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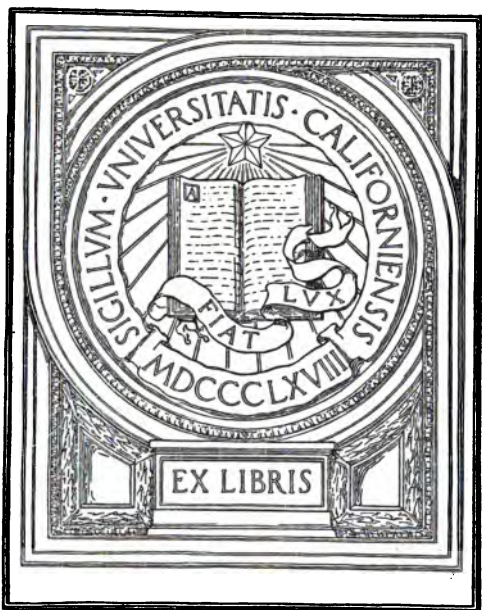
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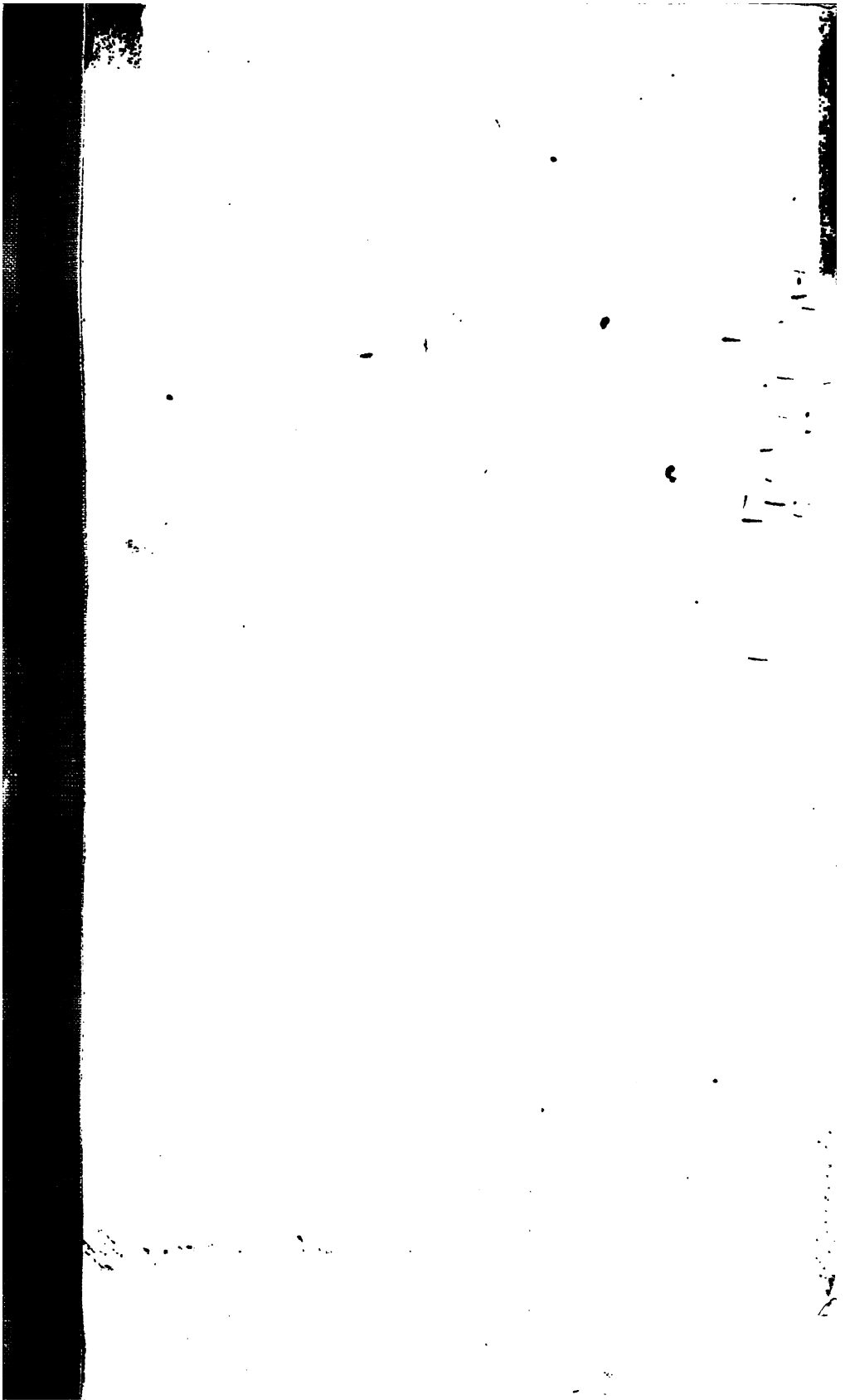
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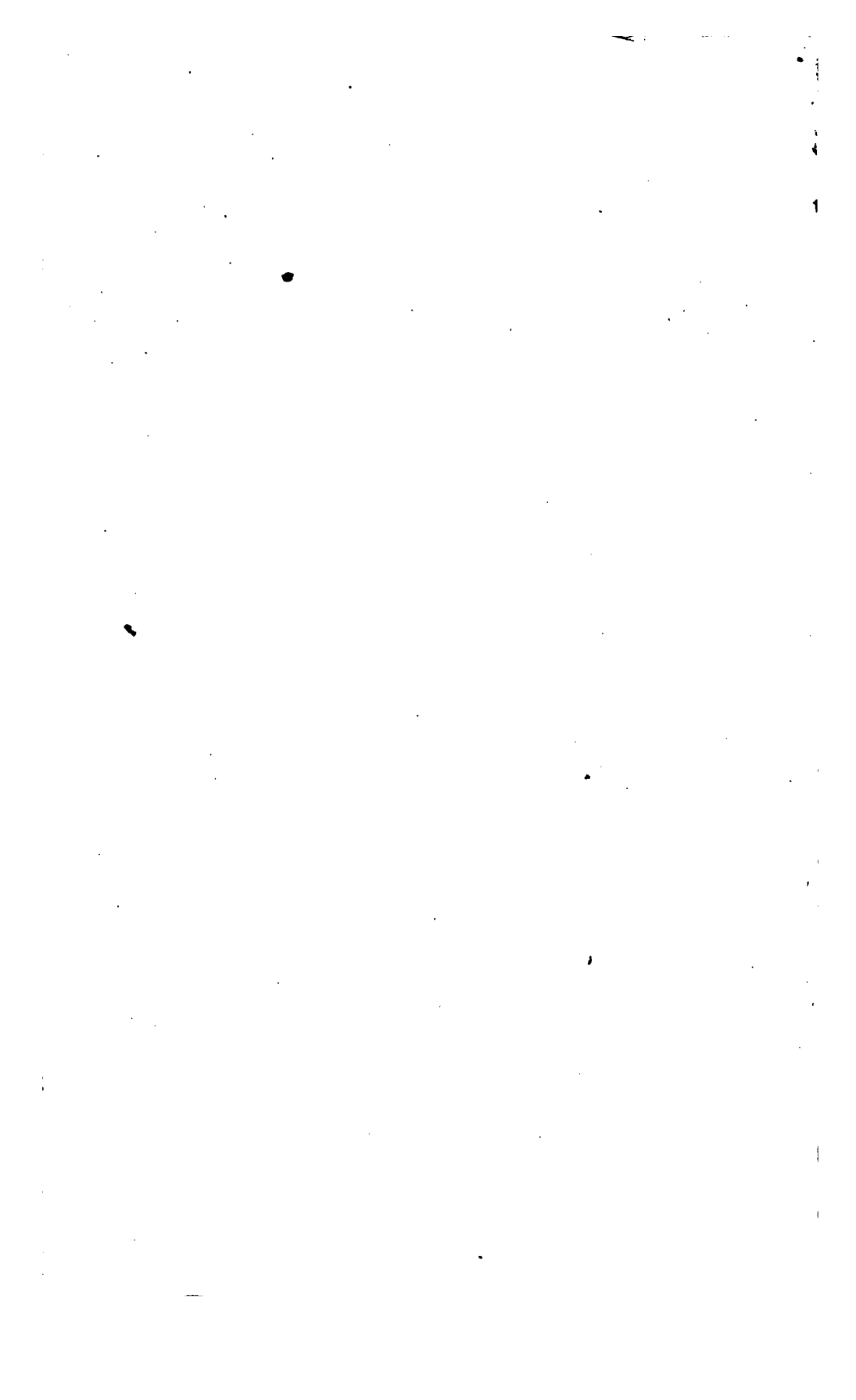
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PRAIRIE-BIRD.

BY THE HON.

CHARLES AUGUSTUS MURRAY

AUTHOR OF

"TRAVELS IN NORTH AMERICA."

BY
MURRAY
CALIFORNIA

Ferdinand. Most sure the goddess
On whom these airs attend—

My prime request
Which I do last pronounce is, O you wonder,
If you be maid or no!

Miranda. No wonder, sir,
But certainly a maid.

Ferdinand. My language, Heavens!

Temple, not I.

NEW YORK:

HARPER & BROTHERS, PUBLISHERS,

82 CLIFF STREET.

1849.

P R E F A C E.

"I HATE a Preface!" Such will probably be the reader's exclamation on opening this volume. I will, however, pursue the subject a little farther in the form of a dialogue.

Author. "I entirely agree in your dislike of a Preface; for a good book needs none, and a dull book cannot be mended by it."

Reader. "If, then, you coincide in my opinion, why write a Preface? Judging from appearances, your book is long enough without one!"

A. "Do not be too severe; it is precisely because the road which we propose to travel together is of considerable extent, that I wish to warn you at the outset of the nature of the scenery, and the entertainment you are likely to meet with, in order that you may, if these afford you no attraction, turn aside and seek better amusement and occupation elsewhere."

R. "That seems plausible enough; yet, how can I be assured that the result will fulfil your promise? I once travelled in a stage-coach, wherein was suspended, for the benefit of passengers, a coloured print of the watering-place which was our destination; it represented a magnificent hotel, with extensive gardens and shrubberies, through the shady walks of which, gayly attired parties were promenading on horse-back and on foot. When we arrived, I found myself at a large, square, unsightly inn by the sea-side, where neither flower, shrub, nor tree was to be seen; and on inquiry, I was informed that the print represented the hotel as the proprietor intended it to be! Suppose I were to meet with a similar disappointment in my journey with you?"

A. "I can at least offer you this comfort; that whereas you could not have got out of the stage half way on the road without

much inconvenience, you can easily lay down the book whenever you find it becoming tedious; if you seek for amusement only, you probably will be disappointed, because one of my chief aims has been to afford you correct information respecting the habits, condition, and character of the North American Indians and those bordering on their territory. I have introduced, also, several incidents founded on actual occurrences; and some of them, as well as of the characters, are sketched from personal observation."

R. "Indeed! you are then the individual who resided with the Pawnees, and published, a few years since, your Travels in North America. I suppose we may expect in this volume a sort of *pot-pourri*, composed of all the notes, anecdotes, and observations which you could not conveniently squeeze into your former book?"

A. "(looking rather foolish). "Although the terms in which you have worded your conjecture are not the most flattering, I own that it is not altogether without foundation; nevertheless, gentle reader—"

R. "Spare your epithets of endearment; or, at least, reserve them until I have satisfied myself that I can reply in a similar strain."

A. "Nay, it is too churlish to censure a harmless courtesy that has been adopted even by the greatest dramatists and novelists from the time of Shakspeare to the present day."

R. "It may be so; permit me, however, to request, in the words of one of those dramatists to whom you refer, that you will be so obliging as to

"Forbear the prologue,
And let me know the substance of thy tale!"
The Orphan

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p 1849

THE PRAIRIE-BIRD.

CHAPTER I.

In which the reader will find a sketch of a village in the West, and will be introduced to some of the famous persons.

There is, perhaps, no country in the world more favoured, in respect to natural advantages, than the State of Ohio in North America: the soil is of inexhaustible fertility; the climate temperate; the rivers, flowing into Lake Erie to the north, and through the Ohio into the Mississippi to the south-west, are navigable for many hundreds of miles, the forests abound with the finest timber, and even the bowels of the earth pay, in various kinds of mineral, abundant contribution to the general wealth: the southern frontier of the State is bounded by the noble river from which she derives her name, and which obtained from the early French traders and missionaries the well-deserved appellation of "La Belle Rivière."

Towns and cities are now multiplying upon its banks; the axe has laid low vast tracts of its forests; the plough has passed over many thousand acres of the prairies which it fertilized; and crowds of steamboats, laden with goods, manufactures, and passengers from every part of the world, urge their busy way through its waters.

Far different was the appearance and condition of that region at the period when the events detailed in the following narrative occurred. The reader must bear in mind that, at the close of the last century, the vast tracts of forest and prairie now forming the States of Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois, were all included in what was then called the North-west Territory: it was still inhabited by numerous bands of Indian tribes, of which the most powerful were the Lenapé or Delawares, the Shawanons, the Miamies, and the Wyandots or Hurons.

Here and there, at favourable positions on the navigable rivers, were trading posts, defended by small forts, to which the Indians brought their skins of bear, deer, bison, and beaver; receiving in exchange, powder, rifles, paint, hatchets, knives, blankets, and other articles, which, although unknown to their forefathers, had become to them, through their intercourse with the whites, numbered among the necessaries of life. But the above-mentioned animals, especially the last two, were already scarce in this region; and the more enterprising of the hunters, Indian as well as white men, made annual excursions to the wild and boundless hunting-ground, westward of the Mississippi.

At the close of the eighteenth century, the villages and settlements on the north bank of the Ohio, being scarce and far apart, were built, rather for the purpose of trading with the Indians than for agriculture or civilized industry;

and their inhabitants were as bold and hardy, sometimes as wild and lawless, as the red men, with whom they were beginning to dispute the soil.

Numerous quarrels arose between these western settlers and their Indian neighbours; blood was frequently shed, and fierce retaliation ensued, which ended in open hostility. The half-disciplined militia, aided sometimes by regular troops, invaded and burnt the Indian villages; while the red men, seldom able to cope with their enemy in the open field, cut off detached parties, massacred unprotected families, and so swift and indiscriminate was their revenge, that settlements, at some distance from the scene of war, were often aroused at midnight by the unexpected alarm of the war-whoop and the firebrand. There were occasions, however, when the Indians boldly attacked and defeated the troops sent against them; but General Wayne, having taken the command of the western forces (about four years before the commencement of our tale), routed them at the battle of the Miamies with great slaughter; after which many of them went off to the Mississippian plains, and those who remained, no more ventured to appear in the field against the United States.

One of the earliest trading posts established in that region was Marietta, a pretty village situated at the mouth of the Muskingum river, where it falls into the Ohio. Even so far back as the year 1799 it boasted a church, several taverns, a strong block-house, serving as a protection against an attack from the Indians' stores for the sale of grocery; and, in short, such a collection of buildings as has, in more than one instance in the western states of America, grown into a city with unexampled rapidity.

This busy and flourishing village had taken the lead, of all others within a hundred miles, in the construction of vessels for the navigation of the Ohio and Mississippi; nay, some of the more enterprising merchants there settled, had actually built, launched, and freighted brigs and schooners of sufficient burthen to brave the seas in the Mexican gulf; and had opened, in their little inland port, a direct trade with the West Indian islands, to which they exported flour, pork, maize, and other articles, their vessels returning laden with fruit, coffee, sugar, and rum.

The largest store in the village, situated in the centre of a row of houses fronting the river, was built of brick, and divided into several compartments, wherein were to be found all the necessaries of life,—all such at least as were called for by the inhabitants of Marietta and its neighbourhood; one of these compartments was crowded with skins and furs from

the North-west, and with clothes, cottons, and woollen stuffs, from England; the second with earthenware, cutlery, mirrors, rifles, stoves, grates, &c.; while in the third, which was certainly the most frequented, were sold flour, tea, sugar, rum, whiskey, gunpowder, spices, cured pork, &c.; and in a deep corner or recess of the latter was a trap-door, not very often opened, but which led to a cellar, wherein was stored a reasonable quantity of Madeira and claret, the quality of which would not have disgraced the best hotel in Philadelphia.

Over this multifarious property on sale, presided David Muir, a bony, long-armed man of about forty-five years of age, whose red, bristly hair, prominent cheek bones, and sharp, sunken gray eyes, would, without the confirming evidence of his broad Scottish accent, have indicated to an experienced observer the country to which he owed his birth. In the duties of his employment, David was well seconded by his helpmate,—a tall, powerful woman, whose features, though strong and masculine, retained the marks of early beauty, and whose voice, when raised in wrath, reached the ears of every individual, even in the farthest compartment of the extensive store above described.

David was a shrewd, enterprising fellow, trustworthy in matters of business, and peaceable enough in temper; though in more than one affray, which had arisen in consequence of some of his customers, whitemen and Indians, having taken on the spot too much of his "fire-water," he had shown that he was not to be affronted with impunity; nevertheless in the presence of Mrs. Christie (so was his spouse called) he was gentle and subdued, never attempting to rebel against an authority which an experience of twenty years had proved to be irresistible; one only child, aged now about eighteen, was the fruit of their marriage; and Jessie Muir was certainly more pleasing in her manners and in her appearance than might have been expected from her parentage; she assisted her mother in cooking, baking, and other domestic duties, and, when not thus engaged, read or worked in a corner of the cotton and silk compartment over which she presided; two lads, engaged at a salary of four dollars a week, to assist in the sale, care, and package of the goods, completed David's establishment, which was perhaps the largest and the best provided that could be found westward of the Alleghany mountains.

It must not be supposed, however, that all this property was his own: it belonged for the most part to Colonel Brandon, a gentleman who resided on his farm, seven or eight miles from the village, and who entrusted David Muir with the entire charge of the stores in Marietta; the accounts of the business were regularly audited by the colonel once every year, and a fair share of the profits as regularly made over to David, whose accuracy and integrity had given much satisfaction to his principal.

Three of the largest trading vessels from the port of Marietta were owned and freighted by Colonel Brandon; the command and management of them being entrusted by him to Edward Ethelston, a young man who, being now in his twenty-eighth year, discharged the duty of captain and supercargo with the rarest steadiness, ability, and success.

As young Ethelston and family will occupy a considerable place in our narrative, it may be as well to detail briefly the circumstances which led to his enjoying so large a share of the colonel's affection and confidence.

About eleven years before the date mentioned as being that of the commencement of our tale, Colonel Brandon, having sold his property in Virginia, had moved to the Northwest Territory, with his wife and his two children, Reginald and Lucy; he had persuaded, at the same time, a Virginian friend, Digby Ethelston, who, like himself, was descended from an ancient royalist family in the mother country, to accompany him in this migration; the feelings, associations, and prejudices of both the friends had been frequently wounded during the war which terminated in the independence of the United States; for not only were both attached by those feelings and associations to the old country, but they had also near connexions resident there, with whom they kept up a friendly intercourse.

It was not, therefore, difficult for Colonel Brandon to persuade his friend to join him in his proposed emigration; the latter who was a widower, and who, like the Colonel, had only two children, was fortunate in having under his roof a sister, who being now past the prime of life, devoted herself entirely to the charge of her brother's household. Aunt Mary (for she was known by no other name) expressed neither aversion nor alarm at the prospect of settling permanently in so remote a region; and the two families moved accordingly, with goods and chattels, to the banks of the Ohio.

The colonel and his friend were both possessed of considerable property, a portion of which they invested in the fur companies, which at that time carried on extensive traffic in the north-west territory; they also acquired from the United States government large tracts of land at no great distance from Marietta, upon which each selected an agreeable site for his farm or country-residence.

Their houses were not far apart, and though rudely built at first, they gradually assumed a more comfortable appearance; wings were added, stables enlarged, the gardens and peach-orchards were well fenced, and the adjoining farm-offices amply stocked with horses and cattle.

For two years all went on prosperously; the boys, Edward Ethelston and Reginald Brandon, were as fond of each other as their fathers could desire; the former being three years the senior, and possessed of excellent qualities of head and heart, controlled the ardent and somewhat romantic temper of Reginald; both were at school near Philadelphia; when on a beautiful day in June, Mr. Ethelston and Aunt Mary walked over to pay a visit to Mrs. Brandon, leaving little Evelyn (who was then about eight years old) with her nurse at home; they remained at Colonel Brandon's to dine, and were on the point of returning in the afternoon, when a farm-servant of Mr. Ethelston's rushed into the room where the two gentlemen were sitting alone; he was pale, breathless, and so agitated that he could not utter a syllable: "For heaven's sake, speak! What has happened!" exclaimed Colonel Brandon.

A dreadful pause ensued; at length, he ra

ther gasped than said, "The Indians!" and buried his face in his hands, as if to shut out some horrid spectacle.

Poor Ethelston's tongue clove to his mouth; the prescient agony of a father overcame him.

"What of the Indians, man?" said Colonel Brandon; angrily, "'sblood, we have seen Indians enough hereabout before now;—what the devil have they been at?"

A groan and a shudder was the only reply.

The colonel now lost all patience, and exclaimed, "By heavens, the sight of a red-skin seems to have frightened the fellow out of his senses! I did not know, Ethelston, that you trusted your farm-stock to such a chicken-heart as this!"

Incensed by this taunt the rough lad replied, "Colonel! for all as you be so bold, and have seen, as they say, a bloody field or two, you'd a' been skeared if you'd a' seen *this* job; but as for my being afear'd of Ingians in an up and down fight, or in a tree-skrimmage—I don't care who says it—'t'aint a fact."

"I believe it, my good fellow," said the Colonel; "but keep us no longer in suspense—say, what has happened?"

"Why you see, Colonel, about an hour ago, Jem and Eliab was at work in the 'bacey-field behind the house, and nurse was out in the big meadow a walkin with Miss Evelyn when I heard a cry as if all the devils had broke loose; in a moment, six or eight painted Ingians with rifles and tomahawks dashed out of the laurel thicket, and murdered poor Jem and Eliab before they could get at their rifles which stood by the *worm* fence;* two of them then went after the nurse and child in the meadow, while the rest broke into the house, which they ransacked and set 'o fire!"

"But my child?" cried the agonized father.

"I fear it's gone too," said the messenger of this dreadful news. "I saw one devil kill and scalp the nurse, and 't'other,"—here he paused, awe-struck by the speechless agony of poor Ethelston, who stood with clasped hands and bloodless lips, unable to ask for the few more words which were to complete his despair.

"Speak on, man, let us know the worst;" said the Colonel, at the same time supporting the trembling form of his unhappy friend.

"I seed the tomahawk raised over the sweet child, and I tried to rush out o' my hidin' place to save it, when the flames and the smoke broke out, and I tumbled into the big ditch below the garden, over head in water; by the time I got out and reached the place, the red devils were all gone, and the house, and straw, and barns all in a blaze!"

Poor Ethelston had only heard the first few words—they were enough—his head sunk upon his breast, his whole frame shuddered convulsively; and a rapid succession of inarticulate sounds came from his lips, among which nothing could be distinguished beyond "child," "tomahawk," "Evelyn."

It is needless to relate in detail all that followed this painful scene; the bodies of the unfortunate labourers and of the nurse were found;

*It may be necessary to inform some of our English readers, that a *worm fence* is a coarse, zigzag railing, common in the new settlements of America. The *larva* (larva) is plentiful.

all had been scalped; that of the child was not found; and though Colonel Brandon himself led a band of the most experienced hunters in pursuit, the trail of the savages could not be followed; with their usual wily foresight they had struck off through the forest in different directions, and succeeded in baffling all attempts at discovering either their route or their tribe, messengers were sent to the trading posts at Kaskaskia, Vincennes, and even to Genevieve, and St. Louis, and all returned dispirited by a laborious and fruitless search.

Mr. Ethelston never recovered this calamitous blow; several fits of paralysis, following each other in rapid succession, carried him off within a few months. By his will he appointed a liberal annuity to Aunt Mary, and left the remainder of his property to his son Edward, but entirely under the control and guardianship of Colonel Brandon.

The latter had prevailed upon Aunt Mary and her young nephew to become inmates of his house; where, after the soothing effect of time had softened the bitterness of their grief, they found the comforts, the occupations, the endearments, the social blessings embodied in the word "home." Edward became more fondly attached than ever to his younger companion, Reginald; and Aunt Mary, besides aiding Mrs. Brandon in the education of her daughter, found time to knit, to hem, to cook, to draw, to plant vegetables, to rear flowers, to read, to give medicine to any sick in the neighbourhood, and to comfort all who, like herself, had suffered under the chastising hand of Providence.

Such were the circumstances which (eleven years before the commencement of this narrative) had led to the affectionate and paternal interest which the Colonel felt for the son of his friend, and which was increased by the high and estimable qualities gradually developed in Edward's character. Before proceeding further in our tale, it is necessary to give the reader some insight into the early history of Colonel Brandon himself, and into those occurrences in the life of his son Reginald, which throw light upon the events hereafter to be related.

CHAPTER II.

Containing an account of the marriage of Colonel Brandon and its consequences.

GEORGE BRANDON was the only son of a younger brother, a scion of an ancient and distinguished family: they had been, for the most part, staunch Jacobites, and George's father lost the greater part of his property in a fruitless endeavour to support the ill-timed and ill-conducted expedition of Charles Edward, in 1745.

After this he retired to the Continent and died, leaving to his son little else besides his sword, a few hundred crowns, and an untarnished name. The young man returned to England; and, being agreeable, accomplished and strikingly handsome, was kindly received by some of his relations and their friends.

During one of the visits that he paid at the house of a neighbour in the country, he fell desperately in love with Lucy Shirley, the daughter of the richest squire in the country, a determined Whig, and one who hated a Jaco

bite worse than a Frenchman. As George Brandon's passion was returned with equal ardour, and the object of it was young and inexperienced as himself, all the obstacles opposed to their union only served to add fuel to the flame and, after repeated but vain endeavours on the part of Lucy Shirley to reconcile her father, or her only brother, to the match, she eloped with her young lover; and, by a rapid escape into Scotland, where they were immediately married, they rendered abortive all attempt at pursuit.

It was not long before the young couple began to feel some of the painful consequences of their imprudence. The old squire was not to be appeased; he would neither see his daughter, nor would he open one of the many letters which she wrote to entreat his forgiveness: but, although incensed, he was a proud man and scrupulously just in all his dealings: Lucy had been left £10,000 by her grand-mother, but it was not due to her until she attained her twenty-first year, or *married with her father's consent*. The squire waived both these conditions; he knew that his daughter had fallen from a brilliant sphere to one comparatively humble. Even in the midst of his wrath he did not wish her to starve, and accordingly instructed his lawyer to write to Mrs. Brandon, and to inform her that he had orders to pay her £500 a-year, until she thought fit to demand the payment of the principal.

George and his wife returned, after a brief absence, to England, and made frequent efforts to overcome by entreaty and submission the old squire's obduracy; but it was all in vain; neither were they more successful in propitiating the young squire, an eccentric youth, who lived among dogs and horses, and who had imbibed from his father a hereditary taste for old port, and an antipathy to Jacobites. His reply to a letter which George wrote, entreating his good offices in effecting a reconciliation between Lucy and her father, will serve better than an elaborate description to illustrate his character; it ran as follows:—

SIR,

When my sister married a Jacobite, against father's consent, she carried her eggs to a fool's market, and she must make the best of her own bargain. Father isn't such a flat as to be gulled with your fine words now; and tho' they say I'm not over forw'rd in my schoolin', you must put some better bait on your trap before you catch

MARMADUKE SHIRLEY, Jun.

It may well be imagined, that after the receipt of this epistle George Brandon did not seek to renew his intercourse with Lucy's brother; but as she had now presented him with a little boy, he began to meditate seriously on the means which he should adopt to better his fortunes.

One of his most intimate and esteemed friends, Digby Ethelston, being like himself, a portionless member of an ancient family, had gone out early in life to America, and had, by dint of persevering industry, gained a respectable competence; while in the southern colonies he had married the daughter of an old French planter, who had left the marquisate to

which he was entitled in his own country, in order to live in peace and quiet among the sugar canes and cotton fields of Louisiana; Ethelston had received with his wife a considerable accession of fortune, and they were on the eve of returning across the Atlantic, her husband having settled all the affairs which had brought him to England.

His representations of the New World made a strong impression on the sanguine mind of George Brandon, and he proposed to his wife to emigrate with their little one to America; poor Lucy, cut off from her own family and devoted to her husband, made no difficulty whatever, and it was soon settled that they should accompany the Ethelstons.

George now called upon Mr. Shirley's solicitor, a dry, matter-of-fact, parchment man, to inform him of their intention, and of their wish that the principal of Lucy's fortune might be paid up. The lawyer took down a dusty box of black tin, whereon was engraved "Marmaduke Shirley, Esq., Shirley Hall, No. 7," and after carefully perusing a paper of instructions, he said, "Mrs. Brandon's legacy shall be paid up, sir, on the 1st of July to any party whom she may empower to receive it on her behalf, and to give a legal discharge for the same."

"And pray, sir," said George, hesitating, "as we are going across the Atlantic, perhaps never to return, do you not think Mr. Shirley would see his daughter once before she sails, to give her his blessing?"

Again the man of parchment turned his sharp nose towards the paper, and having scanned its contents, he said, "I find nothing, sir, in these instructions on that point; Good-morning, Mr. Brandon—James, shew in Sir John Waltham."

George walked home dispirited, and the punctual solicitor failed not to inform the squire immediately of the young couple's intended emigration and the demand for the paying up of the sum due to Lucy. In spite of his long cherished prejudices against George Brandon's Jacobite family, and his anger at the elopement, he was somewhat softened by time, by what he heard of the blameless life led by the young man, and by the respectful conduct that the latter had evinced towards his wife's family; for it had happened on one occasion that some of his young companions had thought fit to speak of the obstinacy and stinginess of the old squire; this language George had instantly and indignantly checked, saying, "My conduct in marrying his daughter against his consent, was unjustifiable; though he has not forgiven her, he has behaved justly and honourably; any word spoken disrespectfully of my wife's father, I shall consider a personal insult to myself."

This had accidentally reached the ears of the old squire, and, though still too proud and too obstinate to agree to any reconciliation, he said to the solicitor: "Perkins, I will not be reconciled to these scapegraces, I will have no intercourse with them, but I will see Lucy before she goes; she must not see me;—arrange it as you please; desire her to come to your house to sign the discharge for the £10,000, in person; you can put me in a cupboard, in the next room, where you will, a glass door will do;—you understand?"

"Yes, sir. When?"

"Oh, the sooner the better; whenever the papers are ready."

"It shall be done, sir." And thus the interview closed.

Meantime George made one final effort in a letter which he addressed to the Squire, couched in terms at once manly and respectful; owning the errors that he had committed, but hoping that forgiveness might precede this long, this last separation.

This letter was returned to him unopened, and in order to conceal from Lucy the grief and mortification of his high and wounded spirit, he was obliged to absent himself from home for many hours, and when he did return, it was with a clouded brow.

Certainly the fate of this young couple, though not altogether prosperous, was in one particular a remarkable exception to the usual results of a runaway match; they were affectionately and entirely devoted to each other; and Lucy, though she had been once, and only once, a disobedient daughter, was the most loving and obedient of wives.

The day fixed for her signature arrived. Mr. Perkins had made all his arrangements agreeably to his wealthy client's instructions; and when, accompanied by her husband, she entered the solicitor's study, she was little conscious that her father was separated from her only by a frail door, which being left ajar, he could see her, and hear every word that she spoke.

Mr. Perkins, placing the draft of the discharge into George Brandon's hand, together with the instrument whereby his wife was put in possession of the £10,000, said to him, "Would it not be better, sir, to send for your solicitor to inspect these papers on behalf of yourself and Mrs. Brandon, before she signs the discharge?"

"Allow me to inquire, sir," replied George, "whether Mr. Shirley has perused these papers, and has placed them here for his daughter's signature?"

"Assuredly, he has, sir," said the lawyer, "and I have too, on his behalf; you do not imagine, sir, that my client would pay the capital sum without being certain that the discharge was regular and sufficient?"

"Then I am satisfied, sir," said George, with something of disdain expressed on his fine countenance. "Mr. Shirley is a man of honour, and a father; whatever he has sent for his daughter's signature will secure her interests as effectually as if a dozen solicitors had inspected it."

At the conclusion of this speech, a sort of indistinct *hem* proceeded from the enconced Squire, to cover which Mr. Perkins said, "But, sir, it is not usual to sign papers of this consequence without examining them."

"Lucy, my dear," said George, turning with a smile of affectionate confidence to his wife; "to oblige Mr. Perkins, I will read through these two papers attentively; sit down for a minute, as they are somewhat long;" so saying, he applied himself at once to his task.

Meantime, Lucy, painfully agitated and excited, made several attempts to address Mr. Perkins; but her voice failed her, as soon as she turned her eyes upon that gentleman's rigid countenance; at length however, by a desper-

ate effort, she succeeded in asking, tremulously, "Mr. Perkins, have you seen my father lately?"

"Yes, ma'am," said the lawyer, nibbling his pen.

"Oh! tell me how he is!—Has the gout left him?—Can he ride to the farm as he used?"

"He is well, madam, very well, I believe."

"Shall you see him soon again, sir?"

"Yes, madam, I must show him these papers when signed."

"Oh! then, tell him, that his daughter, who never disobeyed him but once, has wept bitterly for her fault; that she will probably never see him again, in this world; that she blesses him in her daily prayers. Oh! tell him, I charge you as you are a man, tell him, that I could cross the ocean happy; that I could bear years of sickness, of privation, happy; that I could die happy, if I had but my dear, dear father's blessing." As she said this, the young wife had unconsciously fallen upon one knee before the man of law, and her tearful eyes were bent upon his countenance in earnest supplication.

Again an indistinct noise, as of a suppressed groan or sob, was heard from behind the door, and the solicitor wiping his spectacles and turning away his face to conceal an emotion of which he felt rather ashamed, said: "I will tell him all you desire, madam; and if I receive his instructions to make any communication in reply, I will make it faithfully, and without loss of time."

"Thank you, thank you a thousand times," said Lucy; and resuming her seat, she endeavoured to recover her composure.

George had by this time run his eye over the papers, and although he had overheard his wife's appeal to the solicitor, he would not interrupt her, nor throw any obstacle in the way of an object which he knew she had so much at heart. "I am perfectly satisfied, sir," said he; "you have nothing to do but to provide the witnesses, and Mrs. Brandon will affix her signature."

Two clerks of Mr. Perkins were accordingly summoned, and the discharge having been signed in their presence, they retired. Mr. Perkins now drew another paper from the leaves of a book on his table, saying: "Mr. Brandon, the discharge being now signed and attested, I have further instructions from Mr. Shirley to inform you that although he cannot alter his determination of refusing to see his daughter, or holding any intercourse with yourself, he is desirous that you should not in America find yourself in straitened circumstances; and has accordingly authorised me to place in your hands this draft upon his banker for £5000."

"Mr. Perkins," said George, in a tone of mingled sadness and pride; "in the payment of the £10,000, my wife's fortune, Mr. Shirley, though acting honourably, has only done justice, and has dealt as he would have dealt with strangers; had he thought proper to listen to my wife's, or to my own repeated entreaties for forgiveness and reconciliation, I would gratefully have received from him, as from a father, any favour that he wished to confer on us; but, sir, as he refuses to see me under his roof, or even to give his affectionate and repentant child a parting blessing, I would rather work for my daily

bread than receive at his hands the donation of a guinea."

As he said this, he tore the draft and scattered its shreds on the table before the astonished lawyer. Poor Lucy was still in tears, yet one look assured her husband that she *felt* with him. He added in a gentler tone, "Mr. Perkins accept my acknowledgments for your courtesy;" and offering his arm to Lucy, turned to leave the room.

CHAPTER III.

Containing some further account of Colonel and Mrs. Brandon, and of the Education of their son Reginald.

WHILE the scene described in the last chapter was passing in the lawyer's study, stormy and severe was the struggle going on in the breast of the listening father; more than once he had been on the point of rushing into the room to fold his child in his arms; but that obstinate pride, which causes in life so many bitter hours of regret, prevented him, and checked the natural impulse of affection: still, as she turned with her husband to leave the room, he unconsciously opened the door, on the lock of which his hand rested, as he endeavoured to get one last look at a face which he had so long loved and caressed. The door being thus partially opened, a very diminutive and favourite spaniel, that accompanied him wherever he went, escaped through the aperture, and, recognizing Lucy, barked and jumped upon her in an ecstasy of delight.

"Heavens!" cried she, "it is—it must be 'an!" At another time she would have fondly caressed it, but one only thought now occupied her; trembling on her husband's arm, she whispered, "George, papa *must* be here." At that moment her eye caught the partially-opened door, which the agitated Squire still held, and, breaking from her husband, she flew as if by instinct into the adjacent room, and fell at her father's feet.

Poor Mr. Perkins was now grievously disconcerted, and calling out, "This way, madam, this way; that is not the right door," was about to follow, when George Brandon, laying his hand upon the lawyer's arm, said impressively,

"Stay, sir; that room is sacred!" and led him back to his chair. His quick mind had seized in a moment the correctness of Lucy's conjecture, and his good feeling taught him that no third person, not even he, should intrude upon the father and the child.

The old squire could not make a long resistance when the gush of his once-loved Lucy's tears trickled upon his hand, and while her half-choked voice sobbed for his pardon and his blessing; it was in vain that he summoned all his pride, all his strength, all his anger; Nature would assert her rights; and in another minute his child's head was on his bosom, and he whispered over her, "I forgive you Lucy; may God bless you, as I do!"

For some time after this was the interview prolonged, and Lucy seemed to be pleading for some boon which she could not obtain; nevertheless her tears, her old familiar childish caresses, had regained something of their former

dominion over the choleric, but warm-hearted Squire; and in a voice of joy that thrilled even through the quiet man of law, she cried, "George! George, come in!" he leaped from his seat, and in a moment was at the feet of her father. There as he knelt by Lucy's side, the old Squire put one hand upon the head of each, saying, "My children, all that you have ever done to offend me is forgotten; continue to love and to cherish each other, and may God prosper you with every blessing!" George Brandon's heart was full; he could not speak, but straining his wife affectionately to his bosom, and kissing her father's hand, he withdrew into a corner of the room, and for some minutes remained oppressed by emotions too strong to find relief in expressions.

We need not detail at length the consequences of this happy and unexpected reconciliation. The check was re-written, was doubled, and was accepted. George still persevered in his wish to accompany his friend to Virginia; where Ethelston assured him that, with his £20,000 prudently managed, he might easily acquire a sufficient fortune for himself and his family.

How mighty is the power of circumstance: and upon what small pivots does Providence some times allow the wheels of human fortunes to be turned! Here, in the instance just related, the blessing or unappeased wrath of a father, the joy or despair of a daughter, the peace or discord of a family, all, all were dependent upon the bark and caress of a spaniel! For that stern old man had made his determination, and would have adhered to it, if Lucy had not thus been made aware of his presence, and by her grief aiding the voice of Nature, overthrown all the defences of his pride.

It happened that the young Squire was at this time in Paris, his father having sent him thither to see the world and learn to fence; a letter was, however, written by Lucy, announcing to him the happy reconciliation, and entreating him to participate in their common happiness.

The arrangements for the voyage were soon completed; the cabin of a large vessel being engaged to convey the whole party to Norfolk in Virginia. The Old Squire offered no opposition, considering that George Brandon was too old to begin a profession in England, and that he might employ his time and abilities advantageously in the New World.

We may pass over many of the ensuing years, the events of which have little influence on our narrative, merely informing the reader that the investment of Brandon's money, made by the advice of Ethelston, was prosperous in the extreme. In the course of a year or two, Mrs. Brandon presented her lord with a little girl, who was named after herself. In the following year, Mrs. Ethelston had also a daughter: the third confinement was not so fortunate, and she died in childbed, leaving to Ethelston, Edward, then about nine, and little Evelyn—a twelvemonth old.

It was on this sad occasion that he persuaded his sister to come out from England to reside with him, and take care of his motherless children: a task that she undertook and fulfilled with the love and devotion of the most affectionate mother.

In course of time the war broke out which ended in the independence of the Colonies. During its commencement, Brandon and Ethelston both remained firm to the Crown; but as it advanced, they became gradually convinced of the impolicy and injustice of the claims urged by England; Brandon having sought an interview with Washington, the arguments, and the character, of that great man decided him; he joined the Independent party, obtained a command, and distinguished himself so much as to obtain the esteem and regard of his commander. As soon as peace was established he had, for reasons before stated, determined to change his residence, and persuaded Ethelston to accompany him with his family.

After the dreadful domestic calamity mentioned in the first chapter, and the untimely death of Ethelston, Colonel Brandon sent Edward, the son of his deceased friend, to a distant relative in Hamburg, desiring that every care might be given to give him a complete mercantile and liberal education, including two years' study at a German university.

Meanwhile the old Squire Brandon was dead, but his son and successor had written, after his own strange fashion, a letter to his sister, begging her to send over her boy to England, and he would "make a man of him." After duly weighing this proposal, Colonel and Mrs. Brandon determined to avail themselves of it; and Reginald was accordingly sent over to his uncle, who had promised to enter him immediately at Oxford.

When Reginald arrived, Marmaduke Shirley turned him round half a dozen times, felt his arms, punched his ribs, looked at his ruddy cheeks and brown hair, that had never known a barber, and exclaimed to a brother sportsman who was standing by, "D—d if he ain't one of the right sort! eh, Harry!" But if the uncle was pleased with the lad's appearance, much more delighted was he with his accomplishments: for he could walk down any keeper on the estate, he sat on a horse like a young centaur, and his accuracy with a rifle perfectly confounded the Squire. "If this isn't a chip of the old block, my name isn't Marmaduke Shirley," said he; and for a moment a shade crossed his usually careless brow, as he remembered that he had wooed, and married, and been left a childless widower.

But although at Shirley Hall Reginald followed the sports of the field with the arduous natural to his age and character, he rather annoyed the Squire by his obstinate and persevering attention to his studies at College; he remembered that walking and shooting were accomplishments which he might have acquired and perfected in the woods of Virginia; but he felt it due to his parents, and to the confidence which they had reposed in his discretion, to carry back with him some more useful knowledge and learning.

With this dutiful motive, he commenced his studies; and as he advanced in them, his naturally quick intellect seized on and appreciated the beauties presented to it; authors, in whose writings he had imagined and expected little else but difficulties, soon became easy and familiar; and what he had imposed upon himself from a high principle as a task, proved, ere long a source of abundant pleasure.

In the vacations he visited his good-humoured uncle, who never failed to rally him as a "Latin-monger" and a book-worm; but Reginald bore the jokes with temper not less merry than his uncle's; and whenever, after a hard run, he had "pounded" the Squire or the huntsman, he never failed to retaliate by answering the compliments paid him on his riding with some such jest as "Pretty well for a book-worm, uncle." It soon became evident to all the tenants, servants, and indeed to the whole neighbourhood, that Reginald exercised a despotical influence over the Squire, who respected internally those literary attainments in his nephew which he affected to ridicule.

When Reginald had taken his degree, which he did with high honour and credit, he felt an ardent desire to visit his friend and school-fellow, Edward Ethelston, in Germany; he was also anxious to see something of the Continent, and to study the foreign languages; this wish he expressed without circumlocution to the Squire, who received the communication with undisguised disapprobation: "What the devil can the boy want to go abroad for! not satisfied with wasting two or three years poking over Greek, Latin, Mathematics, and other infernal 'atics' and 'ologies,' now you must go across the Channel, to eat sour-cROUT, soup-maigre, and frogs! I won't hear of it, sir;" and in order to keep his wrath warm, the Squire poked the fire violently.

In spite of this determination Reginald, as usual carried his point, and in a few weeks was on board a packet bound for Hamburg, his purse being well filled by the Squire, who told him to see all that could be seen, and "not to let any of those Mounseers top him at anything." Reginald was also provided with letters of credit to a much larger amount than he required; but the first hint which he gave of a wish to decline a portion of the Squire's generosity raised such a storm, that our hero was fain to submit.

CHAPTER IV.

Containing sundry adventures of Reginald Brandon and his friend Ethelston on the Continent; also some further proceedings at Squire Shirley's; and the return of Reginald Brandon to his home. In this chapter the sporting reader will find an example of an unmade rider on a made hunter.

REGINALD having joined his attached and faithful friend Ethelston at Hamburg, the young men agreed to travel together; and the intimacy of their early boyhood ripened into a mature friendship, based upon a mutual esteem; in personal advantages, Reginald was greatly the superior; for although unusually tall and strongly built, such was the perfect symmetry of his proportions, that his height, and the great muscular strength of his chest and limbs, were carried off by the grace with which he moved, and by the air of high-breeding by which he was distinguished; his countenance was noble and open in expression; and though there was a fire in his dark eye which betokened passions easily aroused, still there was a frankness on the brow, and a smile around the mouth that told of a nature at once kindly, fearless, and without suspicion.

Ethelston, who was, be it remembered, three years older than his friend, was of middle stature, but active and well proportioned; his hair and eyebrows were of the jettest black, and his countenance thoughtful and grave; but there was about the full and firm lip an expression of determination not to be mistaken; habits of study and reflection had already written their trace upon his high and intellectual brow; so that one who saw him for the first time might imagine him only a severe student; but ere he had seen him an hour in society, he would pronounce him a man of practical and commanding character. The shade of melancholy, which was almost habitual on his countenance, dated from the death of his father, brought prematurely by sorrow to his grave, and from the loss of his little sister, to whom he had been tenderly attached. The two friends loved each other with the affection of brothers; and, after the separation of the last few years, each found in the other newly developed qualities to esteem.

The state of Europe during the autumn of 1795 not being favourable for distant excursions, Ethelston contented himself with showing his friend all objects worthy of his attention in the north of Germany, and at the same time assisted him in attaining its rich, though difficult language; by associating much during the winter, with the students from the Universities, Reginald caught some of their enthusiasm respecting the defence of their country from the arms of the French republic; he learned that a large number of Ethelston's acquaintances at Hamburg had resolved in the spring to join a corps of volunteers from the Hanseatic towns, destined to fight under the banner of the Archduke Charles; to their own surprise, our two friends were carried away by the stream, and found themselves enrolled in a small, but active and gallant band of sharpshooters, ordered to act on the flank of a large body of Austrian infantry. More than once the impetuous courage of Reginald had nearly cost him his life; and in the action at Amberg, where the Archduke defeated General Bernadotte, he received two wounds, such as would have disabled a man of less hardy constitution. It was in vain that Ethelston, whose bravery was tempered by unruffled coolness, urged his friend to expose himself less wantonly; Reginald always promised it, but in the excitement of the action always forgot the promise.

After he had recovered from his wounds, his commanding officer, who had noticed his fearless daring, a quality so valuable in the skirmishing duty, to which his corps were appointed, sent for him, and offered to promote him. "Sir," said Reginald, modestly, "I thank you heartily, but I must decline the honour you propose to me. I am too inexperienced to lead others; my friend and comrade, Ethelston, is three years my senior; in action he is always by my side, sometimes before me; he has more skill or riper judgment; any promotion that should prefer me before him, would be most painful to me." He bowed and withdrew. On the following day, the same officer, who had mentioned Reginald's conduct to the Archduke, presented each of the friends, from him, with a gold medal of the Emperor; a distinction the more gratifying to Reginald, from his knowledge

that he had been secretly the means of bringing his friend's merit into the notice of his commander.

They served through the remainder of that campaign, when the arms of the contending parties met with alternate success; towards its close, the Archduke having skilfully effected his object of uniting his forces to the corps d'armée under General Wartenleben, compelled the French to evacuate Franconia, and to retire towards Switzerland.

This retreat was conducted with much skill by General Moreau; several times did the French rear-guard make an obstinate stand against the pursuers, among whom Reginald and his comrades were always the foremost. On one occasion, the French army occupied a position so strong that they were not driven from it without heavy loss on both sides; and even after the force of numbers had compelled the main body to retire, there remained a gallant band who seemed resolved to conquer or die upon the field; in vain did the Austrian leaders, in admiration of their devoted valour, call to them to surrender; without yielding an inch of ground, they fell, fighting where they stood. Reginald made the most desperate efforts to save their young commander, whose chivalrous appearance and brilliantly decorated uniform made him remarkable from a great distance; several times did he strike aside a barrel pointed at the French officer; but it was too late; and when at length, covered with dust, and sweat, and blood, he reached the spot, he found the young hero whom he had striven to save, stretched on the ground by several mortal wounds in his breast; he saw, however, Reginald's kind intention, smiled gratefully upon him, waved his sword over his head, and died.

The excitement of the battle was over, and leaning on his sword, Reginald still bent over the noble form and marble features of the young warrior at his feet, and he sighed deeply when he thought how suddenly had this flower of manly beauty been cut down. "Perhaps," said he, half aloud, "some now childless mother yet waits for this last prop of her age and name; or some betrothed lingers at her window, and wonders why he so long delays."

Ethelston was at his side, his eyes also bent sadly upon the same object; the young friends interchanged a warm and silent grasp of the hand, each feeling that he read the heart of the other! At this moment, a groan escaped from a wounded man, who was half buried under the bleeding bodies of his comrades; with some difficulty Reginald dragged him out from below them, and the poor fellow thanked him for his humanity; he had only received a slight wound on the head from a spent ball, which had stunned him for the time; but he soon recovered from its effects, and looking around, he saw the body of the young commander stretched on the plain.

"Ah, mon pauvre General!" he exclaimed: and on farther inquiry, Reginald learned that it was indeed the gallant, the admired, the beloved General Marceau, whose brilliant career was thus untimely closed.

"I will go," whispered Ethelston, "and bear this tidings to the Archduke; meantime, Regi-

nald, guard the honoured remains from the camp-spoiler and the plunderer." So saying he withdrew; and Reginald, stooping over the prostrate form before him, stretched it decently, closed the eyes, and throwing a mantle over the splendid uniform, sat down to indulge in the serious meditations inspired by the scene.

He was soon aroused from them by the poor fellow whom he had dragged forth, who said to him, "Sir, I yield myself your prisoner."

"And who are you, my friend?"

"I was courier, valet, and cook to M. de Varenuil, aide-de-camp to the General Marceau; both lie dead together before you."

"And what is your name, my good fellow?"

"Gustave Adolphe Montmorenci Perrot."

"A fair string of names, indeed," said Reginald, smiling. "But pray, Monsieur Perrot, how came you here? are you a soldier as well as a courier?"

"Monsieur does me too much honour," said the other, shrugging his shoulders. "I only came from the baggage-train with a message to my master, and your avant-garde peppered us so hotly that I could not get back again. I am not fond of fighting; but somehow, when I saw poor Monsieur de Varenuil in so sad a plight, I did not wish to leave him."

Reginald looked at the speaker, and thought he had never seen in one face such a compound of slyness and honesty, drollery and sadness. He did not, however, reply, and relapsed into his meditation. Before five minutes had passed, Monsieur Perrot, as if struck by a sudden idea, fell on his knees before Reginald, and said,

"Monsieur has saved my life—will he grant me yet one favour?"

"If within my power," said Reginald, good-naturedly.

"Will Monsieur take me into his service? I have travelled over all Europe; I have lived long in Paris, London, Vienna; I may be of use to Monsieur; but I have no home now."

"Nay, but Monsieur Perrot, I want no servant; I am only a volunteer with the army."

"I see what Monsieur is," said Perrot, archly, "in spite of the dust and blood with which he is disfigured. I will ask no salary; I will share your black bread, if you are poor, and will live in your pantry if you are rich: I only want to serve you."

Monsieur Perrot's importunity overruled all the objections that Reginald could raise; and he at last consented to the arrangement, provided the former, after due reflection, should adhere to his wish.

Ethelston meanwhile returned with the party sent by the Archduke to pay the last token of respect to the remains of the youthful General. They were interred with all the military honours due to an officer whose reputation was, considering his years, second to none in France, save that of Napoleon himself.

After the ceremony, Monsieur Perrot, now on parole not to bear arms against Austria, obtained leave to return to the French camp for a week, in order to "arrange his affairs," at the expiration of which he promised to rejoin his new master. Ethelston blamed Reginald for his thoughtlessness in engaging this untried attendant. The latter, however, laughed at his friend, and said, "Though he is such a droll-

looking creature, I think there is good in him at all events, rest assured I will not trust him far without trial."

A few weeks after these events, General Moreau having effected his retreat into Switzerland, an armistice was concluded on the Rhine between the contending armies; and Reginald could no longer resist the imperative commands of his Uncle to return to Shirley Hall. Monsieur Gustave Adolphe Montmorenci Perrot had joined his new master, with a valise admirably stocked, and wearing a peruke of a most fashionable cut. Ethelston shrewdly suspected that these had formed part of poor Monsieur de Varenuil's wardrobe, and his dislike of Reginald's foppish valet was not thereby diminished.

On the route to Hamburg the friends passed through many places where the luxuries, and even the necessaries, of life had been rendered scarce by the late campaign. Here Perrot was in his element; fatigue seemed to be unknown to him; he was always ready, active, useful as a courier, and unequalled as a cook and a caterer; so that Ethelston was compelled to confess that if he only proved honest, Reginald had indeed found a treasure.

At Hamburg the two friends took an affectionate farewell, promising to meet each other in the course of the following year on the banks of the Ohio. Reginald returned to his Uncle, who stormed dreadfully when he learned that he had brought with him a French valet, and remained implacable in spite of the circumstances under which he had been engaged; until one morning, when a footman threw down the tray on which he was carrying up the Squire's breakfast of beefsteaks and stewed kidneys, half an hour before "the meet" at his best cover-side. What could now be done! The cook was sulky, and sent word that there were no more steaks or kidneys to be had. The Squire was wrath and hungry. Reginald laughed, and said, "Uncle, send for Perrot."

"Perrot be d—d!" cried the Squire. "Does the boy think I want some pomatum! What else could that coxcomb give me?"

"May I try him, Uncle!" said Reginald, still laughing.

"You may try him: but if he plays any of his jackanapes pranks, I'll tan his hide for him, I promise you!"

Reginald having rung for Perrot, pointed to the remains of the good things which a servant was still gathering up, and said to him, "Send up breakfast for Mr. Shirley and myself in one quarter of an hour from this minute: you are permitted to use what you find in the larder; but be punctual."

Perrot bowed, and, without speaking, disappeared.

"The devil take the fellow! he has some sense," said the angry Squire; "he can receive an order without talking; one of my hulking knaves would have stood there five minutes out of the fifteen, saying, 'Yes, sir; I'll see what can be done;' or, 'I'll ask Mr. Alltripe,' or some other infernal stuff. Come, Reginald, look at your watch. Let us stroll to the stable; we'll be back to a minute; and if that fellow plays any of his French tricks upon me, I'll give it him." So saying, the jolly Squire cut the head off one of his gardener's favourite plants,

with his hunting whip, and led the way to the stable.

We may now return to Monsieur Perrot, and see how he set about the discharge of his sudden commission; but it may be necessary, at the same time, to explain one or two particulars not known to his master, or to the Squire. Monsieur Perrot was very gallant, and his tender heart had been smitten by the charms of Mary, the still-room maid; it so happened on this very morning that he had prepared slyly, as a surprise, a little "*déjeuner à la fourchette*," with which he intended to soften Mary's obduracy. We will not inquire *how* he had obtained the mushroom, the lemon, and the sundry other good things with which he was busily engaged in dressing a plump hen-pheasant, when he received the above unexpected summons. Monsieur Perrot's vanity was greater than either his gourmandise or his love; and, without hesitation, he determined to sacrifice to it the hen-pheasant: his first step was to run to the still-room; and having stolen a kiss from Mary, and received a box on the ear as a reward, he gave her two or three very brief but important hints for the coffee, which was to be made immediately; he then turned his attention to the hen-pheasant, sliced some bacon, cut up a ham, took possession of a whole basket of eggs, and flew about the kitchen with such surprising activity, and calling for so many things at once, that Mr. Alltripe left his dominion, and retired to his own room in high dudgeon.

Meanwhile the Squire, having sauntered through the stables with Reginald, and enlightened him with various comments upon the points and qualities of his favourite hunters, took out his watch, and exclaimed, "the time is up, my boy; let us go in and see what your precious Mounseer has got for us." As they entered the library, Monsieur opened the opposite door, and announced breakfast as quietly and composedly as if no unusual demand had been made upon his talents. The Squire led the way into the breakfast-room, and was scarcely more surprised than was Reginald himself at the viands that regaled his eyes on the table. In addition to the brown and white loaves, the rolls, and other varieties of bread, there smoked on one dish the delicate salmi of pheasant, on another the Squire's favourite dish of bacon, with poached eggs, and on a third, a most tempting *Omelette au Jambon*.

Marmaduke Shirley opened his eyes and mouth wide with astonishment, as Monsieur Perrot offered him, one after another, these delicacies, inquiring, with undisturbed gravity, if "Monsieur desired anything else? as there were other dishes ready below!"

"Other dishes! why, man, here's a breakfast for a Court of aldermen," said the Squire; and having ascertained that the things were as agreeable to the taste as to the eye, and that the coffee was more clear and high flavoured than he had ever tasted before, he seized his nephew's hand, saying, "Reginald, my boy, I give in; your Master Perrot's a trump, and no man shall ever speak a word against him in this house! A rare fellow!" Here he took another turn at the omelette; "hang me if he shan't have a day's sport;" and the Squire, chuckling at the idea that had suddenly crossed

him, rang the bell violently: "Tell Repton, said he to the servant who entered, "to saddle 'Rattling Bess' for Monsieur Perrot, and to take her to the cover-side with the other horses, at ten."

"She kicks a bit at starting," he added to Reginald; "but she's as safe as a mill; and though she rushes now and then at the fence, she always gets through or over 'em."

Now it was poor Perrot's turn to be astonished: to do him justice, he was neither a bad horseman (as a courier) nor a coward; but he had never been out with hounds, and the enumeration of "Rattling Bess's" qualities did not sound very attractive to his ear; he began gently to make excuses, and to decline the proposed favour: he had not the "proper dress;" "he had much to do for Monsieur's wardrobe at home;" but it was all to no purpose, the Squire was determined; Repton's coat and breeches would fit him, and go he must.

With a rueful look at his master, Perrot slunk off, cursing in his heart the salmi and the omelette, which had procured him this undesired favour; but he was ordered to lose no time in preparing himself, so he first endeavoured to get into Mr. Ripton's clothes; that proved impossible, as Mr. R. had been a racing jockey, and was a feather-weight, with legs like nut-crackers; having no time for deliberation, Monsieur Perrot drew from his valise the courier-suit which he had worn in France; and, to the surprise of the whole party assembled at the door, he appeared clad in a blue coat, turned up with yellow, a cornered hat, and enormous boots, half a foot higher than his knees: he was ordered to jump up behind the Squire's carriage, and away they went to the cover-side, amid the ill-suppressed titter of the grooms and footmen, and the loud laughter of the maids, whose malicious faces, not excepting that of Mary, were at the open windows below.

When they reached the place appointed for "the meet," and proceeded to mount the impatient horses awaiting them, Perrot eyed with no agreeable anticipation the long ears of Rattling Bess laid back, and the restless wag of her rat-tail, and he ventured one more attempt at an escape. "Really, sir," said he to the Squire, "I never hunted, and I don't think I can manage that animal; she looks very savage."

"Never mind her, Monsieur Perrot," said the Squire, enjoying the poor valet's ill-dissembled uneasiness. "She knows her business here as well as any whipper-in or huntsman; only let her go her own way, and you'll never be far from the brush."

"Very well," muttered Perrot; "I hope she knows her business; I know mine, and that is to keep on her back, which I'll do as well as I can."

The eyes of the whole field were upon this strangely attired figure, and as soon as he got into the saddle, "Rattling Bess" began to kick and plunge violently; we have said that he was not in some respects a bad horseman, and although in this, her first prank, he lost one of his stirrups, and his cornered hat fell off, he contrived to keep both his seat and his temper; while the hounds were drawing the cover, one of the Squire's grooms restored the hat, and

gave him a string wherewith to fasten it, an operation which he had scarcely concluded, when the inspiring shouts of "Tally-ho," "Gone away," "Forward," rang on his ears. "Rattling Bess" seemed to understand the sounds as well as ever alderman knew a dinner-bell; and away she went at full gallop, convincing Monsieur Perrot, after an ineffectual struggle of a few minutes on his part, that both the speed and direction of her course were matters over which he could not exercise the smallest influence.

On they flew, over meadow and stile, ditch and hedge, nothing seemed to check Rattling Bess; and while all the field were in astonished admiration at the reckless riding of the strange courier, that worthy was catching his breath and muttering through his teeth "Diable d'animal, she have a mouth so hard, like one of Mr. Alltripe's bif-steak—she know her business—and a sacré business it is—holà there! mind yourself!" he shouted at the top of his voice, to a horseman whose horse had fallen in brushing through a thick hedge, and was struggling to rise on the other side just as Rattling Bess followed at tremendous speed over the same place; lighting upon the hind-quarters of her hapless predecessor, and scraping all the skin off his loins, she knocked the rider head over heels into the ploughed field where his face was buried a foot deep in dirty mould; by a powerful effort she kept herself from falling, and went gallantly over the field; Perrot still muttering, as he tugged at the insensible mouth, "She know her business, she kill dat poor devil in the dirt, she kill herself and me too."

A few minutes later, the hounds, having overrun the scent, came to a check, and were gathered by the huntsman into a green lane, whence they were about to "try back" as Rattling Bess came up at unabated speed. "Hold hard there, hold hard!" shouted at once the huntsman, the whips, and the few sportsmen who were up with the hounds. "Where the devil are you going, man?" "The fox is viewed back." "Hallo!—you're riding into the middle of the pack." These and similar cries scarcely had time to reach the ears of Perrot, ere "Rattling Bess" sprang over the hedge into the green lane, and coming down among the unfortunate dogs, split the head of one, broke the back of another, and laming two or three more, carried her rider over the opposite fence, who still panting for breath, with his teeth set, muttered, "She know her business, sacré animal."

After crossing two more fields, she cleared a hedge so thick that he could not see what was on the other side; but he heard a tremendous crash, and was only conscious of being hurled with violence to the ground; slowly recovering his senses, he saw Rattling Bess lying a few yards from him, bleeding profusely; and his own ears were saluted by the following compassionate inquiry from the lips of a gardener, who was standing over him, spade in hand: "D—n your stupid outlandish head, what be you a doin' here!"

The half-stunned courier, pointing to Rattling Bess, replied: "She know her business."

The gardener, though enraged at the entire demolition of his melon-bed, and of sundry forced vegetables under glass, was not an ill-

tempered fellow in the main; and seeing that the horse was half killed, and the rider, a foreigner, much bruised, he assisted poor Perrot to rise, and having gathered from him, that he was in the service of rich Squire Shirley, rendered all the aid in his power to him and to Rattling Bess, who had received some very severe cuts from the glass.

When the events of the day came to be talked over at the Hall, and it proved that it was the Squire himself whom Perrot had so unceremoniously ridden over,—that the huntsman would expect some twenty guineas for the hounds, killed or maimed,—that the gardener would probably present a similar, or a larger account for a broken melon-bed and shattered glass,—and that Rattling Bess was lame for the season, the Squire did not encourage much conversation on the day's sport; the only remark that he was heard to make, being "What a fool I was to put a frog-eating Frenchman on an English hunter!"

Monsieur Perrot remained in his room for three or four days, not caring that Mary should see his visage while it was adorned with a black eye and an inflamed nose.

Soon after this eventful chase, Reginald obtained his Uncle's leave to obey his father's wishes by visiting Paris for a few months; his stay there was shortened by a letter which he received from his sister Lucy, announcing to him his mother's illness, on the receipt of which he wrote a few hurried lines of explanation to his Uncle, and sailed by the first ship for Philadelphia, accompanied by the faithful Perrot, and by a large rough dog of the breed of the old Irish wolf-hound, given to him by the Squire.

On arriving, he found his mother better than he had expected; and, as he kissed off the tears of joy which Lucy shed on his return, he whispered to her his belief that she had a little exaggerated their mother's illness, in order to recall him. After a short time, Ethelston also returned, and joined the happy circle assembled at Colonel Brandon's.

It was now the spring of 1797, between which time and that mentioned as the date of our opening chapter, a period of nearly two years nothing worthy of peculiar record occurred; Reginald kept up a faithful correspondence with his kind uncle, whose letters showed how deeply he felt his nephew's absence. Whether Monsieur Perrot interchanged letters with Mary, or consoled himself with the damsels on the banks of the Ohio, the following pages may show. His master made several hunting excursions, on which he was always accompanied by Baptiste, a sturdy backwoodsman, who was more deeply attached to Reginald than to any other being on earth; and Ethelston had, as we have before explained, undertaken the whole charge of his guardian's vessels, with one of the largest of which he was, at the commencement of our tale, absent in the West India Islands.

CHAPTER V.

An adventure in the woods.—Reginald Brandon makes the acquaintance of an Indian chief.

It was a bright morning in April; the robins was beginning his early song, the wood-pecker darted his beak against the rough bark, and the

squirrel hopped merrily from bough to bough among the gigantic trees of the forest, as two hunters followed a winding path which led to a ferry across the Muskingum river.

One was a powerful, athletic young man, with a countenance strikingly handsome, and embrowned by exercise and exposure; his dress was a hunting shirt, and leggings of deer-skin; his curling brown locks escaped from under a cap of wolf-skin; and his mocassins, firmly secured round the ankle, were made from the tough hide of a bear; he carried in his hand a short rifle of heavy calibre and an ornamented *souteau-de-chasse* hung at his belt. His companion lower in stature, but broad, sinewy, and weather-beaten, seemed to be some fifteen or twenty years the elder; his dress was of the same material, but more soiled and worn; his rifle was longer and heavier; and his whole appearance that of a man to whom all inclemencies of season were indifferent, all the dangers and hardships of a western hunter's life familiar; but the most remarkable part of his equipment was an enormous axe, the handle studded with nails, and the head firmly riveted with iron hoops.

"Well Master Reginald" said the latter; "we must hope to find old Michael and his ferry-boat at the Passage des Rochers, for the river is much swollen, and we might not easily swim it with dry powder."

"What reason have you to doubt old Michael's being found at his post?" said Reginald; "we have often crossed there, and have seldom found him absent."

"True, master; but he has of late become very lazy; and he prefers sitting by his fire, and exchanging a bottle of fire-water with a strolling Indian for half a dozen good skins, to tugging a great flat-bottomed boat across the Muskingum during the March floods."

"Baptiste," said the oung man, "it grieves me to see the reckless avidity with which spirits are sought by the Indians; and the violence, outrage, and misery which are the general consequence of their dram-drinking."

"Why you see, there is something very good in a cup of West Ingy rum;" here Baptiste's hard features were twisted into a grin irresistably comic, and he proceeded, "it warms the stomach and the heart; and the savages, when they once taste it, suck at a bottle by instinct, as natural as a six-weeks cub at his dam: I often wonder, Master Reginald, why you spoil that fine *eau de vie* which little Perrot puts into your hunting flask, by mixing with it a quantity of water! In my last trip to the mountains, where I was first guide and turpret,* they gave me a taste now and then, and I never found it do me harm; but the nature of an Indian is different, you know."

"Well, Baptiste," said Reginald, smiling at his follower's defence of his favourite beverage; "I will say, that I never knew you to take more than you could carry; but your head is as strong as your back, and you sometimes prove the strength of both."

The conversation was suddenly interrupted by the report of Reginald's rifle, and a grey squirrel fell from the top of a hickory, where he

was feasting in fancied security. Baptiste took up the little animal, and having examined it attentively, shook his head gravely, saying, "Master Reginald, there is not a quicker eye, nor a truer hand in the Territory, but—"

As he hesitated to finish the sentence, Reginald added laughing, "but—but—I am an obstinate fellow, because I will not exchange my favourite German rifle, with its heavy bullet, for a long Virginia barrel, with a ball like a pea; is it not so, Baptiste?"

The guide's natural good-humour struggled with prejudices which, on this subject, had been more than once wounded by his young companion, as he replied, "Why, Master Reginald, the deer, whose saddle is on my shoulder, found my pea hard enough to swallow, and look here, at this poor little vermint you have just killed,—there is a hole in his neck big enough to let the life out of a grisly bear; you have hit him nearly an inch farther back than I taught you to aim before you went across the great water, and learnt all kinds of British and German notions?"

Reginald smiled at the hunter's characteristic reproof, and replied in a tone of kindness, "Well, Baptiste, all that I do know of tracking a deer, or lining a bee, or of bringing down one of these little vermint, I learned first from you; and if I am a promising pupil, the credit is due to Baptiste, the best hunter in forest or prairie!"

A glow of pleasure passed over the guide's sunburnt countenance; and grasping in his hard and horny fingers his young master's hand, he said, "Thank'ee, Master Reginald; and as for me, though I'm only a poor 'Coureur des bois,' I a'n't feared to back my pupil against any man that walks, from Dan Boone, of Kentucky, to Bloody-hand, the great war-chief of the Cayugas."

As he spoke, they came in sight of the river, and the blue smoke curling up among the trees, showed our travellers that they had not missed their path to Michael's log-house and ferry. "What have we here?" exclaimed Baptiste, catching his companion by the arm; "'tis even as I told you: the old rogue is smoking his pipe over a glass of brandy in his kitchen corner; and there is a wild-looking Indian pulling himself across with three horses in that crazy battean, almost as old and useless as its owner!"

"He will scarcely reach the opposite bank," said Reginald; "the river is muddy and swollen with melted snow, and his horses seem disposed to be unquiet passengers."

They had now approached near enough to enable them to distinguish the features of the Indian in the boat; the guide scanned them with evident surprise and interest, the result of which was, a noise that broke from him, something between a grunt and a whistle, as he muttered, "What can have brought him here?"

"Do you know that fine-looking fellow, then?" inquired Reginald.

"Know him, Master Reginald!—does 'Wolf' know Miss Lucy?—does a bear know a beech-tree?—I should know him among a thousand Red-skins, though he were twice as well disguised. *Tête-bleu*, master, look at those wild brutes how they struggle; he and they will taste Muskingum water before long."

* "*Anglic*" Interpreter."

* "*Coureur des bois*," an appellation often given to the Canadian and half-breed woodsman.

While he was speaking one of the horses reared, another kicked furiously, the shallow flat boat was upset, and both they and the Indian fell headlong into the river; they had been secured together by a "laryette" or thong of hide, which unfortunately came athwart the Indian's shoulder, and thus he was held below the water, while the struggles of the frightened animals rendered it impossible for him to extricate himself. "He is entangled in the laryette," said the guide; "nothing can save him," he added in a grave and sadder tone. "'Tis a noble youth, and I would have wished him a braver death! What are you doing, Master Reginald!—are you mad? No man can swim in that torrent. For your father's sake—"

But his entreaties and attempts to restrain his impetuous companion were fruitless, for Reginald had already thrown on the ground his leathern hunting shirt, his rifle, and ammunition; and shaking off the grasp of the guide as if the latter had been a child, he plunged into the river, and swam to the spot where the feebler struggles of the horses showed that they were now almost at the mercy of the current. When he reached them, Reginald dived below the nearest, and dividing the laryette with two or three successful strokes of his knife, brought the exhausted Indian to the surface; for a moment, he feared that he had come too late; but on inhaling a breath of air, the Redskin seemed to regain both consciousness and strength, and was able in his turn to assist Reginald, who had received, when under water, a blow on the head from the horse's hoof, the blood flowing fast from the wound; short but expressive was the greeting exchanged as they struck out for the bank which one of the horses had already gained; another was bruised, battered, and tossed about among some shelving rocks lower down the river; and the third was fast hurried towards the same dangerous spot, when the Indian, uttering a shrill cry, turned and swam again towards this, his favourite horse, and by a great exertion of skill and strength, brought it to a part of the river where the current was less rapid, and thence led it safely ashore.

These events had passed in less time than their narration has occupied, and the whole biped and quadruped party now stood drenched and dripping on the bank. The two young men gazed at each other in silence, with looks of mingled interest and admiration; indeed, if a sculptor had desired to place together two different specimens of youthful manhood, in which symmetry and strength were to be gracefully united, he could scarcely have selected two finer models: in height they might be about equal; and though the frame and muscular proportions of Reginald were more powerful, there was a roundness and compact knitting of the joints, and a stony suppleness in the limbs of his new acquaintance, such as he thought he had never seen equalled in statuary or in life. The Indian's gaze was so fixed and piercing, that Reginald's eye wandered more than once from his countenance to the belt, where his war-club was still suspended by a thong, the scalp-knife in its sheath, and near it a scalp, evidently that of a white man, and bearing the appearance of having been recently taken.

With a slight shudder of disgust, he raised

his eyes again to the chiselled features of the noble-looking being before him, and felt assured that though they might be those of a savage warrior, they could not be those of a lurking assassin. The Indian now moved a step forward, and taking Reginald's hand, placed it upon his own heart, saying distinctly in English, "My brother!"

Reginald understood and appreciated this simple expression of gratitude and friendship; he imitated his new friend's action, and evinced, both by his looks and the kindly tones of his voice, the interest which, to his own surprise, the Indian had awakened in his breast.

At this juncture they were joined by the guide, who had paddled himself across in a canoe that he found at the ferry, which was two hundred yards above the spot where they now stood. At his approach, the young Indian resumed his silent attitude of repose; while apparently unconscious of his presence, Baptiste poured upon his favourite a mingled torrent of reproofs and congratulations.

"Why, Master Reginald, did the mad spirit possess you to jump into the Muskingum, and dive like an otter, where the water was swift and dark as the Niagara rapids! Pardie, though, it was bravely done! another minute, and our Redskin friend would have been in the hunting-ground of his forefathers. Give me your hand, master; I love you better than ever! I had a mind to take a duck myself after ye; but thought, if bad luck came, I might serve ye better with the canoe." While rapidly uttering these broken sentences, he handed to Reginald the hunting-shirt, rifle, and other things, which he had brought over in the canoe, and wrung the water out of his cap, being all the time in a state of ill-dissembled excitement. This done, he turned to the young Indian, who was standing aside, silent and motionless. The guide scanned his features with a searching look, and then muttered audibly, "I knew it must be he."

A gleam shot from the dark eye of the Indian, proving that he heard and understood the phrase, but not a word escaped his lips.

Reginald, unable to repress his curiosity, exclaimed, "Must be who, Baptiste? Who is my Indian friend—my brother?"

A lurking smile played round the mouth of the guide, as he said in a low tone to the Indian, "Does the paint on my brother's face tell a tale? is his path in the night? must his name dwell between shut lips?"

To this last question the Indian, moving forward with that peculiar grace and innate dignity which characterized all his movements, replied, "The War-Eagle hides his name from none: his cry is heard from far, and his path is strait: a dog's scalp is at his belt!" Here he paused a moment; and added, in a softened tone, "But the bad Spirit prevailed; the waters were too strong for him; the swimming-warrior's knife came; and again the War-Eagle saw the light."

"And found a brother—is it not so?" added Reginald.

"It is so!" replied the Indian: and there was a depth of pathos in the tone of his voice as he spoke, which convinced Reginald that those words came from the heart.

"There were three horses with you in the bac," said the guide: "two are under yonder trees;—where is the third?"

"Dead, among those rocks below the rapids," answered War-Eagle, quietly. "He was a fool, and was taken from a fool, and both are now together;" as he spoke he pointed scornfully to the scalp which hung at his belt.

Reginald and Baptiste interchanged looks of uneasy curiosity, and then directing their eyes towards the distant spot indicated by the Indian, they distinguished the battered carcass of the animal, partly hid by the water, and partly resting against the rock, which prevented it from floating down with the current.

The party now turned towards the horses among the trees; which, after enjoying themselves by rolling in the grass, were feeding, apparently unconscious of their double misdemeanour in having first upset the bac, and then nearly drowned their master by their struggles in the water. As Reginald and his two companions approached, an involuntary exclamation of admiration burst from him.

"Heavens, Baptiste! did you ever see so magnificent a creature as that with the laryette round his neck? And what a colour! it seems between chestnut and black! Look at his short, wild head, his broad forehead, his bold eye, and that long silky mane falling below his shoulder! Look, also, at his short back and legs! Why, he has the beauty of a barb joined to the strength of an English hunter!"

It may be well imagined that the greater portion of this might have been a soliloquy, as Baptiste understood but few, the Indian none, of the expressions which Reginald uttered with enthusiastic rapidity; both, however, understood enough to know that he was admiring the animal, and both judged that his admiration was not misplaced.

Our hero (for so we must denominate Reginald Brandon) approached to handle and caress the horse; but the latter, with erect ears and expanded nostrils, snorted an indignant refusal of these civilities, and trotted off, tossing high his mane as if in defiance of man's dominion. At this moment, the War-Eagle uttered a shrill, peculiar cry, when immediately the obedient horse came to his side, rubbing his head against his master's shoulder, and courting those carcases which he had so lately and so scornfully refused from Reginald.

While the docile and intelligent animal thus stood beside him, a sudden ray of light sparkled in the Indian's eye, as with rapid utterance, not unmingled with gesticulation, he said, "The War-Eagle's path was toward the evening sun; his tomahawk drank the Comanche's blood; the wild horse was swift, and strong, and fierce; the cunning man on the evening prairie said he was *Nekimi*,*—the Great Spirit's angry breath; but the War-Eagle's neck-bullet struck!"

At this part of the narrative, the guide, carried away by the enthusiasm of the scene described, ejaculated in the Delaware tongue, "That was bravely done!"

For a moment the young Indian paused; and then, with increased rapidity and vehemence, told in his own language how he had cap-

tured and subdued the horse; which faithful creature, seemingly anxious to bear witness to the truth of his master's tale, still sought and returned his caresses. The Indian, however, was not thereby deterred from the purpose which had already made his eye flash with pleasure. Taking the thong in his hand, and placing it in that of Reginald, he said, resuming the English tongue, "The War-Eagle gives *Nekimi* to his brother. The white warrior may hunt the mastoche,* he may overtake his enemies, he may fly from the prairie-fire when the wind is strong: *Nekimi* never tires!"

Reginald was so surprised at this unexpected offer, that he felt much embarrassed, and hesitated whether he ought not to decline the gift. Baptiste saw a cloud gathering on the Indian's brow, and said in a low voice to his master in French, "You must take the horse; a refusal would mortally offend him." Our hero accordingly accompanied his expression of thanks with every demonstration of satisfaction and affection. Again War-Eagle's face brightened with pleasure; but the effect upon *Nekimi* seemed to be very different, for he stoutly resisted his new master's attempts at approach or acquaintance, snorting and backing at every step made by Reginald in advance.

"The white warrior must learn to speak to *Nekimi*," said the Indian, quietly; and he again repeated the short, shrill cry before noticed. In vain our hero tried to imitate the sound; the horse's ears remained deaf to his voice, and it seemed as if his new acquisition could prove but of little service to him.

War-Eagle now took Reginald aside, and smeared his hands with some grease taken from a small bladder in his girdle, and on his extending them again towards the horse, much of the fear, and dislike evinced by the latter disappeared. As soon as the animal would permit Reginald to touch it, the Indian desired him to hold its nostril firmly in his hand, and placing his face by the horse's head, to look up steadfastly into its eye for several minutes, speaking low at intervals to accustom it to his voice; he assured him that in a few days *Nekimi* would through this treatment become docile and obedient.

CHAPTER VI.

Reginald and Baptiste pay a visit to War-eagle.—An attempt at treachery meets with summary punishment.

THE other horse being now secured, the party prepared to resume their journey; and as it appeared after a few words whispered between the Indian and the guide, that their routes were in the same direction, they struck into the forest, Baptiste leading, followed by Reginald, and War-Eagle bringing up the rear with the two horses.

After walking a few minutes in silence, "Baptiste," said our hero in French, "what was the story told about the horse? I understood little of what he said in English, and none of what he spoke in his own tongue."

* In the Delaware language this expression seems applicable to any large swift animal, as it is given to the elk the buffalo, &c.

* *Nekimi* is the Delaware for "Thunder."

"He told us, Master Reginald, that he was out on a war-party against the Camanchees, a wild tribe of Indians in the South-west; they steal horses from the Mexicans, and exchange them with the *Aricaras*, *Kioways*, *Pawnees*, and other Missouri Indians."

"Well, Baptiste, how did he take this swift horse with his 'neck-bullet,' as he called it?"

"That, Master Reginald, is the most difficult shot in the prairie; and I have known few Redskins up to it. The western hunters call it 'creasing':—a ball must be shot just on the upper edge of the spine where it enters the horse's neck; if it is exactly done, the horse falls immediately, and is secured, then the wound is afterwards healed; but, if the ball strikes an inch lower, the spine is missed, or the horse is killed. Few Redskins can do it," muttered the guide, "and the 'doctor' here," shaking his long rifle, "has failed more than once; but War-Eagle has said it, and there are no lies in his mouth."

"Tell me, Baptiste," said Reginald, earnestly; "tell me something about my brother's history, his race, and exploits."

"Afterwards, my young master. I know not that he understands us now; but these Indians are curious critters in hearing; I believe if you spoke in that strange Dutch lingo which you learnt across the water, the Redskins would know how to answer you—stay," he added, putting his rifle to his shoulder, "here is work for the doctor."

Reginald looked in the direction of the piece, but saw nothing; and the guide, while taking his aim, still muttered to himself, "the pills are very small, but they work somewhat sharp." Pausing a moment, he drew the trigger; and a sudden bound from under a brake, at fifty yards distance, was the last death-spring of the unlucky deer whose lair had not escaped the hunter's practised eye.

"Bravely shot," shouted Reginald; "what says War-Eagle?"

"Good," replied the Indian.

"Nay," said Baptiste; "there was not much in the shot; but your French waly-de-sham might have walked past those bushes without noting the twinkle of that crittur's eye. Our Redskin friend saw it plain enough I warrant you," he added, with an inquiring look.

"War-Eagle's path is not on the deer track," said the young chief, with a stern gravity.

In a very few minutes an additional load of venison was across the sturdy shoulders of the guide, and the party resumed their march in silence.

They had not proceeded far, when the Indian halted, saying, "War-Eagle's camp is near; will my white brother eat and smoke!—the sun is high, he can then return to his great wig-wam."

Reginald, who was anxious to see more of his new friend, and in whom the morning's exercise had awakened a strong relish for a slice of broiled venison, assented at once, and desired him to lead the way.

As he was still followed by the two horses, War-Eagle was somewhat in advance of his companions, and Baptiste whispered in French, "Beware, Master Reginald—you may fall into a trap."

"For shame," said the latter, colouring with indignation; "can you suspect treachery in him? Did you not yourself say he could not lie?"

"Your reproof is undeserved," said the cool and wary hunter; "War-Eagle may not be alone, there may be turkey-buzzards with him."

"If there be a score of vultures," said Reginald, "I will follow him without fear—he would not lead us into harm."

"Perhaps you are right," was the guide's answer; and again the party resumed their march in silence.

They soon arrived at a place where the forest was less densely wooded; some of the larger trees appeared to have been overthrown by a hurricane, and some of the lesser to have fallen by the axe. Nekimi trotted forward, as if making for a spot that he recognised, and the Indian recalled him with the same cry that he had before used, adding, however, another, and a shriller sound.

The guide shook his head, and muttered something inaudibly between his teeth, loosening at the same time the huge axe in his belt, and throwing his long rifle over his arm, ready for immediate use.

These preparations did not escape the observation of Reginald; and although he said nothing, he felt more uneasy than he cared to own; for it struck him that if the guide, who seemed to have so high an opinion of War-Eagle, was apprehensive of treachery or of some unforeseen danger, there was less ground for his own confidence.

Meantime the Indian walked composedly forward until he reached the camp,*—a pretty spot, sheltered on the windward side by a laurel thicket, and on the other commanding a view of the open glade, and of a small stream winding its silent course towards the river which our party had so lately left.

On a grassy plot, between two venerable trees, the embers of a smouldering fire sent up the thin blue vapour which rises from the burning of green wood, several logs of which were still piled for fuel; while sundry bones and feathers, scattered at no great distance, gave sufficient evidence of recent feasting.

War-Eagle glanced hastily around his camp; and leaving Nekimi to feed at liberty, secured the less tractable horse; while he was thus employed, the guide whispered in a low voice, "There are three or four Indians here! I trace their marks on the grass, and I know it by this fire; it is a war party—there are no squaws here; Master Reginald, keep your ears and eyes open, but show no distrust; if he offers a pipe, all may yet be right."

Although the guide said this so distinctly that Reginald heard every syllable, he was to all appearance busily engaged in throwing some dry sticks on the fire, and easing himself of the skins and the venison with which he was loaded. The Indian now took from a hollow in one of the old trees before-mentioned, a pipe, the bowl of which was of red sandstone, and the

* Among the western hunters any resting-place for the night, or even where a fire has been made for a mid-day halt, though it may be by one individual, is commonly called "a camp." This must be borne in mind through out the following tale.

stick painted and ornamented with stained porcupine quills; he also drew out a leather bag of *Kinne-kineck*,* and having filled and lighted his pipe, seated himself at a short distance from the fire, and gravely invited Reginald to sit on his right, and the guide on his left. As soon as they were seated, War-Eagle inhaled a large volume of smoke; and looking reverently up to the sky, sent forth a long whiff, as an offering to the Great Spirit; then simply saying, "My brother is welcome," he passed the pipe to Reginald, and afterwards to Baptiste.

For some time they smoked in silence: not a sound was heard but the crackling of the wood on the fire, and the occasional chirrup of a robin in the neighbouring bushes; this silent system not suiting Reginald's ardent temperament, he abruptly addressed the Indian as follows:

"Has my brother come far from his people?"

A cloud gathered on the chief's brow, and the guide thought that a storm of wrath would be excited by this unlucky question; but the Indian looking steadily upon the frank open countenance of the speaker, replied in a voice rather melancholy than fierce, "War-Eagle has few people: the bones of his fathers are not far!"

Our hero anxious to dismiss a subject which seemed painful to his new friend, turned the conversation to his equipment, and observed, "My brother walks abroad without fear; he is almost without arms."

The Indian carelessly resting his hand upon his war-club, said (speaking rather to himself than to his companions), "It has tasted blood: ask the Dahcotahs!"

"The Dahcotahs are dogs," said the guide angrily. "Their skins are red, but their hearts are white!"

War-Eagle turning upon him a penetrating look, continued, "Grande-Hache is a warrior; he has smoked, has feasted, has fought among the *Lenape*;[†] he has struck more than one Dahcotah chief. But the Grande-Hache cannot rest: the scalp of his mother hangs in the lodge of the *Assiniboins*; † her spirit is inquiet in the dark hunting-ground."

The guide made no reply, but the forced compression of his lips, and the muscular contraction that passed over his sinewy frame, showed how deeply he cherished that vengeance which the Indian's word awakened.

"This is, then," said our hero to himself, "the cause of that fierce unextinguishable hate which Baptiste has always borne to these Sioux; I cannot wonder at it." Reginald continued, however, his conversation respecting his new friend's equipment, in the same tone: "My brother's war-club is strong, and that iron spike in its head is sharp; but the rifle kills from far, and the white men are not all friends to him."

* *Kinne-kineck* is a mixture made by the Indians from the inner bark of the willow pounded small, tobacco, and the dried leaves of the sumach: the flavour of this composition is by no means disagreeable; the word itself is Delaware, but the mixture is in common use among many tribes.

† The Delawares call themselves *Lenni-Lenape*,—"the ancient or original people."

‡ *Assiniboins*—the "stone heaters"—a powerful and warlike branch of the great Dahcotah or Sioux nation.

"War-Eagle has ears and eyes; he can see snakes in the grass," was the calm reply.

"Nay, but my brother is careless," said Reginald laughing; "Grande-Hache, as you call him, and I are two men, both strong and armed with rifles: if we were met his brothers, the War-Eagle would be in danger."

"The bad Spirit made the thick water and the horses too strong for War-Eagle," said the latter, referring to the morning's accident, "but he could not be hurt by his brother's rifle."

"And why so?" demanded Reginald.

"Because," said the Indian, "the white warrior has smoked, has taken his brother's gift, and the Great Spirit has written on his face that he cannot speak lies."

"You are right, my brave friend," said Reginald, (not a little gratified by the untasted compliment;) "but if you fall in with white men who carry rifles, and who do speak lies—how fares it with you then?"

"War-Eagle is always ready" said he, in the same unmoved tone; "the Grande-Hache is a great warrior—my brother will take many scalps; yet if their tongues were forked—if their hearts were bad—both would die where they now sit—they have neither ears nor eyes—but the *Lenape* is a chief, they are as safe here as in the great white village."

Though inwardly nettled at this taunt, which he felt to be not altogether undeserved, the guide took no other notice of it than to strain to the utmost those organs of sight and hearing which the Redskin had held so cheap, but in vain: the forest around them seemed wrapt in solitude and silence; the eyes of Reginald, however, served him better on this occasion. "By heaven, the Indian speaks truth," said he; "I see them plainly—one, two, three! and we, Baptiste, are at their mercy."

This he spoke in French, and the guide answered in the same language: "Do you see Indians, Master Reginald, where I can see naught but trees, and logs, and grass; if it is so—I am an owl, and no hunter!"

"Glance your eye," said our hero, calmly, to yon old fallen log, that lies fifty or sixty yards to your right, there are three small parallel lines visible there,—they are three gun-barrels; the sun shone on them a minute since, and their muzzles are directed full upon us."

"It is true; your eyes are younger than mine, I suppose," said the guide, apparently more disconcerted at that circumstance than at the imminent peril of their situation. He added, in a low, determined tone, "but they must shoot very true, if they wish to prevent me from taking this deep and deceitful villain with me on the long journey."

During the whole of this conversation, War-Eagle sat in unmoved silence, occasionally puffing out a whiff from the fragrant herb in his pipe. Reginald met the unexpected danger with the straightforward, daring courage which was the characteristic of his mind; Baptiste with the cool resolution which was the result of a life of perils, stratagems, and eescapes.

"War-Eagle," said the former, "you speak true; Grand-Hache and I have shut our eyes and ears; but they are now open; I see your warriors."

The Indian turned his searching eye full upon

the speaker; he met a look bold, open, fearless as his own. "Where can my white brother see warriors?" he inquired.

"Their guns are across yonder log," said Reginald; "and their muzzles are pointed here."

"It is so," said War-Eagle; "the red men are on the war-path; they seek blood; is my white brother not afraid?"

"War-Eagle is a chief," replied the young man; "he cannot lie,—he has said that his white brother is as safe as in the wigwam of his father!"

Again the Indian bent a scrutinizing look upon the countenance of the speaker, and again met the same smile of fearless confidence. With more emotion than he had yet shown, he said, "The Great Spirit has given to my white brother the big heart of a Lenape!"

He now made a signal to his ambuscade to come forth, on which they started up from behind the large fallen tree which had hitherto screened them, and advanced slowly towards the camp. They were three in number; two of them active looking men, of moderate stature, but of symmetrical proportions; the third a lad, apparently about seventeen years old; the faces of the two former were painted with black stripes, which gave them an appearance at once fierce and grotesque; they were lightly clad in hunting shirts, leggins, and moccasins, all of elk-skin, and each carried a tomahawk, scalp-knife, and the gun before mentioned; the young lad carried no other weapon but the gun; his hunting-shirt was fancifully ornamented with tassels of porcupine quills, and was fastened at the waist by a belt studded with party-coloured beads; his leggins were fringed, and his moccasins were also braided with the quills of the porcupine; in figure he was slight and tall; as he drew near, Reginald thought his countenance even more remarkable than that of War-Eagle; indeed its beauty would have been almost effeminate, had it not been for the raven blackness of the hair, and the piercing fire of the dark eyes. The three came forward in silence, the lad being rather in advance of the others, and stood before the War-Eagle.

He bade them in his own language to be seated, and smoke the pipe with the white men. They did so, with the exception of the lad, who not being yet a warrior, passed it untouched; and when it had gone round, War-Eagle harangued his party; as he narrated the events of the morning, Reginald was struck by the deep and flexible modulation of his voice; and although he did not understand a word of the language, fancied that he knew when the chief related his immersion and subsequent preservation by the white man's knife.

At this portion of the tale, the Indian youth made no attempt to conceal his emotion; his glistening eyes were fixed upon the speaker, and every feature of his intelligent countenance beamed with affectionate interest: as War-Eagle described his being struck under water, stunned by a blow from a horse's foot, and that the thick water covered him, a hurried exclamation escaped from the boy's lips; and when his chief related how the white warrior had dived, had cut the cord in which he was entangled, and had brought him again to the air and to life, the youth, no longer able to control his

feelings, threw himself into Reginald's arms, exclaiming in good English,

"The Great Spirit reward the white warrior: he has given me back my chief—my brother!"

Our hero was no less astonished than was the guide, at such uncontrolled emotion in a youth of a nation so early taught to conceal their feelings; nor were they less surprised at the clearness and purity of accent with which he expressed himself in English.

"I only did, my boy," said Reginald, kindly, "what you would have done had you been in my place."

"You are a great warrior," said the youth, running his eye over the powerful frame beside him: "Wingenund would have gone into the strong river, and would have died with the War-Eagle."

"Is Wingenund, then, your name, my brave boy?"

"It was my forefather's name," said the youth, proudly. "I have yet no name: but War-Eagle says I may have one soon, and I will have no other."

"I feel sure you well deserve your forefather's name," said Reginald. "What does it mean in my language?"

"It means 'The Beloved!'"

"The youth speaks true," murmured the guide (who, though busily engaged in rounding off a bullet with his knife, lost not a word or gesture that passed), "he speaks only truth; I knew his forefather well: a braver and better heart never dwelt among the Lenape."

The boy looked gratefully at the weather-beaten hunter; and as he cast his eyes down in silence, it would have been difficult to say whether pleasure, pride, or pain, predominated in their expression.

"Tell me," resumed Reginald, "how come you to speak English like a white man?"

"The good father and Olitipa taught me."

Reginald looked at the guide for an explanation; that worthy personage shook his head, saying, "The boy talks riddles; but they are not hard to guess. The good-father must be some missionary, or priest; and Olitipa would in their tongue signify 'pretty prairie-fowl'; so it is probably the name of a Delaware woman—perhaps his sister."

"*Keholla la*—so it is," said the boy: "Olitipa is in your tongue 'pretty prairie-bird,' and she is my sister."

"Where is Prairie-bird?" inquired Reginald, amused by the youth's naiveté.

"Far, far away, beyond the great river! But we will go back soon;—shall we not?" he inquired, looking up timidly at War-Eagle.

"*Pechu lenitti*," answered the chief; and leaning towards the youth, he added some words in a whisper, which made him start up to obey the orders he had received.

Reginald was not long left in ignorance of their nature, as in a few minutes the active lad had refreshed the fire, and was busy in broiling some venison steaks, which, after the exercise of the morning, sent up a steam far from unpleasant to the senses of any of those present.

"Master Reginald," said the guide, "that

silly parroquet of yours, Gustave Perrot, is always telling fine stories of what he has seen in Europe, and talking of the scent of roses, and the sweet sounds of music, till the girls in the clearings think he's a book-author and a poet; did you ever smell any scent, or hear any music, sweeter than comes from the hissing and frizzling of those slices of fat venison after a six hours' hunt in the woods?"

"Perhaps not," said Reginald, laughing; "but we are only hunters, and Monsieur Perrot is a man of taste."

"Whom have we here?" grumbled the guide, as an Indian appeared in the distance. "Friend War-Eagle, is this another of your band?"

"He is," replied the chief: "all are now here."

The new-comer was a powerful, athletic-looking man; his face was painted one half black, and the other half striped with bars of red; the sleeves of his hunting-shirt were so short and loose, that his naked arms were visible, one of which was tattooed in the form of a lizard, and on the other he wore an armlet of brass; his leggins and mocassins were soiled and torn, and the perspiration streaming from his matted hair shewed that he had travelled both far and fast. He was, like the rest, equipped with rifle, tomahawk, and scalp-knife; his countenance, as far as it could be distinguished through its disguise of paint, was expressive of cunning and ferocity. Though probably much surprised at seeing two white men sitting thus amicably with his chief, he took little notice of them, or of the rest of the party; but without asking, or being asked, any questions, seated himself on the opposite side of the fire, lighted his pipe, and smoked.

"Master Reginald," said the guide, in French, "I do not like that fellow. I know not how he comes to be with our friend here, for he belongs to another tribe: I have seen him before."

Meantime, the industrious lad had broiled his venison steaks, and having gathered some broad leaves, which served on this occasion for plates, he brought the first slice to Reginald, the second to Baptiste, the next to War-Eagle, and so on, until he went through the party; after which, without tasting anything himself, he took his station close to his chief and his new friend. During the meal, the Indian last arrived talked much in a suppressed voice to the one next to him, and seemed studiously to avert his eyes from his chief and the two white men.

"Tahé," said War-Eagle, addressing him, "is there not *tassamanané** for the stranger? he is my brother, and his path has been long."

Tahé went to his "cache," a spot not many yards distant, and taking out two or three small cakes, brought them round behind his chief, and offered one to our hero, who was in the act of receiving it, when the miscreant, drawing the knife from his girdle, aimed a blow at the back of the unsuspecting Reginald.

Nothing could have saved him from instant death, had not the gallant boy thrown himself between the savage and his victim. The knife went through his arm; and so deadly was the

force by which it was guided, that it still descended, and inflicted a slight scratch on Reginald's shoulder.

War-Eagle sprang like a tiger from the ground, and with one blow of his tremendous war-club dashed the ruffian to the earth; then turning suddenly his angry glance upon the two other Indians, he asked if they had any part in Tahé's plot. Neither had stirred from his seat, and both declared they had known nothing of his intention. It was well for them that the chief believed them, for this act of vile treachery had aroused all the slumbering fire within him, and the veins started like blue cords upon his temples.

Reginald's first impulse, when he jumped upon his feet, was to hasten to the wounded youth, whose features were now lighted up by a smile of happiness. "Tell me, my brave generous boy, are you much hurt?"

"No," said he: "I should have been hurt if the War-Eagle's camp had been stained with the blood of his white brother."

The sturdy guide himself could not repress his admiration of this gallant boy's conduct, who now stood looking intently upon War-Eagle, his features animated by excitement and by pride, and the knife still fixed up to the very handle in his arm.

"War-Eagle," said Baptiste, "the Lenapé are men,—their boys are warriors: that dog is not a Lenapé," he added, pointing to the prostrate body of Tahé.

"*Tah-Delamattenos*,"* said the chief indignantly. The youth now moving a step forward, came before his chief with an air of modest dignity, and slowly drew the reeking knife from his arm, while a stream of blood gushed from the wound; not a muscle of his frame trembled, not a feature varied its expression, as he said in a voice of musical gentleness, "War-Eagle, will Wingenund allow his grandson now to bear his name?"

"*Wingenund*!" said War-Eagle, looking upon him with affectionate pride, "the chiefs at the Council-fire shall know that the blood of the well-beloved still flows in a young warrior's veins."

"My good friend," said the guide to the chief, "you have no time to lose, the lad will bleed to death!"

Reginald sprang forward, and closing as he best could the gaping wound, bound his handkerchief tightly over it.

There was, indeed, no time to be lost; for the blood had flowed more freely than his youthful frame could endure. A painful dizziness came over him; and murmuring almost inaudibly "The White Warrior is safe, and Wingenund is happy," he fell senseless into Reginald's arms.

* "*Tah-Delamattenos*."—"No, he is a Wyandot." This tribe occupied the region to the north of Ohio, and the north-west of Pennsylvania; they spoke a dialect of the Iroquois, and are better known by the name of Hurons; they sometimes hunted with the Delaware, by whom they were designated as above.

* *Tassamanané*: a kind of bread made by the Delawares for long journeys. It is made of maize, powdered very fine, and sweetened with maple sugar.

CHAPTER VII.

Containing some particulars of the history of the two Delaware and of Baptiste. The latter returns with Reginald to Mooshanne, the residence of Colonel Brandon.

"I FEAR he will die!" said Reginald in a tone of the deepest grief, as he stooped over the inanimate form of the wounded boy.

"Die!" said the War-Eagle, almost fiercely, "yes, he will die! but not by the bite of yonder serpent," pointing to the body of the Wyandot; "he will die when the Great Spirit orders it; but before he dies, the murderers of his father shall hear his war-whoop! His tomahawk shall be red in their blood; their scalps shall hang at his belt! *Aen* Wingenund may go to his ancient people in the happy hunting fields!"

"My brother," said Reginald earnestly, and still supporting the insensible frame of Wingenund, "do not lead this youth to shed the white man's blood! He cannot call back those who are gone! We have a book which the Great Spirit gave to our forefathers; it speaks His own words, and He tells us, 'Vengeance is mine;' and He also tells us that if we would please Him, we must forgive those who have injured us; His arrows are very sharp; His anger is fierce; His justice is sure. Leave Him to punish those bad men, and teach the 'well-beloved' to be the white man's friend."

For a minute the chief seemed buried in deep thought; then suddenly starting from his reverie, he spoke a few words in a low tone to one of his men, who instantly moved away, and disappeared in the forest.

War-Eagle then replied in a tone rather of melancholy than of reproof, "The Great Spirit never speaks to the red man in words: if He is angry, He thunders; if He is pleased, He sends rain and sunshine, to make the corn and fruits to grow, and sweet grass to fatten the deer; my brother says the Great Spirit has spoken plainly to the white man in words, and that those words are painted in a book. War-Eagle believes it, because my brother's tongue is not forked; but he would ask,—Did those white men, who came in the night like wolves to the couch of the fawn, who murdered the father, the kindred, the little sisters of Wingenund,—did those men hear the Great Spirit's words?"

"My brother," said Reginald, "there are among white men many wolves and serpents: men whose hands are bloody, and their tongue forked. The Great Spirit does not forbid to punish, or even to kill such men, in defence of ourselves, our wigwams, our children, or our friend; He is not angry with War-Eagle for striking down that Huron whose hand was raised to shed his brother's blood; but when the grass of many seasons has grown over the graves of those who were injured, then the Great Spirit commands man to let his anger sleep, to bury his hatchet, and to forgive."

"It may be so," said War-Eagle gravely, "the Good Father in the Western Hunting-ground has said the same; Olitipa, whose voice is like the mocking-bird, and who speaks only truth, she has spoken the same; but it is very dark, War-Eagle cannot see it."

"Who is the Prairie-bird?" inquired Reginald, whose curiosity had twice been excited by the mention of this extraordinary name.

Before the chief could reply, the Indian, whom he had sent, returned with a mess made from several leaves, herbs, and roots, which he had bruised and reduced to a kind of glutinous pulp; War-Eagle now took off the bandage from the youth's arm; after examining it carefully, and applying some of the above mixtures to both the orifices of the wound, he bound it again, more strongly and skilfully than before; then taking him in his arms, as if he had been a little child, he carried him down to the rivulet; and by dint of bathing his temples and rubbing forcibly his hands and feet, soon restored the suspended animation.

When he was recovered so far as to be able to speak, Reginald, sitting down by him, said a thousand kind things to him, such as were prompted by the gratitude of a generous heart.

While they were conversing, the guide drew near to the chief; and pointing to the body of the Wyandot, which still lay where he had fallen, said, "He is surely dead!"

"He is so," replied the other gravely, "when War-Eagle is angry he does not strike his enemy's forehead twice."

The guide now turned over the body; and seeing that the iron point of the war-club had entered just above the eyes, and had sunk deep into the brain, he knew that instant death must have ensued. The chief calling the two Indians, desired them to bury the body where it would be safe from wolves and buzzards. "But," he added sternly, "let not the spot be marked for his kindred: he died like a dog, and none should lament him."

As they turned away to execute these orders, the guide observed to the chief "that Huron has not been long with the War-Eagle."

"True,—but how does the Grand-Hâche know it?"

"His eye has been on him more than once; Grande-Hâche sees, but he can hold his tongue."

"Grande-Hâche is a warrior," replied the chief: "he has seen many things; he has talked with the wise men; does he know why yon Huron wished to kill the young white brave?"

"He does," said Grande-Hâche; but as he did not of himself state what he knew, it would have been contrary to the usages of Indian courtesy to question him farther.

Baptiste now diverting the conversation to another topic, said, "It is singular that War-Eagle, on a war-path far from his village, should have only strangers with him, excepting the youth who is wounded!"

"What means the Grand-Hâche?"

"He means," replied the guide, "that the other two, now gone to bury the Huron, are *Southern men*—they are not Lenapé."

"Grande-Hâche has ears and eyes open—how can he know that he speaks truth?" said the chief.

"Because he *has* eyes and ears," replied the guide. "Does War-Eagle think that Grande-Hâche has hunted twenty years among the red nations, and knows not yet the mocassin and

* Southern-men—in the Delaware language Cha-ou-no or Shawano—known to the Americans as "Shawnees." This powerful tribe were generally in alliance with the Lenapé, and inhabited the country on their western frontier. About the time of our tale, they were very numerous on the banks of the Muskingum and of the Wabash river.

"tongue of a Shawanon? I knew them at a glance," he added, with a shrewd smile, "as well as I knew the War-Eagle in the batteau, though both he and they have put on their faces the paint of the *Mengwee*."*

"Grande-Hâche speaks truth," replied the chief, dryly, without showing the surprise and annoyance that he felt at the penetration of the guide. "The men are Shawanons, they hunt with the Lenapé, beyond the great river—they are brothers."

So saying, he broke off the conversation, and turning towards Wingennud, saw that he was talking as earnestly and freely with Reginald as if they had been long intimate; while he contemplated this friendly intercourse with a smile of satisfaction, the guide felt himself called upon to remind his companion that the sun was getting low, that they had yet some miles to walk, and that the colonel would be anxious and impatient.

"True," said Reginald, springing up, "I must take leave of my brother, and of my young preserver; but we shall meet again; we will hunt together, and be friends."

"Let it be so," said the lad, with an ardour which he cared not to conceal; "and Wingennud will tell Prairie-Bird that the white warrior who drew War-Eagle from the deep water, will come to see her, and she will thank him."

While the boy was speaking, the chief turned away, and busied himself in fastening a thong-halter firmly to the head of Nekimi, which he again led to his new master.

Reginald now undid from his waist the silver buckled belt with the couteau-de-chasse which it supported, and buckling it round the youth, he said, "Wingennud must wear this, and must not forget his white friend."

The boy's eyes sparkled with pleasure, as he received this gift; but he was still too weak to stand, and he only murmured, in a low voice, "Wingennud will not forget."

The chief now taking the guide aside, said to him, in his own language, "How is my white brother called?"

"I call him 'Master Reginald.'"†

After one or two ludicrous attempts at an imitation, War-Eagle shook his head, saying, "It is not good—may his Lenape friend call him 'Netis.'"

As soon as Reginald was informed of what had passed, and of the meaning of his new name, he accepted it with pleasure, and Wingennud repeated it again and again as our hero bid him farewell.

War-Eagle insisted upon accompanying him, and leading Nekimi through the forest, until they reached the broad wheel track which passed Colonel Brandon's house, and thence led through other clearings to the village of Marietta. As they went along, Reginald desired Baptiste in a whisper to talk with the chief, and endeavoured to draw from him, what article of dress, ornament, or use, he would most value,

* *Mengwee*, or *Mingoes*.—the Delaware name for those Indians who resided chiefly in the northern States of the Union, and who are better known as the "Iroquois."

† "Master Reginald," might well puzzle the chief, as there is no letter R in the Delaware language, though some of them contrive to pronounce it.

"Netis" signifies in their tongue, "a trusted friend,"

"one to whom all secrets are confided."

as he was anxious to make his Indian brother a present; and the guide, by skillfully manœuvring his conversation, soon learned that War-Eagle had, on this last excursion, lost his rifle, and that he was also short of ammunition. They now emerged from the forest upon the great road, if it might be so called, leading to Marietta; and the Indian putting the halter of Nekimi into Reginald's hand, said that he would return to his camp. Our hero, taking him by the hand, said, "Netis wishes to see his brother at this spot to-morrow at noon."

"War-Eagle will come," was the brief reply; and shaking both the whitemen cordially by the hand, he turned and disappeared among the trees.

Reginald and the guide were within a few miles of Colonel Brandon's house; but they could not proceed very fast, owing to the evident reluctance shown by Nekimi to follow his new master; he neighed, snorted, jumped, and played all manner of pranks in his endeavour to get loose; but this War-Eagle had foreseen, and the tough halter of undressed hide was well enough secured to defy all his efforts at escape.

"This has been a strange day of adventures, Baptiste," said Reginald; "it has been to me one of the pleasantest of my life!"

"Why, Master Reginald, it has been a day of events, such as they are; you have been twice at the outside edge of t'other world, with water and cold iron."

"Oh, there was not much harm in the water," said Reginald, laughing, "had it not been for the knock which one of the horses gave me on the head; but that villanous attempt of the Huron makes me shudder;—to offer a man food, and stab him while he is taking it! I thought such a thing was unknown in Indian history."

"It is, almost," said the guide. "But a Huron—and a Dacotah!" he added, bitterly,—"would murder a brother to gratify revenge."

"But I had never injured him, Baptiste."

"His memory is better than yours, Master Reginald. He and his brother were two of the leading warriors in that unfortunate affair where St. Clair was beat by the Ingians, upon the north fork of the Miami. I was there, too, and the 'Doctor's' pills did some service—but not much to signify, neither. Colonel Brandon did all that a man could do, but, at last, he was forced back. Well, that Tarbé and his brother, first in the pursuit, killed two of our poor fellows, and were scalping 'em, when the Colonel called out to 'em, and fired. He killed Tarbé's brother dead. I see'd it all; and I took a long squint with the Doctor at Tarbé, which only lamed his arm a bit; for, you see, Master Reginald, I was a long ways off; and a chap don't shoot quite so fine when he's a retreatin' double quick, with a few hundred Redskins yellin' in his rear. However, that Tarbé has been more than once down at Marietta, and round the neighbours' clearings; and he knowed you, Master Reginald, just as well as a Kentucky hog knows an acorn."

"Now I understand it, so far, Baptiste. But if the fellow wanted to take my life, why did he not hide in the laurel-thicket, and shoot me as I passed? Why did he make the attempt where my death was sure to be revenged?"

"Now, Master Reginald, you are asking a

poor ignorant critter,—who knows nought but a little huntin', and, may be, knows a beaver-skin from a buffalo-hide,—all the ins and outs of a red Indian's crooked mind! May be, he wanted to force War-Eagle into shedding white-man's blood. I saw that one of those Shawanons was up to his game; and if a general skirmish had come, they'd have tried to do for me. Or, perhaps, when he found his knife so convenient to the back of your neck, he couldn't lose the chance, for the bad spirit had got hold of him."

"By heavens!" cried Reginald, "I never can sufficiently admire the quickness, and the heroic courage of that boy, Wingenund! Did you see, Baptiste, how he drew that great knife slowly out of his wounded arm; and how all the time he smiled upon War-Eagle, as if to show him that he despised the pain!"

"He is a brave youth," said the guide. "I know the stock he comes from: if he were a coward, the grisly bear might breed sheep!"

"Pray tell me something of his parents, and of his story. Is he related to War-Eagle?"

"He is," said the guide. "They are the children of two brothers. War-Eagle of the eldest; Wingenund of the youngest."

"Are these two brothers alive, Baptiste?"

"No: both were murdered by the white men, in time of peace, without provocation. There was a third brother, who, happening to be absent from the village on a hunt, escaped. He has now gone to the far-west, beyond the great river. Both the War-Eagle and the boy are called his sons; and the latter, as he told us to-day, lives in his lodge."

"Then all these three brothers were the children of Wingenund?"

"Yes."

"And who was he?"

"One of the old Lenape:—first in council and foremost in the fight! I remember him well when I was a boy," said the guide, warming with his subject. "He taught me to follow a trail, and to travel in the woods, with no other guide than the wind, the stars, and the bark of the trees; and before I was as old as that boy, his grandson, he lent me his rifle to shoot the first Dacotah as ever I killed."

"What was the party, Baptiste?" said Reginald (anxious to keep the guide from the subject of the Dacotahs), "what party was it that committed the atrocious murder upon the Indians in time of peace?"

"Why, Master Reginald, though you were but a youngster, don't you remember hearing that twelve or fourteen years ago, a party of white men, led by Williamson, Harvey, and some other rough chaps from the Kentucky side, fell upon a village of friendly Indians on the banks of Tuscarawas river, and murdered all they found, man, woman, and child! Some of these poor Redskins had been made Christians, and were called Moravians; and their village, as was destroyed, was called by some outlandish name, too long by half for me to speak or to remember.* They had given over their own natural life of smoking, hunting, and fighting, and did nothing but plant, and sow, and pray! And, after all, that's the way they was served, Master Reginald."

* The village was called Gnaden-Hütten—"tent," or "cabins of grace."

"Horrible and disgraceful cruelty!" said the young man: and rather thinking aloud, than addressing his companion, he added, "It is no wonder that the Indians receive so unwillingly Christian precepts, when they have such examples of Christian practice. I am not surprised that War-Eagle finds it hard to forgive such injuries."

"And yet you are surprised, Master Reginald," said the guide, in a deep voice, almost hoarse from repressed emotion, "that I do not forgive the Dacotah? Did he not burn the log hut where I was born and raised? Did he not murder those who gave me birth? Did he not drive me out, a child, into the woods, to live by berries, or wild fruits, or what I could find or kill? Is not my father's scalp (not half revenged!) now hanging before a Dacotah lodge! Oh! let me come but within rifle range of the Throat-cutter,* and if he comes off with a whole skin, I will forgive him!"

Our hero, seeing that farther discussion would only increase an excitement which already mastered his companion's self-control, said to him kindly, "Well, Baptiste, it must be owned that you have received from these people deep, irreparable wrong! You are a man, and would not pay them in their own base coin, by killing one of their squaws or children: but if it is ever your fortune to meet them in a fair stand-up fight, when I am with you, then you shall see that I can stand by a friend, and share in his just feelings of resentment."

"I know it—I know it, Master Reginald," said the guide, grasping the hand extended to him; and having now recovered an equanimity which nothing but the Dacotah subject ever disturbed, he added,

"If you and I were to take a summer-hunt towards the mountains, with that light-limbed War-Eagle, who has the eyes, and ears, and spring of a painter,† we might p'raps bring in a handsome load o' skins, and may be, pay off the Throat-cutters an old debt or two."

"It is more likely than you imagine, Baptiste, that we shall make an excursion to the West, this spring; for my father told me the other day—but see, there he is, with Lucy on his arm, and Aunt Mary, and Wolf by her side!"

As he said this, the young man bounded forward, and in a moment was in the midst of them, kissing his sister, shaking his father and Aunt Mary affectionately by the hand, and patting Wolf's great shaggy head.

"Dear Reginald! what has kept you so long!" said Lucy, reproachfully; where can you have been? Why, your clothes are all soiled; and see, papa," she added turning deadly pale; "there is blood upon his hunting-shirt and upon his cheek!"

"What a little coward art thou," said Reginald, "to be the daughter of a soldier! Why, Lucy, the few drops of blood upon my clothes must surely have come from your cheeks, which are as pale as a magnolia flower! Harkee Lucy, I must do something to drive the rosy current back to its proper channel; come here, girl:"

* Every Indian tribe has its peculiar mark, or sign; among all the nations of the far-west, the Sioux, or Dacotahs, are designated by passing the hand across the throat as if cutting it.

† A Panther is so called by the western hunters.

and bending her head aside, he whispered something in her ear.

Never was the effect of magic more rapid, or more potent; for in an instant the obedient blood rushed to the fair girl's cheek, suffusing, at the same time, her neck and temples with the same glowing hue; casting upon her brother a look at once playful and appealing, she pinched his ear between her tiny fingers till he fairly begged pardon, and promised not to do so again.

As it was now evident that Reginald was not much hurt, Lucy turned her eyes towards the hunter, who approached, leading Nekimi, still snorting, prancing, and curvetting, at the full length of his laryette. "Baptiste," said the Colonel, "where have you found that wild, untamed animal?"

"He belongs," said the hunter, "to Master Reginald."

The Colonel looked to his son for an explanation, who giving an arm to his sister, while the Colonel escorted Aunt Mary, turned homeward, and narrated, as they went, the events described in this and the foregoing chapter.

CHAPTER VIII.

Containing a Sketch of Mochawno.—Reginald introduces his Sister to the two Delawares.

THE day following that on which the events related in the preceding pages occurred, there was an assemblage more than usually numerous, gathered in and around the capacious store of David Muir, in Marietta: immediately in front of his door was a small party, who, from their bearing and appearance, might be easily recognised as leading persons in the little community. In the midst of them was a roughly-dressed country lad, whose haggard appearance indicated wretchedness or fatigue, or both; near the group stood his horse reeking with sweat, and showing that the messenger, for such he was, had not spared the spurs on the road. Many and eager were the questions put to him, and the countenances of his auditors evinced no ordinary degree of interest in his replies; several women, and a dozen or two of boys and girls, made repeated endeavours to penetrate into this important circle; and having contrived to overhear a disjointed word, here and there, such as "Indian," "scalped," "rifle," &c., they slunk away, one by one, to spread it abroad through the village, that a neighbouring settlement had been attacked by a large body of Indians, armed with rifles and tomahawks; and that every man, woman, and child, excepting this messenger, who had escaped, was scalped!

We will, however, introduce the reader into the centre of the above-mentioned group, and detail to him the substance of the news which created so much excitement.

It appears that on the preceding day, two brothers, named Hervey, were riding homeward, after attending a marriage, at a small settlement twenty miles to the northward of Marietta: they were not above half a mile in advance of several other men, also returning from the marriage; both were armed with rifles, having been shooting at a target for a wager, when on a sudden, a single Indian, uttering a loud war-whoop, sprang from a thicket by the road, and at one stroke of

his war-club felled the elder brother to the earth; before the second could come up to his assistance, the same Indian aimed a sweeping blow at his head with the but-end of his rifle; the younger Hervey warded the blow also with his rifle, but it fell with such force that both barrels were broken off from the stocks; with the rapidity of lightning, the Indian struck him heavily on the head, and he fell stunned from his horse. A few minutes afterward, he recovered, and found some of his friends standing over him; his unfortunate brother lay dead and scalped at his side; his horse and the Indian had disappeared. Several young men dashed off immediately in pursuit, and tracked the hoofs successfully until the fugitive had entered the hardy and stony bed of a rivulet falling into the Muskingum; hence all farther search proved unsuccessful, and they returned dispirited to their companions.

It was long since so daring an outrage had been committed in the Territory; seldom was it that the Redskins would attack white men in open day, unless they were greatly superior in numbers; but for a single Indian to fall upon two armed whites, killing one and leaving the other for dead, almost within call of his friends, was an instance of audacity to which the oldest hunter could scarcely remember a parallel; it was evident also that the savage had been aware of a party of whites being at hand, otherwise he would certainly have shot one brother before he attacked the other; but, avoiding the discharge of his rifle, he had effected his purpose with a war-club.

Another striking circumstance was the clear evidence afforded that the killing of the elder Hervey was an act of personal revenge; because the younger brother, when knocked from his horse, had fallen helpless at the Indian's feet; and the latter, purposely to show that he had spared his life and scalp, had struck a knife through the lappet of his coat into the ground, with force enough to bury it up to the haft. Four or five of the best hunters had recommenced the pursuit; and although they once struck the trail of a man on foot evidently running from them, they were again baffled by the river, and returned to the settlement.

Such was the sum of the messenger's intelligence, which caused, as can easily be imagined, no little sensation in Marietta and the neighbouring districts.

"I know some of the worst o' them Redskin devils," said a bulky young man, whose countenance betrayed violent passions, and strong symptoms of free indulgence in David Muir's "fire-water," "tell me what was this Indian like? how did Dick Hervey describe him?"

"He hadn't over much time to look at him," said the messenger, "afore he was sent to sleep; but he says he was a very tall, powerful chap, streaked over the face with black."

"Was he a young un or an old un?"

"A young un, and active as a deer, or he couldn't have knocked those two Herveys off their critters, as a man knocks off a corn-cob with an ash plant."

"I wish I had him here," said the young giant, shutting a hand as heavy and large as a shoulder of mutton. "I'd give him a real Kentucky hug."

None of the bystanders seemed able to form any guess as to who the perpetrator of this bold outrage might be; it was resolved, however, to take all possible measures for his discovery: a

meeting of the principal inhabitants was convened, a description of the Indian's person, and of the marks by which Hervey's horse might be recognised, was written, and several copies thereof made, and forwarded to the nearest posts and ferries; at the same time a reward of a hundred dollars was offered to any person who should discover the offender, and a hundred more for his seizure, dead or alive.

During the discussion of these and other plans at the meeting, our old acquaintance David Muir, who felt himself not to be one of the least important persons present, said, "I'm thinking, gentlemen, it would be as well to send a messenger out to Colonel Brandon, wi' this intelligence; he kens the Indians as weel's ony man in this country-side, mayhap he'll gie us some gude counsel; and, sirs," added David, his grey eyes twinkling at his own sagacity, "be sure ye dinna forget to tak the advice o' yon lang-headed chiel, Battiste; if the Indian deevil's o' this side the Misissippi, Battiste will fin' him out, as sure as twa threes mak sax."

This was one of the longest orations which David had ever delivered in public; and both his suggestions being approved, carried *nem. con.*, and the meeting dissolved, David returned to his store with his hands thrust into his coat-tail pockets, and his countenance big with the consciousness of having rendered essential service to the Territory.

We must now return to Reginald, who, on the morning of this same day, rose with the sun; and feeling himself nothing the worse from his slight wounds, or from his diving adventure, sallied forth to see how Baptiste had provided for Nekimi's safety and comfort. All means having failed to entice him into a stable, the hunter had secured him firmly to an oak, casting down for him abundance both of food and litter. Reginald approached him, holding in his hand some bread; and having given the sharp, shrill cry (which, to Lucy's great alarm, he had practised more than once in the house), he was agreeably surprised to perceive that the horse recognised it, and seemed less averse to his caresses; having fed him, and carefully observed all the rules laid down by War-Eagle for gaining his affections, he returned to the house, and began to collect the various articles which he proposed to give to his Indian brother; among these was a good Kentucky rifle, and a handsome buck's-horn knife for the chief; he selected also a light fowling-piece, which he had used as a boy, and which he intended for Wingenund; to these he added several pounds of powder, and a due proportion of lead; he also threw into the package a few beads and a large cornelian ring, which had been long the occupant of his dressing-case.

When he had collected all these together he gave them to Baptiste, desiring him to be ready to accompany him to the rendezvous after breakfast; and having finished his preparations, he knocked at the door of Lucy's room, to inquire whether she was ready to preside at the morning meal.

"Come in, Reginald," she said; "if I am rather late it is your fault; for your adventures of yesterday have driven sleep from my pillow; and even when I did fall asleep, I dreamed of nothing but your Indian hero."

"Say you so, faithless one?" replied Reginald; "I shall tell that to—"

"Hush row, Reginald," said the blushing girl,

putting her little hand upon his mouth; "did you not promise me yesterday that you would not do so again?"

"Perhaps I did," said her brother; "and I will keep it if you will come down stairs and give me a very good cup of coffee."

In the breakfast-room they were joined by the Colonel and Aunt Mary; and while they discuss that most comfortable of family meals, we will give the reader a slight sketch of the house in which they were assembled.

It was built of substantial brick of a dun red colour, and had originally been a regular and solid building of moderate dimensions; but the Colonel had added on one side a wing, containing a library and sitting-rooms for himself and his son, while on the opposite side he had built additional apartments for Aunt Mary, and a small conservatory for Lucy. Thus the building had gradually assumed a straggling and irregular shape, the back court being occupied by stables, barns, and extensive farm-offices. The site of the house was on a gentle elevation, sloping down to a little brook, which wound its bubbling way through a deep grove of oak, maple, and sycamore, and circling round the base of the hill, fell at the distance of half a mile into the Muskingum river. The spot still retained the name of "Mooshanne" (signifying in the Delaware language Elk Creek), probably owing to the little streamlet above mentioned having been a favourite resort of an animal which the rifles of Reginald and Baptiste had rendered somewhat scarce in the neighbourhood.

We left the family assembled at the breakfast-table, where the conversation still turned upon the adventures of the preceding day.

"Reginald" said Lucy, "I should like to go with you to-day, to see your Indian brother, and that heroic boy."

"I fear," replied her brother, "it is farther than you could easily walk; and, moreover, Wingenund will scarcely accompany his chief; he must be still too weak from his wound."

"Nay, Reginald; if the distance is the only difficulty, I can ride Snowdrop; and if Wingenund does come, I will reward him for his brave defence of my brother, by giving him some little trinket, which he may take back to his sister. You cannot refuse me now," she added, in a coaxing tone, the power of which over her brother was all but despotic.

"Of course I cannot, if you obtain Aunt Mary's and the Colonel's permission," said Reginald, smiling.

Lucy met with no farther opposition. Snowdrop was ordered to be saddled; in a few minutes the happy girl was equipped, and provided with a coral necklace for the chief, and a pretty broach, destined for her brother's preserver.

The party now assembled before the door, consisting of Reginald, Baptiste, and Lucy, mounted on her favourite grey pony; our hero slung his rifle across his shoulders; the sturdy woodsman, besides carrying his own enormous axe, walked lightly under the two rifles, and the other articles to be presented to the chief, and Wolf played around them his fantastic and unwieldy gambols.

Cheerful and smiling was the woodland scenery through which they passed; the dewdrops still glittered in the beams of the morning sun, and the air was impregnated with the vernal fragrance arising from a thousand opening buds and blossoms.

"See, Lucy," said her brother, as he walked by her side, while the tact of the sturdy hunter kept him a few paces in the rear, "see how those mischievous squirrels hop and chatter upon the boughs! They seem to know that your presence is a protection to them."

"I often wonder, Reginald, how you can shoot such playful and graceful animals; you who have taste enough to admire their beauty, and who can find sport more worthy of your rifle."

"It is childish sport, Lucy; yet they are no contemptible additions to the table; their furs are useful, and there is some skill in shooting them—that is, in shooting them properly."

"If I were a man, I would shoot nothing but lions and tigers, buffaloes or bears!" said his sister.

"A pretty Amazon, truly!" said Reginald, laughing: "yet, methinks, your thoughts are not always so warlike. Come, Lucy, now that we are alone (for our good Baptiste is out of ear-shot), you need not pout or blush if I ask you whether Ethelston is expected soon to return?"

"Indeed, I know not, Reginald," said his sister, blushing in spite of his prohibition. "His last letter to the Colonel mentioned something about privateers, and the rupture with France. Papa did not appear desirous of communicating much upon the subject, so I dropped it."

"True," said Reginald; "the French will not soon forget or forgive the loss of their fine frigate, the *Insurgent*, which was taken the other day so gallantly by the *Constellation*. I doubt not they will endeavour to cripple our trade in the West Indies. Edward has got a little craft that can run if she cannot fight."

"I am sure Edward will never run if it is possible to fight," said Lucy, a little piqued.

"There, again, you speak the truth: it is because his courage is so tempered by his judgment, that he is fit to be entrusted with other lives and property than his own: if it is *not* possible to fight, he will have sense and skill enough to show the Frenchman his heels.—By-the-by, Lucy, which vessel is he now commanding?"

Again there was a decided blush, and almost a pout on Lucy's full lip, as she said, "You know, brother, that the '*Adventure*,' and the '*Pocahontas*,' are both in port, and the vessel he is now on board of is the—"

"Oh! I remember," said Reginald, laughing; "she was to be called the '*Lucy*'; but Edward did not choose to hear that name in every common sailor's and negroe's mouth; so he altered it to the '*Pride of Ohio*,' which means in his vocabulary the same thing."

"I wish," said Lucy, "there was any *Mary*, or *Charlotte*, or *Catherine*, or any other name under the sun, about which I could tease you! Have a little patience, Mr. Reginald; my turn will come: you shall see what mercy I will show you then!"

Thus did the brother and sister spar and jest with each other until they reached the spot appointed for the interview. As they had arrived rather before the time, they imagined that the *War-Eagle* had not yet come; but Baptiste, putting his finger to his mouth, blew a long shrill signal-whistle, and in a few minutes the chief appeared, accompanied by Wingenund. As they emerged from the forest, and approached, Reginald looked at his sister to see the effect produced by their appearance; for the chief was dressed in a manner calculated to display his noble figure and countenance to better advantage

than on the preceding day. His long black hair was parted on his forehead, and gathered into a mass, confined by a narrow fillet made from the fur of the white weasel, and surmounted by an eagle's feather. It seemed that his vow of war and revenge was for the time cancelled; for the lines of black paint which had disfigured his visage were removed, and the commanding form and features were not marred by any grotesque or fanciful attire. His brawny neck was bare, and a portion of his bold, open chest appeared beneath the light hunting shirt, which was his only upper vesture. The ponderous war-club was still at his girdle, but the scalp had disappeared: and his light, free step upon the grass was like that of a young elk on a prairie.

The dress of Wingenund was unaltered. He was still very weak from the loss of blood, and the pain consequent upon his wound; his arm rested in a sling, made from the platted bark of elm; and the air of languor cast over his countenance by sleeplessness and suffering, gave additional effect to the delicacy of his features, and the deep dark lustre of his eyes.

"Our new brother is indeed a fine-looking creature!" said Lucy, as *War-Eagle* drew near. "What a haughty step and bearing he has! Wingenund looks too gentle to be an Indian!"

"He is as brave as gentle, Lucy; look at his arm!" and, as she did look at the wounded limb, she remembered that only yesterday it had saved her brother's life.

The greeting between Reginald and the two Indians was affectionate and cordial; he then presented his sister to them both in turn. The chieftain, placing his hand upon his heart, fixed upon her that penetrating look with which he had before scrutinized her brother; it was not the bold stare of vulgarity admiring beauty, but the child of nature reading after his own fashion a page in her book.

"*War-Eagle*," said Lucy to him, in her own gentle tone of voice, "I know all that passed yesterday, and you are now my brother!"

As she pronounced his name in English, a gleam shot from his eye, and a perceptible and sudden change came over his countenance; it seemed produced by some unexpected association; and Lucy was surprised at the deep pathos of his voice, as he replied, "The Great Spirit has made the sun to shine upon my white brother's path! His heart is brave; his arm is strong; and his sister is like a flower of the prairie!—her voice comes upon the ear like a pleasant dream!" The chief's last words he spoke rather to himself than addressing those around him.

Lucy was not displeased with the Indian's compliment, and was about to speak to Wingenund, when Reginald said aloud, "Come, let us withdraw among these thick trees; we have many things to talk about." His proposal being assented to, the whole party were soon reassembled under a branching oak, screened from the public track by a thicket of rhododendron.

While they were effecting this manoeuvre, an opportunity of interchanging a few sentences with the *War-Eagle*; the result of which was apparently satisfactory to the honest woodsman, for his face instantly resumed its usual frank and careless expression.

"Lucy," said her brother, "as you have thought proper to accompany me here, you must play your part as Queen of the Feast. I hope my brothers will value these baubles

more from your hands than from mine." Thus instructed, Lucy opened the canvass package, which the guide had hitherto carried, and presenting the large rifle to the chief, she said to him,

"War-Eagle, your brother and your white sister give you this rifle as a mark of their friendship; and with it they give you powder and lead enough to shoot all the deer and bears in the territory."

The chief placed her hand and her brother's both upon his heart, saying, "War-Eagle thanks you. May the Great Spirit love you and guard your path!"

He then poised and examined the rifle, which was a piece of no ordinary beauty and excellence, while Baptiste whispered to him, in his own language, "It is loaded."

Lucy then turned to Wingenund, and presenting him with the lighter fowling-piece, said to him, "With this, a sister thanks Wingenund for a brother's life."

The boy cast his eyes modestly to the ground, saying, "Wingenund is too happy. War-Eagle will tell his name to the braves in council. The sister of Netis is good to him; Wingenund is ready to die!"

"Indeed," said Lucy to the guide, "I fear he is very faint and ill; ask the chief how he passed the night!"

"Wingenund is not ill," said the boy, with a smile; "he is very happy."

Meanwhile, Baptiste having conferred with the chief, replied, "Why, Miss Lucy, the wound was a very bad 'un, and he lost a power o' blood; once or twice in the night, War-Eagle thought he might not get over it; but he is better now, and though unable to bear much fatigue, he's a hardy young plant, and will take as much killing as an eel."

"Come, Baptiste," said Reginald; "I know you put something to eat and drink into that sack with the ammunition: War-Eagle must feast with us to-day."

The guide, opening his capacious wallet, drew from it a venison pasty, some bread, and a couple of bottles of Madeira. Lucy declined taking more than a crust of bread, merely tasting the wine to the health of the hunters. Wingenund was equally abstemious, and sat a little apart with his new sister; while Reginald, Baptiste, and the chief made a more substantial luncheon. The latter being asked, by Reginald, how he liked the wine, replied, carelessly, "Good." But it was evident that he drank it rather from courtesy than because it pleased his palate.

Reginald now desired the guide to speak to the War-Eagle in his own tongue, and to gather from him all the requisite particulars for his joining the Delawares in their summer-hunt beyond the Mississippi. He had long been anxious to visit some of those scenes which Baptiste had so often described; and his father having expressed a wish that he should go to St. Louis on some business connected with his investments in the fur-trade, he thought that so fair an opportunity ought not to be lost.

While the guide and the chief conversed in a low and earnest tone of voice, and Reginald listened with an idle curiosity, imagining now and then that he could catch their meaning, Lucy became much interested in her conversation with Wingenund; she was surprised at his intelligence and proficiency in English, and was

touched by the melancholy expression of his countenance and of his deep lustrous eyes. As she was speaking, he suddenly and impressively placed his finger on her arm, then raised it to his own lips, as a sign to her to be silent, then creeping two or three yards from the party, he threw himself at full length on the grass with his ear to the ground. Lucy listened attentively, but could hear nothing but the gentle breeze stirring the leaves, and the regular sound of Snowdrop's teeth as he nibbled the young grass.

The three hunters were still busy with their arrangements for the summer, when Wingenund, resuming his sitting posture, uttered an almost imperceptible sound, like the hiss of a small serpent; instantly, as if by instinct, the War-Eagle grasped his rifle, and looked inquiringly on the intelligent countenance of the boy.

"Wingenund hears men and horses," was the short reply.

Baptiste strained his practised ears to the utmost, as did Reginald, without success. Even War-Eagle seemed for a moment unable to catch the sound—he then whispered to Reginald, "Wingenund speaks truth, there are men—not a few."

Several minutes elapsed before our hero and the guide could distinguish the tramp of horses and the voices of men speaking angrily.

Our hero and his party being effectually screened from view by the dense *laurel** thicket, could listen unobserved to the conversation of those who were approaching; and the following expressions, delivered in a loud and authoritative tone, at once attracted and absorbed their attention: "It is impossible that the fellow should escape, we have scouts out in every direction. There can be no doubt that the camp which we have just found in the woods is the one where he passed the night with other Redskins, for the embers are still warm. Dickenson and Brown are gone south towards Marietta; Henderson and his party are tracking the prairies to the north; it is impossible he should long escape; and young Hervey thinks he should know him anywhere!"

While the person who appeared to be the leader of the unseen party was thus speaking, War-Eagle whispered a few sentences to Wingenund, to which the intelligent youth only replied by a look; the chief then conversed apart, in a low, earnest voice, with the guide, who ended by grasping his hand, and saying, in the Delaware tongue, "Grande-Hâche will do it at the risk of his life."

The chief appeared satisfied, and rising with calm dignity, he tightened the belt at his waist, to which he hung his newly-acquired knife and ammunition; and throwing his rifle into the hollow of his left arm, he said to Reginald, "War-Eagle must leave his brother Netis; Grande-Hâche will tell him all; before two moons have passed, Netis will come to hunt the bison with his brother; and he shall smoke with the braves of the Lenapé."

"He will," replied Reginald, warmly pressing his hand, and at the same time passing the cornelian ring upon one of the fingers of the chief. "If the Great Spirit gives him life, he will come and hunt, and smoke with his Lenapé brother."

The chief, now turning to Lucy, drew from his head the eagle feather which was passed

* In the Western States, the rhododendron is generally called the laurel.

through his hair, and which was quaintly stained, and ornamented with porcupine quills; offering it gracefully to her, he said, in a voice of musical gentleness, "War-Eagle wishes happiness to the 'pale flower of Mooshanne;' many braves have tried to pluck this feather from his head; no Dacotah nor Pawnee has touched it and lived! The sister of Netis may fasten it in her hair—let none but a brave warrior raise his eyes to it there."

"Thank you, dear War-Eagle," said Lucy, kindly, "I promise you it shall never be touched by an unworthy hand; and do you take this string of red beads," giving him at the same time a coral necklace, "and wear it for the sake of your white sister."

The chief received this gift with evident pleasure; and waving his hand in adieu, whispering at the same time one parting word to Wingenund, he strode leisurely away, and was soon lost in the deep glades of the forest.

CHAPTER IX.

Now Reginald Brandon returned to Mooshanne with his Sister, accompanied by Wingenund; and what befell them on the Road.

LUCY BRANDON was not a little surprised at the chief's sudden departure, and with the frankness natural to her character, inquired of her brother whether he could explain its cause; Reginald appeared either unable or unwilling to do so; and an appeal to the guide produced only the following unsatisfactory reply:

"War-Eagle is like the bird after which he's called—it ain't easy to explain or to follow his flight."

Wingenund remained silent, but every now and then he fixed his bright and speaking eyes upon Lucy, as if he would divine her thoughts. That young lady, though at a loss to account for her embarrassment, entertained a fear that all was not right, and proposed to her brother to return to Mooshanne.

Snowdrop was soon caught, and the little party moved leisurely homeward, Reginald and the guide leading the way, and Wingenund walking by the side of Lucy's pony; after riding a few minutes, she recovered her spirits, and remembering that there was no foundation for any surmises of evil, she resumed the conversation with her young companion, which the chief's departure had interrupted. "Tell me, Wingenund, who is the 'Black Father,' of whom you speak?"

"He is very good," said the boy, seriously; "he talks with the Great Spirit; and he tells us all that the Great Spirit has done; how He made the earth, and the water; and how He punishes bad men, and makes good men happy."

"He is a white man, then?" said Lucy.

"He is," replied the lad; "but though he is a white man, he always speaks truth, and does good, and drinks no fire-water, and is never angry."

What a humiliating reflection is it, thought Lucy to herself, that in the mind of this young savage, the idea of white men is naturally associated with drunkenness and strife! "Tell me, Wingenund," she continued, "is the 'Black Father' old?"

"Many winters have passed over his head, and their snow rests upon his hair."

"Does he live with you always?"

"He comes and he goes, like the sunshine and

the rain; he is always welcome; and the Lenapé love him."

"Can he speak your tongue well?"

"He speaks many tongues, and tries to make peace between the tribes, but he loves the Lenapé, and he teaches the 'Prairie-bird' to talk with the Great Spirit."

"Does your sister speak to the Black Father in her own tongue?"

"Sometimes, and sometimes in the English; but often in a strange tongue, written on a great book. The Black Father reads it, and the Prairie-bird opens her ears, and looks on his face, and loves his words; and then she tells them all to me. But Wingenund is a child of the Lenapé—he cannot understand these things!"

"You will understand them," said Lucy, kindly, "if you only have patience; you know," she added, smiling, "your sister understands them, and she is a Lenapé too!"

"Yes," said the boy; "but nobody is like Prairie-bird."

"She must, indeed, be a remarkable person," said Lucy, humouring her young companion's fancy; "still, as you have the same father and mother, and the same blood, whatever she learns, you can learn too."

"I have no father or mother," said Wingenund, sadly, and he added, in a mysterious whisper, drawing near to Lucy, "Prairie-bird never had a father or mother."

"Never had a father or mother!" repeated Lucy, as the painful thought occurred to her, that poor Wingenund was deranged.

"Never," said the boy, in the same tone; "she came from *there*," pointing, as he spoke, towards the northwest quarter of the heaven.

"How melancholy is it," said Lucy to herself, "to think that this brave, amiable boy is so afflicted! that so intelligent and quick a mind is like a lyre with a broken string! Still," thought she, "I will endeavour to understand his meaning, and not to deceive him."

"Dear Wingenund, you are mistaken—your sister had the same father and mother as yourself; she may have learned much, and may understand things strange to you, but you might learn them too."

"Wingenund's father and mother are dead," said the boy, in a voice of deep and suppressed emotion; "he will not tell you *how* they died, for it makes his heart throb and his eyes burn; but you are good to him, and shall not see his anger. Prairie-bird never had a father; the Great Spirit gave her to the Lenapé."

While Lucy was musing how she should endeavour to dispel this strange delusion which seemed to have taken such firm hold of her young companion's mind, Reginald and Baptiste halted, and the latter said, "You see that party approaching; they may put some troublesome questions, leave me to answer them. Wingenund, you know what I mean?"

"Wingenund does not understand English," said the boy, a slight smile of irony lurking in the corner of his mouth.

The approaching party consisted of eight or ten men, all armed with rifles, excepting two, who were mounted, and who carried cutlasses and large horse-pistols; among the pedestrians towered the gigantic form of young Mike Smith, who has already been presented to the reader before the store of David Muir, in Marietta; and among the horsemen was the younger Hervey, leading his friends to scour the whole coun-

try in search of the slayer of his brother; they were all in a high state of excitement; and despite the cool and unmoved demeanour of the guide, he was not without apprehension that they might desire to wreak their vengeance on Wingenund.

"Ha! Baptiste," said Hervey, grasping the guide's hand; "you are the very man we are in search of; we have already been to the colonel's, and he told us we should find you with his son, and with Mis Brandon, in this quarter. We want your assistance, man, and that speedily, too."

"How can I serve you?" said the guide; "what is the matter? you seem bent on a hunt."

"A hunt?" exclaimed Hervey, "yes, a hunt of a Redskin devil! Harkee, Baptiste!" and stooping from his horse, he repeated to the guide in a low voice, but clear enough to be heard by all present, the circumstances attending his brother's death.

"A daring act, indeed," said the guide, musing; "but could not you follow the trail while it was fresh yesterday?"

"We followed it to a creek leading to the Muskingum, and there we lost it."

"Can you describe the appearance of the Indian?" inquired the guide.

"A tall, handsome fellow, as straight as a poplar, and with a leap like a painter, so he seemed; but d—n him, he gave me such a knock on the head, that my eyes swam for five minutes."

A cold shudder ran through Lucy's limbs as, comparing this slight sketch of War-Eagle with his sudden departure and the guide's caution to Wingenund, she recognised in the chief the object of their search: glancing her eye timidly at Wingenund, she could read on his countenance no trace of uneasiness; he was playing with Snowdrop's mane; his gun resting on the ground, and he himself apparently unconscious of what was passing.

After a minute's reflection, the guide continued: "You say that the Indian's rifle was broken in half; did you notice anything about it?"

"Nothing: it was a strong coarse piece; we have brought the stock with us; here it is," he added, calling up one of his party to whom it had been entrusted.

The guide took it in his hand, and, at the first glance detected the imitation of a feather, roughly but distinctly cut with a knife; his own suspicions were at once confirmed, although his countenance betrayed no change of expression; but Mike Smith, who had been looking over his shoulder, had also observed the marks of the feather, and noticed it immediately aloud, adding, "Come, Baptiste, you know all the Indian marks between Alleghany and the Missouri; what Redskin has this belonged to?"

"Mike," said the guide coolly, "a man's tongue must shoot far and true to hit such a mark as that."

"And yet, Baptiste, if I'd been as long at the guiding and trapping as you, I think I'd a' know'd something about it."

"Ay, that's the way of it," replied Baptiste; "you young 'uns a ways think you can shave a hog with a horn spoon! I'spose, Master Mike, you can tell a buzzard from a mocking-bird; but if I was to show you a feather, and ask you *what* buzzard it belonged to, the answer might not be easy to find."

"You're an old fool," growled Mike angrily;

and he added as his eye rested suddenly upon Wingenund, "what cub is that standing by Miss's white pony? we'll see if he knows this mark. Come here, you devil's brat."

Not a muscle in the boy's face betrayed his consciousness that he was addressed.

"Come here, you young Redskin!" shouted Mike yet more angrily, "or I'll sharpen your movements with the point of my knife."

Reginald's fiery temper was ill calculated to brook the young backwoods-man's coarse and violent language; placing himself directly between him and Wingenund, he said to the former in a stern and determined tone, "Master Smith, you forget yourself; that boy is one of my company, and is not to be exposed either to insult or injury."

"Here's a pretty coil about a young Redskin," said Mike, trying to conceal his anger under a forced laugh; "how do we know that he ain't a brother or a son of the Indian we're in search of; s' blood, if we could find out that he was, we'd tar him, and burn him over a slow fire!"

"I tell you again," said Reginald, "that he is guilty of no crime; that he saved my life yesterday at the risk of his own, and that while I live neither you nor any of your party shall touch a hair of his head."

Baptiste fearing the result of more angry words, and moved by an appealing look from Miss Brandon, now interposed, and laying his hand on Smith's shoulder, said, "Come, Master Mike, there is no use in threatening the young Redskin when you see that he does not understand a word that you say; tell me what you wish to inquire of him, and I will ask him in his own tongue."

"His tongue be d—d," said Mike; "I'll wager a hat against a gallon of David Muir's best, that the brat knows English as well as you or I, although he seems to have nothing to do but to count the tassels on the edge of his shirt. I'll show you without hurting him," he added in a lower tone, "that I'm not far wrong."

"You swear not to injure him?" said Reginald, who overheard what passed.

"I do," said Mike; "I only want to show you that he can't make a fool of Mike Smith." Here he called up one of the men from the rear; and having whispered something in his ear, he said in a loud and distinct tone of voice, "Jack, we have found out that this Indian cub belongs to the party, one of whom murdered poor Hervey. Life for life is the law of the backwoods; do you step a little on one side; I will count four, and when I come to the four, split me the young rascal's head, either with a bullet or with your axe."

"For Heaven's sake, as you are men," exclaimed Lucy in an agony, "spare him!"

"Peace, Miss Brandon," said Mike; "your brother will explain to you that it must be so."

The guide would fain have whispered a word to the boy, but he was too closely watched by Smith, and he was obliged to trust to Wingenund's nerves and intelligence.

"Are you ready, Jack?" said Mike audibly.

"Yes!" and he counted slowly, pausing between each number: one—two—three! At the pronunciation of this last word Wingenund, whose countenance had not betrayed by the movement of a muscle, or by the expression of a single feature, the slightest interest in what was passing, amused himself by patting the great rough head which Wolf rubbed against his

hand, as if totally unconscious that the deadly weapon was raised, and that the next word from the hunter's lips was to be his death warrant.

"D—n it, you are right after all, Baptiste," said Mike Smith; "the brat certainly does not understand us, or he'd have pricked his ears when I came to number three; so, do you ask him in his own lingo if he knows that mark on the rifle-butt, and can tell us to what Redskin tribe it belongs?"

The guide now addressed a few words to Wingenund in the Delaware tongue, while Reginald and Lucy interchanged a glance of wonder and admiration at the boy's sagacity and courage.

"He tells me that he has seen this mark before," said the guide.

"Has he?" replied Mike; "ask him whether it is that of a Shawnee, or a Wyandot; of an Iroquois or of a Delaware?"

After again conferring with Wingenund, the guide muttered to himself, "This youngster won't tell a lie to keep a bullet from his brain or a halter from his neck; I must act for him." He added in a louder tone, "Mike, a word with you: it is not unlikely that the Indian you're in search of is the same who gave the boy that wound, and who tried to kill Master Reginald yesterday; if it is so, he wants no more punishing; he has his allowance already."

"How so?" said Mike.

"He is dead, man—killed on the spot. Do you and Hervey meet me here to-morrow an hour before noon; I will take you to the place where the body is buried, and you shall judge for yourselves whether it is that of the man you seek."

"It's a bargain," said Mike, "we'll come to the time; now, lads, forward to Hervey's Clearing. Let's have a merry supper to-night; and to-morrow, if the guide shows us the carcass of this rascal, why we can't hurt that much; but we'll pay off a long score one day or other with some of the Redskins. Sorry to have kept you waitin', Miss, and hope we haven't scared you," said the rough fellow, making, as he drew off his party, an awkward attempt at a parting bow to Lucy.

"That was a clever turn of Baptiste's," said Reginald in a low voice to his sister; "he has made them believe that the cowardly knave who tried to stab me was the perpetrator of the daring outrage which they seek to avenge!"

"And was it really War-Eagle?" said Lucy, with a slight shudder. "He who seems so noble and so gentle—was it he who did it?"

"I believe so," said Reginald.

"But is it not wrong in us to be friends with him, and to aid his escape?"

"Indeed," replied her brother, "it admits of doubt; let us ask the guide, he will speak now without reserve." And accordingly Reginald repeated to Baptiste the question and his sister's scruples.

"Why you see, Miss," said the wary hunter, "there is no proof that War-Eagle did it, though I confess it was too bold a deed to have been done by that dog of a Wyandot; but I will tell you, Miss," he added, with increasing energy and vehemence, "if the War-Eagle did it, you will yourself, when you know all, confess that he did it nobly, and that he deserves no punishment from man. That elder Hervey was one of the blood-thirsty band by whom the harmless

Christian Indians* were murdered; and it is believed that it was by his own hand that Wingenund's father fell; if War-Eagle revenged this cruel murder, and yet spared the life of the younger brother when lying helpless at his feet, who shall dare to blame him, or move a foot in his pursuit?"

"He speaks the truth, Lucy," said her brother; "according to the rules by which retaliation is practiced by mankind, War-Eagle would have been justified in punishing with death such an act of unprovoked atrocity; but it is a dangerous subject to discuss: you had better forget all you have heard about it; and in case of farther inquiries being made in your presence, imitate the happy unconsciousness lately displayed by Wingenund."

"Come here, my dear young brother," he added in a kindly tone, "and tell us—did you really think that hot-headed chap was going to shoot you when he counted number three?"

"No!" said the boy, with a scornful smile.

"And why not? for he's a violent and angry man."

"He dared not," was the reply.

"How so?"

"He is a fool!" said the boy, in the same scornful tone; "a fool scarcely fit to frighten the fawn of an antelope! If he had touched me, or attempted to shoot me, Netis and Grande-Hâche would have killed him immediately."

"You are right, my young brave," said Reginald, "he dared not hurt you. See, dear Lucy," he added apart to his sister, "what a ripe judgment, what a heroic spirit, what nerves of iron, are found in the slender frame of this wounded boy, exhausted by fatigue and suffering!"

"We will at least give him a hearty supper," said Lucy, "and an affectionate welcome to our home."

Wingenund thanked her with his dark eyes, and the little party proceeded leisurely, without incident or interruption, to Mooshanne.

CHAPTER X.

In which the Reader is unceremoniously transported to another Element in Company with Ethelston; the latter is left in a disagreeable Predicament.

It is time that we should now turn our attention to Ethelston, who is much too important a personage in our narrative to be so long neglected, and respecting whose safety Lucy began to feel the jealous anxiety of love; for "The Pride of Ohio" had been long expected in Marietta, and several French frigates and corvettes were reported to be cruising among the West India Islands, actively engaged in revenging upon American commerce the loss which they had sustained in the Insurgente. We shall soon see that Lucy's alarm was not altogether groundless, and that her lover's prolonged absence was not without sufficient cause. About a month preceding the occurrences detailed in the last chapter, Ethelston, having landed his merchandise in safety at Port Royal, and having taken on board a small cargo of sugar and coffee, prepared to return to New Orleans; he had heard of the French men-of-war cruising in the neighbourhood, and prudently resolved to risk as little

* Alluding again to the massacre of the Moravian Delawarees at "Cassakuhuta."

as possible on this trip; he took, therefore, securities for a great portion of the amount due to him, which he left in the charge of the vessel's consignee, and conveyed on board only a sufficient cargo to put *The Pride of Ohio* in perfect sailing trim, and to give her a fair chance of escape in case she were chased by an enemy; his little brig was well rigged and manned, and he felt confident that few, if any, of the French cruisers would match her for speed. His mate or sailing-master was Gregson, a hardy, weather-beaten old sailor, who had served on board every kind of craft, from a man-of-war to a fishing-cobble, and knew every headland, reef, and current in that dangerous sea, as well as a Liverpool pilot knows the banks and shoals in the mouth of the Mersey. *The Pride of Ohio* mounted three guns: two eighteen pound carronades, and one long nine pounder; ten stout fellows and a black cook formed her complement; the last-mentioned person deserves special notice, as he was a character strangely formed by the alternations of fortune which he had seen. A native of the interior of western Africa, he had, in early life, been chosen, on account of his extraordinary strength and courage, a chief of the Luucumi tribe, to which he belonged; but having been unfortunately made a prisoner, he was taken down to the coast and sold to a slaver; thence he had been conveyed to some of the Spanish islands, and afterwards to Virginia, where he had come into the possession of Colonel Brandon, who, finding him possessed of many good qualities, and of a sagacity very rare among his countrymen, had offered him his liberty when he moved to Ohio; but Cupid (for so was the negro called) had grown so much attached to his master, that he begged to be allowed to remain in his service, and from one employment to another, had now become cook and steward on board *The Pride of Ohio*. In frame he was Herculean; and though he rarely exerted his strength, he had shown on various occasions that it was nearly, if not quite, equal to that of any other two men in the vessel. He spoke but little, and was sullen and reserved in his manners; but as he never disobeyed orders, and never was guilty of aggression or violence, Cupid was, upon the whole, a favourite with the crew.

To Ethelston he was invaluable; for he was always at his post, was scrupulously honest with respect to money or stores placed under his charge, and on more than one occasion his shrewdness and readiness had surprised his young commander. The captain (for so was Ethelston called on board) always treated Cupid kindly, and never allowed him to be made the subject of those jeers and insults to which free negroes in the States are usually exposed; on this account the cook, who never forgot that he had been a warrior, entertained towards him the warmest feelings of attachment and gratitude.

How or where he had obtained the name he bore, none seemed to know; and Ethelston remembered having heard that when first he came into Colonel Brandon's possession, and was asked his name, he had sullenly replied, "The name I once had is at home: a slave has neither name nor home!" A terrible gash across his forehead and left cheek (received, probably, in

the war when he was captured) had disfigured a countenance that had been originally expressive of haughtiness and determination, and had, perhaps, led the slave-dealer to bestow upon him in irony the name by which he was now called.

The Pride of Ohio had made good two days of her homeward passage, when, in endeavouring to round a point on the southern coast of Cuba, Ethelston descried a ship some miles to windward, and ahead, which a careful examination through his glass convinced him was a French frigate. His mate being below at the time, he sent for him on deck, anxious to see whether the experienced sailor's observation would confirm his opinion. As soon as he appeared, handing him the glass, he said, "Gregson, see what you make of that fellow on our larboard bow."

"Make of her!" said the mate; "the devil take him that made her, and him that brought her athwart us, say I, captain! She's a Frenchman; and though we can't well see her hull yet, I doubt it won't be long before we see her row of teeth."

"I thought so myself," said Ethelston. "We must hold our course steady; and if we can round the point, we may then bear away, and show her a pair of heels. Turn the hands up, Gregson; trim the sails, and stand by for a run. Put Harrison at the helm; he can keep her a point nearer than that youngster."

"Ay, ay, sir!" was the reply; and having executed the order, he returned to Ethelston, who was still sweeping the southern horizon with his glass, and examining the strange ship, whose hull was now distinctly visible.

The young man's countenance wore a grave expression, as, returning the glass to his mate, he said, "Gregson, it is, as we supposed, a French frigate. We may, perhaps, creep along under the shore without his noticing our small craft."

The old seaman riveted the glass upon the stranger, as if he wished to count every sail and plank. During the examination, he grunted two or three inarticulate ejaculations, in unison with which his hard features underwent various contortions; and his young commander waited with no little impatience for what he called his "overhauling."

"She's neither more nor less than that infernal 'Epervier,' commanded by L'Estrange. She's one of the fastest sailers in their navy; and as for our creeping past her without being seen, he's the wrong sort o' man for that fun: herring or whale, all's fish for his net!"

"I have often heard of him," said Ethelston. "they say he's a fine fellow."

"That he is, to give the devil his due, as jolly an old dog as ever lived, and much too good a seaman for a Mounseer. Look'ee there, captain," added he, after another squint through the glass; "he's altering his course already—two or three points free, and the reefs shaken out o' the tops'ls. We shall hear from him soon."

"Can we give him the slip by bearing up for the eastern passage?—We should then show him our tail; and a stern chase is a long one."

"We might try if you wish it, captain; but it blows fresh, and she won't be very fond of this lee shore. I think, if you allow me to ad-

wise, we'd better hug it; take the chance of a long shot in rounding that headland, and then run for the inner channel behind the Isle of Pines. He'll not be after following us there; or, if he does, the frigate's keel will chance to scrape acquaintance with a reef."

"You are right, Gregson," said Ethelston. "The pride may fetch that point on this tack. Keep a close luff, Harrison."

"Luff it is, sir," was the reply, as Ethelston went below to consult his chart, and to prepare himself for entering the intricate channel between the Isla de Pinos and the main island.

The gallant little brig well sustained her high character as a sailer, and dashed her bows fearlessly through the foaming waves, under a press of canvass such as few vessels of her tonnage could have borne. The breeze was freshening, and the frigate now shaped her course with the evident intention of cutting off the chase from rounding the headland before mentioned.

The men on board the brig were now clustered forward, anxiously debating the probable issue; while Cutip steamed away in his caboose, preparing the dinner as quietly as if there had been no frigate to windward, nor a rock-bound shore to leeward; but though he seemed thus busied in his usual avocations, he cast every now and then his dark eye upon the Epervier; and few on board could estimate better than himself the danger of their situation.

Ethelston having finished a careful examination of his chart, now came on deck, and a single glance sufficed to shew him that he could not round the point a-head without coming within range of the frigate's guns: but the brig had kept her offing, and he had little doubt of her making good her escape, unless she were crippled by a shot from the enemy.

The Epervier now hoisted her colours for the brig to heave-to; and that being disregarded, she fired a shot which fell short of her bows. Finding that no notice was taken of this, L'Estrange ordered his first lieutenant to fire at the saucy brig in good earnest, to bring her to her senses. Fortunately for the latter, there was a short, angry sea running, and the distance being considerable, the first shot did not take effect. Several of the hands on board the brig had served in men-of-war; these were now oracles among their messmates, and they looked with some anxiety at their young captain, curious to see how he would behave under fire, for they believed he had never smelt powder; and although strict and firm in his command, he was usually so gentle and quiet in his manner, that they considered him rather a studious than a fighting character. Their curiosity was not, however, much gratified; for Ethelston, without appearing to notice the frigate, kept his eye steadily fixed on the cape ahead; and after a brief silence, he said, "Gregson there's a strong current which sets in shore here, 'the Pride' cannot weather that point on this tack."

"You are right, sir," said the mate; "L'Estrange has got his bristles up, he is nearing us every minute, and if we carry on this course, in another half hour, both will go ashore."

"Ha!" exclaimed the young captain, the colour rising in his cheek, as a sudden thought flashed across him. "If we could ensure that both would go to pieces among those breakers,

it would be a glorious death for the little brig to die!"

He spoke these words in an under tone, and rather musing to himself than addressing his officer. The latter, however, overheard them, and looked at him with an astonishment which he could not repress; for he also knew as little as the crew, of the determined courage that reposed under the calm and quiet demeanour of his young commander. Again a wreath of smoke issued from the bows of the frigate, and a round shot passed through the rigging of the chase, doing fortunately no material damage, but proving that they were now within easy range.

"I fear it will not do, sir," said the mate in reply to Ethelston's last words; "she can pepper away at us, and yet make her offing good."

"Then there remains but one chance for us," said the captain; "answer her signal, show your colours, 'bout ship, and stand for the frigate."

The mate was, if possible, more surprised at this order than he had been before at the proposal to try and cast both vessels ashore; but he was too good a seaman to hesitate or to ask any questions; and in a few minutes the gallant little brig had answered the signal, and was standing out towards the frigate on the starboard tack.

We will now transport the reader for a few minutes on board Epervier, and make him acquainted with the captain, into whose clutches the poor little brig seemed destined to fall. L'Estrange was a fine-looking, middle-aged man, who had spent the greater part of his life at sea, and had married, when very young, a Spanish creole, whose beauty was her only dower; he had several children by this marriage the eldest of whom was now a lieutenant on board his ship; the remainder of the family resided at Point à Pitre, in Guadaloupe, for the captain was in truth rather of the 'ancien regime'; he loved his country, but he hated the Directory and other fruits of the French Revolution; so that he never went to Europe, and would have been but rarely employed had he not been known to be one of the most skillful and experienced officers in the French navy. Such was the man who now stood on the frigate's quarter-deck, and after examining "The Pride" again through his glass, turned to his first lieutenant and desired him to cease firing. "That obstinate trader," he added, "seemed very anxious to escape, and thought but little of the risk she ran of going ashore, or of being riddled by our shot!"

"She's one of those saucy Americans," said the lieutenant, "that think nothing afloat can match 'em; however she's made a mistake this time, and I hope, sir, when she's overhauled, she'll prove worth the trouble she's given!"

The frigate, by this time, finding herself too close in on a lee shore, hauled to the wind, and disliking the broken and rugged appearance of the coast, determined not to lie-to for the brig until she had made sufficient offing. This was precisely the calculation that Ethelston had made; and he now paced his deck with a calm and satisfied countenance, while his men, grouped on the fore-castle, were quite at a loss to discover his intentions; the mate, however:

was clearer sighted, and could not withhold his admiration from the decision and boldness of a manœuvre, the success of which must soon be tested.

The captain of the frigate went below to dinner, having given orders to the lieutenant to stand out on the same tack for another half hour, then to lie-to until the brig should come alongside.

Meantime, Ethelston, who had kept his eye fixed upon the head-land so often mentioned, muttering to himself, "she will fetch it now," desired the man at the helm, to yaw the brig about, to throw her up now and then in the wind, so as to fall astern of the frigate as much as possible, yet not apparently varying the course. Having done so as long as he judged it practicable without awakening the enemy's suspicion, he saw, to his inexpressible delight, the frigate shorten sail to enable him to come up; instantly seizing this advantage, he ordered his mate to put the brig about, and run for the Isle of Pines. It may well be imagined that this bold manœuvre was not many moments unperceived on board the frigate; and L'Estrange's astonishment was great, when from the noise overhead, and from the heeling of the ship, he found that her course was altered. Springing on deck, he saw that he had been outwitted by the saucy brig, which was crowding all sail, and seemed not unlikely to effect her escape. The old captain chafed, and stormed, and swore that the obstinate little trader should pay dearly for her insolence.

The *Epervier* was a fast sailer, and as she now dashed the spray from her bows under a press of canvass, it was soon evident that the brig could not yet round the point without coming within range of her guns.

Ethelston's mind was now made up; and finding his men cheerful and inspired by the success of his manœuvre, he yet hoped to bring his vessel into the intricate channel behind the island, where the frigate would not venture to follow; it was not long before she again saluted him, and one of the shot passing through the brig's bulwarks close to him, shivered the binnacle into a hundred pieces. Observing symptoms of uneasiness in the man at the helm, and that he swerved from the course, Ethelston gave him a stern reproof, and again desired Harrison to come to the helm. The frigate, which still held the weather-gage, seemed now resolved to cut off the brig from the headland, and to sink her if she attempted to weather it. Ethelston saw his full danger, and was prepared to meet it; had he commanded a vessel of war, however small, he would not have shrunk from the responsibility he was about to incur; but, remembering that his little brig was but a trader, and that the crew ought not to be exposed without their own consent to danger so imminent as that before them, he desired Gregson to call them aft, when he addressed them as follows:

"My lads,—you see the scrape we are in; if we can round that point we may yet escape but to do so, we must run within a few hundred yards of the frigate's broadside. What say you, my lads, shall we strike, or stand the chance?—a French prison, or hurrah for the Balise?"

"Hurrah for the Balise," shouted the men, animated by their young commander's words

and by his fearless bearing; so the little brig held on her way.

A few minutes proved that he had neither magnified nor underrated the danger; his chart gave him deep water round the headland; and he now ordered Harrison to keep her away, and let her run close in shore, thereby increasing her speed, and the distance from the enemy.

The surprise and wrath of L'Estrange, at the impudent daring of a craft which he now perceived to be really nothing but an insignificant trader, are not to be described. He bore up after her, and having desired the men to stand to their guns, generously determined to give the saucy chase one more chance, but finding his repeated signal for her to heave-to, disregarded, he reluctantly gave the order to fire. Fortunately for "The Pride," the sea was running high, and naval gunnery had not then reached the perfection which it has since attained; and though her rigging was cut up from stem to stern, and her fore-topmast was shot away, and though she received several shot in her hull, she still answered her helm, and gallantly rounding the point, ran in shore, and was in a few minutes among shoals which, to her light draught, were not dangerous, but where it would have been madness in the frigate to follow.

CHAPTER XI.

Ethelston's further Adventures at sea, and how he became Captor and Captive in a very short space of time

It seemed almost miraculous that not a man on the "Pride of the Ohio" was killed by the frigate's broadside, nor was one wounded, excepting Ethelston, who received a slight hurt in the left arm from a splinter; but he paid no attention to it, and calmly gave all the requisite orders for repairing the damaged spars and rigging.

As soon as all was made snug, he let the men go below to dinner, and leaning over the shivered bulwarks of his little craft, seemed busily employed in counting the shot that had struck her; but his eyes were for a time fixed upon the water, through which she was cutting her easy way, and his thoughts were afar off, as he whispered almost audibly to himself, "Dear, dear Lucy—your namesake is wounded and disfigured, but she is not disgraced. Thank Heaven, no Frenchman's foot has yet trodden her deck, and—"

Here he was interrupted by Gregson, who having been carefully observing the frigate through his glass, came up to him, and said, "Beg pardon, sir, but she is getting ready her boats, and the breeze is failing fast; in another hour we shall have scarce a cat's paw.

Ethelston started from his short reverie, and immediately convinced himself that the mate spoke the truth: "You are right," said he, "but we have a good hour to spare, for the frigate is nearly becalmed. Let the men have their dinner quietly, say nothing to them about the matter, and give 'em an extra glass of grog; but no drunkenness, Gregson; they may want the full use of their heads and hands to-night; send Cupid to my cabin, and tell him to bring me a slice of cold meat and a glass of Madeira."

So saying, he went below; the mate looked after him, and turning his quid three or four times in his cheek, he muttered, "Damme if he makes any more count of the frigate's guns or boats than a bear does of a bee-hive! They spoilt as good a commodore as ever stepped a deck when they made a trading-skipper of him." Having vented this characteristic encomium on his young commander, the old seaman went forward to execute his orders.

Meanwhile Ethelston, consulting his chart, found that the reefs and shoals as laid down, rendered the navigation of the coast extremely dangerous even for the light draught of his brig; having only allowed himself a few minutes for refreshment, he again went on deck, and observing the frigate still becalmed, he ordered the mate to shorten sail, take soundings, and to desire the carpenter to make a report of the leakage, or any other serious injury sustained by the frigate's shot.

During this time L'Estrange was not idle on board the "Epervier." Nettled at the successful trick played upon him, he resolved as the breeze gradually died away to capture the chase with his boats; for this duty the launch and the pinnace were assigned: the former had a carronade and twenty-five hands, and was commanded by his son; the latter had a swivel, and thirteen hands, commanded by a junior lieutenant. The object of L'Estrange being to prevent an unnecessary effusion of blood, by sending a force strong enough to render resistance hopeless on the part of, what he called, a dirty little sugar-boat. The crew of The Pride of Ohio, elated by the success of their Captain's manoeuvre, and exhilarated by the extra grog served out, were in high good humour, and laughing over the events of the morning with reckless merriment, when they received an order from Ethelston to come aft. On their obeying the summons, he again addressed them as follows:

"My lads, you have thus far done your duty like men; but our work is not yet over. The Epervier is determined to sink or capture our little craft; she is now getting out her boats for that service; if we resist, we shall have warm work of it; if we strike without a fight, we may rot in a French dungeon. Again I ask you, my lads, will you stick by The Pride, and hurrah for home, or a sailor's grave!"

A hearty and simultaneous cheer from the crew was the only reply.

"I knew it, my lads," continued Ethelston, his countenance, usually so calm, now glowing with enthusiasm, "I knew that you would not desert her while she could float! It is now my duty to tell you that she has received two awkward shots just between wind and water line, and that she leaks apace. We must stop them as well as we may; but be prepared for the boats of the Epervier;—they shall at least buy us a dear bargain!"

Ethelston now called the mate, and gave him full instructions for the plan of defence from the expected attack. The long gun and the carronades were got ready and loaded, the former with round shot, the latter with grape; small arms and cutlasses were served out to the men, and the deck cleared of everything that might impede them in the approaching struggle. Meantime Ethelston ordered to be hoisted a new en-

sign, given to the brig by Lucy, and said to be partly worked by her own fair fingers. As soon as it was run up, he sent aloft a boy, with orders to nail it to the mast-head, which was done amid the repeated cheers of the crew. They were not long kept in suspense; the breeze had died away: the flapping sails and creaking yards gave the usual sullen indications of a calm, when the boats from the Epervier advanced at a steady and measured stroke towards the brig. Ethelston gave the long gun to the charge of Gregson, reserving to himself that of the carronades; he issued also special orders not to fire, under any circumstances, until he gave the word, or in case he fell, until they received the order from Gregson, who would succeed him in the command.

During all these preparations, Cupid appeared indifferent to what was passing, and continued busily occupied with his pots and pans in the caboose. This conduct caused some little surprise in Ethelston, who knew that the black was not the stupid phlegmatic character that he now seemed; and he accordingly sent Gregson to inquire whether, in the event of an attack from the frigate's boats, he meant to fight? desiring the mate at the same time to offer him a cutlass. The African grinned when he received this message, and replied that he meant to do his best. He declined, however, the proffered cutlass, informing the mate, that he had got a toasting-fork of his own, ready for the Mounseers; as he said this, he showed him the fragment of a capstan-bar, the end of which he had sharpened and burnt hard in the hot cinders; it was an unwieldy kind of club, and in the hands of an ordinary man, could have been but of little service; but his gigantic strength enabled him to wield it like a common cudgel. The truth is, that Cupid would have preferred being armed with cutlass and pistol, both of which he could use as well as any man on board; but he had tact enough to know that the prejudice against his colour forbade his taking his place on deck among the other defenders of the vessel.

The boats being now within hail, Lieutenant L'Estrange stood up in the launch and ordered the brig to strike her colours, and receive him on board. Finding this order unheeded, he repeated it through the trumpet in a sterner tone, adding that, if not immediately obeyed, he should fire upon her. Not a man stirred on board the brig, neither was any reply made to the lieutenant, who forthwith discharged the contents of his carronade into her hull, by which one man was killed dead, and two were wounded by splinters; he then desired his men to pull hard for the brig to board her, while others had orders to fire small arms at all whom they could see above the bulwarks. The boats had approached within fifty yards before Ethelston gave the word to fire. Gregson pointed the long gun upon the smaller boat with so true an aim that the heavy shot went clean through her, and she filled and went down in a few minutes, the survivors of her crew being picked up by the launch. Meanwhile, Ethelston fired a volley of grape into the latter with terrible effect, several being killed on the spot, and many of the remainder severely wounded. Nothing daunted by this murderous fire, the gallant young lieutenant held on his way to the brig

and again discharging his cannonade at the distance of only a few yards, her timbers were fearfully rent, and amidst the smoke and confusion thereby created, he and his crew scrambled up her sides to board. The combat was now hand to hand; nor was it very unequal, so many of the Frenchmen having been killed and wounded in the boats; they were strong enough, however, to make good their footing on deck, and inch by inch, they forced back the crew of the brig. Ethelston fought with the courage of a lion; his voice was heard above the din of the fray, animating his men; and several of the boldest of the enemy had already felt the edge of his cutlass. Nor was young L'Estrange less gallant in his attack, and his followers being more numerous than their opponents, drove them back gradually by main force. It was at this moment, that Cupid, who had hitherto remained unnoticed in his caboose, thought fit to commence his operations; which he did by throwing a great pan of greasy boiling water over three or four of the assailants, and then laying about him with his huge club, which felled a man almost at every blow. The excruciating pain occasioned by the hot liquid, together with the consternation produced by this unexpected attack in their rear, completed the dismay of the Frenchmen. At this crisis young L'Estrange slipped and fell on the deck; Gregson, bestriding him, was about to dispatch him, when Ethelston, who was already bleeding from a severe cutlass wound in the forehead, rushed forward to save him; but the infuriated youth, perhaps mistaking his intention, drew his last remaining pistol, and fired with so true an aim, that Ethelston's left arm fell powerless at his side. A flush of anger came over his countenance; but seeing Gregson again raising his hand to dispatch the young officer, he again interposed, and desired the mate to spare him,—in order which the seaman reluctantly obeyed.

Ethelston now entreated L'Estrange to give up his sword, and to save farther bloodshed; and the young man, seeing that his followers were mostly overpowered and wounded, presented it with a countenance in which grief and shame were blended with indignation. "Stay," said Ethelston; "before I receive your sword, the conditions on which I receive it are, that you give your parole, that neither you nor any one of your men shall bear arms against the United States, during the continuance of this war, whether you and I are recaptured or not; and the launch becomes my prize."

To these terms the youth assented, and ordered such of his men as were not quite disabled, to lay down their arms. In a few minutes, all who were unhurt were busily engaged in tending the dying and wounded. Fortunately an assistant-surgeon, who had volunteered on this service from the frigate, was among those unhurt, and he set about his professional duties with as much alacrity as if he had been in the ward of a hospital. Cupid retreated quietly to his caboose, and Ethelston continued giving his orders with the same clearness and decision that had marked his whole conduct. Young L'Estrange looked over the brig's low sides into the water; his heart was too full for utterance; and his captor, with considerate kindness, abstained from addressing him. The

surgeon, observing that the blood still flowed from the wound on Ethelston's forehead, and that his left arm hung at his side, now came and offered his services. Thanking him courteously, he replied, smiling, "I took my chance of wounds on equal terms with those brave fellows, and I will take my chance of cure on equal terms also; when you have attended to all those who are more seriously hurt, I shall be happy to avail myself of your skill."

The surgeon bowed and withdrew. An audible groan burst from the unhappy L'Estrange, but still he spoke not; and Ethelston held a brief consultation with his mate and the carpenter, the result of which was, an order given to the former, in a low tone of voice, "to prepare immediately, and to send Cupid to him in the cabin."

As he was going down, L'Estrange came to him, and asked him, confusedly, and with an averted countenance, if he might speak to him alone for a minute. Ethelston begged him to follow him into his cabin, when, having shut the door, he said, "M. L'Estrange, we are alone, pray speak; is there anything in which I can serve you."

The youth gazed on him for a moment, in an agony that could not yet find relief in words, and then falling on the floor, burst into a flood of tears. Ethelston was moved and surprised at this violent grief in one whom he had so lately seen under the influence of pride and passion. Taking him kindly by the hand, he said, "Pray compose yourself! these are misfortunes to which all brave men are liable. You did all that a gallant officer could do;—success is at the disposal of a higher power; you will meet it another day."

"Never, never!" said the young lieutenant, vehemently; "the loss of my boat is nothing; the failure of our attack is nothing; but I am a dishonoured coward, and Heaven itself cannot restore a tainted honour!"

"Nay, nay," replied Ethelston; "you must not say so. I maintain that you and your crew fought gallantly till every hope of success was gone—the bravest can do no more!"

"You are blindly generous," said the youth, passionately; "you will not understand me! When every hope was gone—when I lay at the mercy of your mate's cutlass—you sprang forward to save my life.—I, like a savage—a monster—a coward as I am,—fired and tried to kill you;—even then, without a word of anger or reproach, you, although wounded by my pistol, again interposed, and saved me from the death I deserved. Oh, would that I had died an hundred deaths rather than have lived to such disgrace!"

And again the unhappy young officer buried his face in his hands, while his whole frame still trembled convulsively with grief. Ethelston used every exertion to soothe and allay his agitation. He assured him that the wound he had received was not serious, that the pistol was fired under a strong excitement and in the turmoil of a bloody fray, when no man's thoughts are sufficiently collected to regulate his conduct; and he forgave him so freely and mingled his forgiveness with so many expressions of kindness and esteem, that he succeeded at length in restoring him to a certain degree of

composure. Nothing, however, would satisfy L'Estrange but that he should have his wounds instantly dressed; and he ran himself and summoned the surgeon, resolving to be present at the operation.

When Ethelston's clothes were removed, it appeared that besides a few flesh cuts of no great consequence, he had received two severe shot wounds: one from a musket-ball, which had sunk deep into the left shoulder, the other from L'Estrange's pistol, by which the bone of the left arm was broken. The latter was soon set and bandaged; but the ball could not be extracted from the former, either because the surgeon's skill was not equal to the task, or from his not having with him the instruments requisite for the operation. As soon as this was over, Ethelston dismissed the surgeon; and turning good-humouredly to L'Estrange, he said, "Now, my young friend, I want your assistance. I must lose no time in putting all our men aboard the launch, and taking in as many stores and necessaries as she will hold, for this brig is doomed; your swivel and the frigate's guns have finished her; she is fast settling down, and in a couple of hours I expect her to sink."

"On my word, sir," said L'Estrange, "you will pardon me if I say, that you are the strangest gentleman that I ever yet knew to command a trading brig! You out-manceuvre a frigate, capture her boats, fight as if you had done nothing but fight all your life, sit as quiet under that surgeon's probes and tortures as if you were eating your dinner, and now talk calmly of scuttling your brig, for which you have run all these risks!"

"It is my philosophy, Monsieur l'Estrange. I tried first to get away without fighting; when that was impossible, I fought as well as I could. What has happened since, and what is yet to come, I bear as well as I can! All that I ask of you is to keep your fellows in order, and make them assist mine in removing the wounded and the requisite stores on board the launch." So saying, and again saluting his prisoner, he went on deck.

Though he struggled thus manfully against his emotion, it was with a heavy heart that Ethelston prepared to bid a final adieu to his little vessel, which he loved much for her own sake,—more perhaps for the name she bore. While giving the necessary orders for this melancholy duty, his attention was called by Gregson to a sail that was coming up with the light evening breeze astern. One look through the glass sufficed to shew him that she hoisted French colours; and L'Estrange, who now came on deck, immediately knew her to be the *Hirondelle*,—an armed cutter that acted on this cruise as a tender to the *Epervier*. A momentary glow overspread the countenance of Ethelston, as he felt that resistance was hopeless, and that in another hour his brig would be sunk, and his brave crew prisoners. But being too proud to allow the French officer to see his emotion, he controlled it by a powerful effort, and continued to give his orders with his accustomed coolness and precision.

Though young L'Estrange's heart beat high at this sudden and unlooked-for deliverance, he could not forbear his admiration at his captor's

self-possession; and his own joy was damped by the remembrance of that portion of his own conduct which he had so deeply lamented, and also of the parole he had given not to bear arms again during the war. Meantime the removal of the men, the stores, provisions, and papers from the brig went on with the greatest order and dispatch.

Ethelston was the last to leave her; previous to his doing so, he made the carpenter knock out the oakum and other temporary plugs with which he had stopped the leaks, being determined that she should not fall into the hands of the French. This being completed, the launch shoved off; and while pulling heavily for the shore, the crew looked in gloomy silence at their ill-fated brig. Ethelston was almost unmanned; for his heart and his thoughts were on Ohio's banks, and he could not separate the recollections of Lucy from the untimely fate of her favourite vessel. He gazed until his sight and brain grew dizzy; he fancied that he saw Lucy's form on the deck of the brig, and that she stretched her arms to him for aid. Even while he thus looked, the waters poured fast into their victim. She settled,—sank; and in a few minutes scarce a bubble on their surface told where the *Pride of Ohio* had gone down! A groan burst from Ethelston's bosom. Nature could no longer endure the accumulated weight of fatigue and intense pain occasioned by his wounds: he sank down insensible in the boat, and when he recovered his senses, found himself a prisoner on board the *Hirondelle*.

Great had been the surprise of the lieutenant who commanded her at the disappearance of the brig which he had been sent to secure; and greater still at the condition of the persons found on board the launch. His inquiries were answered by young L'Estrange with obvious reluctance: so having paid the last melancholy duties to the dead, and afforded all the assistance in his power to the wounded, he put about the cutter, and made sail for the *Epervier*.

As soon as young L'Estrange found himself on the frigate's deck, he asked for an immediate and private audience of his father, to whom he detailed without reserve all the circumstances of the late expedition. He concluded his narration with the warmest praises of Ethelston's courage, conduct, and humanity, while he repeated that bitter censure of his own behaviour which he had before expressed on board the *Pride of Ohio*. The gallant old Captain, though mortified at the failure of the enterprise and the loss of men that he had sustained, could not but appreciate the candour, and feel for the mortification of his favourite son; and he readily promised that Ethelston should be treated with the greatest care and kindness, and that the most favourable terms, consistent with his duty, should be offered to the prisoners.

Young L'Estrange gave up his own berth to Ethelston, whose severe sufferings had been succeeded by a weakness and lethargy yet more dangerous. The surgeon was ordered to attend him; and his care was extended to all the wounded, without distinction of country.

After a few days Captain L'Estrange determined to exchange Gregson, the mate, and the remainder of the brig's crew, for some French prisoners lately taken by an American priva-

beer; they were accordingly placed for that purpose on board the cutter, and sent to New-Orleans. Young L'Estrange having learned from the mate the address of Colonel Brandon and his connection with Ethelston, wrote him a letter, in which he mentioned the latter in the highest and most affectionate terms, assuring the Colonel that he should be treated as if he were his own brother; and that, although the danger arising from his wounds rendered it absolutely necessary that he should return to Guadaloupe with the frigate, his friends might rely upon his being tended with the same care as if he had been at home. Cupid, at his own urgent entreaty, remained with his master, taking charge of all his private baggage and papers.

We need not follow the fate of the cutter any farther than to say that she reached her destination in safety; that the proposed exchange was effected, and the prisoners restored to their respective homes.

The surgeon on board the *Epervier* succeeded at length in taking out the ball lodged in Ethelston's shoulder, and when they arrived at Guadaloupe, he pronounced his patient out of danger, but enjoined the strictest quiet and confinement, till his recovery should be farther advanced. The ardent young L'Estrange no sooner reached home than he prevailed on his father to receive Ethelston into his own house. He painted to his sister Nina, a girl of seventeen, the sufferings and the heroism of their guest, in the most glowing colours; he made her prepare for him the most refreshing and restoring beverages; he watched for hours at the side of his couch; in short, he lavished upon him all those marks of affection with which a hasty and generous nature loves to make reparation for a wrong. In all these attentions and endeavours, he was warmly seconded by Nina, who made her brother repeat more than once, the narrative of the defence and subsequent loss of the brig. How Ethelston's recovery proceeded under the care of the brother and sister shall be told in another chapter.

CHAPTER XII.

Visit of Wingenund to Mooshanne. He rejoins War-Eagle, and they return to their band in the far-west. M. Perrot makes an unsuccessful attack on the heart of a young lady.

We must now return to Mooshanne, where Colonel Brandon received Wingenund very kindly; and within half an hour of the arrival of the party, they were all seated at his hospitable board, whereon smoked venison steaks, various kinds of fowls, a substantial ham, cakes of rice, and Indian maize. On the side-table were cream, wild honey, cheese, and preserved fruits, all these delicacies being admirably served under the superintendance of Aunt Mary, who was delighted with Wingenund, praised the extreme beauty of his eyes and features, telling the Colonel, in a whisper, that if she had been thirty-five years younger, she should have been afraid of losing her heart! The youth was indeed the hero of the day: all were grateful to him for his gallant preservation of Reginald's life, and all strove with equal anxiety to make him forget that he was among strangers.

Nor was the task difficult; for though he had only the use of one hand, it was surprising to see the tact and self-possession with which he conducted himself, the temperate quietness with which he ate and drank, and the ease with which he handled some of the implements at table, which he probably saw for the first time. Baptiste was a privileged person in the Colonel's house, and was allowed to dine as he pleased, either with its master, or with Perrot and the other servants. On this occasion, he was present in the dining-room, and seemed to take a pleasure in drawing out the young Delaware, and in making him talk on subjects which he knew would be interesting to the rest of the party. Wingenund was quiet and reserved in his replies, except when a question was put to him by Lucy, to whom he gave his answers with the greatest naiveté, telling her more than once, that she reminded him of his sister Prairie-bird, but that the latter was taller, and had darker hair. While addressing her, he kept his large speaking eyes so riveted upon Lucy's countenance, that she cast her own to the ground, almost blushing at the boy's earnest and admiring gaze. To relieve herself from embarrassment, she again inquired about this mysterious sister, saying, "Tell me, Wingenund, has she taught you to read, as well as to speak our tongue."

"No," said the youth; "Prairie-bird talks with the Great Spirit, and with paper books, and so does the Black Father; but Wingenund cannot understand them,—he is only a poor Indian."

Here Reginald, whose curiosity was much excited, inquired, "Does the Prairie-bird look kindly on the young chiefs of the tribe?—Will she be the wife of a chief?"

There was something both of surprise and scorn in Wingenund's countenance, as he replied, "Prairie-bird is kind to all—the young chiefs find wives among the daughters of the Delawares;—but the antelope mates not with the moose, though they feed on the same prairie. The Great Spirit knows where the Prairie-bird was born; but her race is unknown to the wise men among the Tortoises."

Reginald and his sister were equally at a loss to understand his meaning; both looked inquiringly at the Guide, who was rubbing his ear, as if rather puzzled by the young Delaware's answer. At length, he said, "Why, Miss Lucy, you see, much of what the lad says is as plain to me as the sight on my rifle: for the tribes of the Lenapé are as well known to me as the *totems* of the Oggibeways. The Great nation is divided into three tribes:—the Minsi, or the Wolf-tribe (sometimes called also Puncsit, or round-foot); the Unalacticos, or the Turkey-tribe, and the *Unamis*, or the Tortoise-tribe. The last are considered the principal and most ancient; and as Wingenund's family are of this band, he spoke just now of their wise men. But who, or what *kin' o' crittur* this Prairie-bird can be, would puzzle a Philadelpy lawyer to tell, let alone a poor hunter who knows little out of the line of his trade."

"Then, Baptiste," said Lucy, smiling; "your trade is a pretty extensive one, for I think you have more knowledge in your head on most subjects than half the lawyers and clerks in the Territory."

"There it is, Miss Lucy; you're always a givin' me a little dose of flattery, just as I give my patches a bit of grease to make the Doctor swallow his lead pills. You ladies think we're all alike,—young sparks, and tough old chaps like me,—if you do but dip our fingers into the honey-pot, you know we shall lick them as soon as your backs are turned! But it is getting late," he added, rising from his seat; "and I have much to say to this youth, who is already tired; with your leave, Miss, I will retire with him, and see that he has a comfortable sleeping-quarter, and that he wants for nothing."

"Pray do so," said Lucy; "let him be treated as if he were one of our own family. I am sure, dear papa, such would be your wish," she added, turning to her father.

"It is indeed, my child," said the Colonel. "Wingenund, again I beg you to receive a father's best thanks for your brave defence of his son."

"It was nothing," replied the boy, modestly. "You are all good, too good to Wingenund; when he gets to the Far Prairie, he will tell the Prairie-bird and the Black Father to speak to the Great Spirit, that He may smile on my white father, and on my brother; and," he added, slowly raising his dark eloquent eyes to Lucy's face, "that he may send down pleasant sunshine and refreshing dew on the Lily of Mooshanne." So saying, he turned and left the room, accompanied by the Guide.

"Well," exclaimed the Colonel, as the youth disappeared, "they may call that lad a savage; but his feelings, ay, and his manners too, would put to shame those of many who think themselves fine gentlemen."

"He is, indeed, a noble young fellow," said Reginald, "and worthy to be the relative and pupil of my Indian brother. I would that you had seen *him*, father: you are in general rather sceptical as to the qualities of the Redskins. I think the War-Eagle would surprise you!"

"Indeed, Reginald," said the Colonel, "I have seen among them so much cruelty, cunning, and drunkenness, that the romantic notions which I once entertained respecting them are completely dissipated. Nevertheless, I confess that many of their worst faults have arisen from their commerce with the whites; and they still retain some virtues which are extremely rare among us."

"To which do you allude?" inquired Reginald.

"More especially, to patience under suffering, a padlocked mouth when entrusted with a secret, and unshaken fidelity in friendship."

"These are indeed high and valuable qualities," replied Reginald. "Moreover, it strikes me that in one principal feature of character the Indian is superior to us; he acts up to his creed. That creed may be entirely based on error; it may teach him to prefer revenge to mercy, theft to industry, violence to right; but such as he has learnt it from his fathers, he acts up to it more firmly and consistently than we do, 'who know the right, and still the wrong pursue.'"

"Your observation is just," replied his father; "they are benighted, and do many of the deeds of darkness. What shall we say of those who do them under the light of a noon-day sun?"

"And yet," said Lucy, "this Wingenund seems half a Christian, and more than half a gentleman, either by nature, or by the instructions of the strange being he calls the Prairie bird!"

"Upon my word, Lucy," said her brother with a malicious smile, "I thought, while the lad was speaking of his sister on the Prairie, his eyes were strangely fixed upon the white lady in the wigwam. It is fortunate he is going soon; and still more fortunate that a certain cruising captain is not returned from the West Indies." As this impertinent speech was made in a whisper, it did not reach Aunt Mary or the Colonel; and the only reply it drew from Lucy, was a blushing threat of a repetition of the same punishment which she had inflicted in the morning for a similar offence. He begged pardon, and was forgiven; soon after which the little party broke up and retired to rest.

Meantime Baptiste, who knew that the well-intentioned offer of a bed-room and its comforts would be a great annoyance to Wingenund, took the lad out with him to a dry barn behind the house, where there was an abundant supply of clean straw, and where he intended to lodge him for the night. "Wingenund," said he, "you will rest here for some hours; but we must go along before daylight to meet War-Eagle, according to my promise."

"I will be ready," replied the youth; and casting himself down on a bundle of straw, in five minutes his wounds and fatigues were forgotten in a refreshing sleep, over which hovered the bright dreams of youth, wherein the sweet tones of his sister's voice were confused with the blue eyes of Lucy; and yet withal a sleep, such as guilt can never know, and the wealth of the Indies cannot purchase.

Before three o'clock on the following morning, the Guide re-entered the barn with a light step; not so light, however, as to escape the quick ear of the young Indian, who leaped from his straw couch, and throwing his rifle over his shoulder, stood before the hunter. "I hope you slept well," said the latter, "and that your arm gives you less pain?"

"I slept till you came," said the boy, "and the pain sleeps still. I feel nothing of it."

"Wingenund will be like his father," said the Guide. "He will laugh at pain, and fatigue, and danger; and his war-path will be sprinkled with the blood of his enemies."

The youth drew himself proudly up, and though gratified by the Guide's observation, merely replied, "The Great Spirit knows.—I am ready; let us go."

Baptiste had provided a couple of horses, and they started at a brisk pace, as he wished to reach the spot where he had appointed to meet War-Eagle soon after day-light. To one less familiar with the woods, the tangled and winding path, through which he led the way, would have offered many impediments; but Baptiste went rapidly forward without hesitation or difficulty, Wingenund following in silence; and after a brisk ride of three hours they came to an opening in the forest, where a log-hut was visible, and beyond it the broad expanse of Ohio's stream.

The Guide here whispered to Wingenund to remain concealed in the thicket with the horses

while he reconnoitered the hut; because he knew that it was sometimes used as a shelter and a rendezvous, by some of the lawless and desperate characters on the borders of the settlements.

Having finished his examination, and ascertained that the hut was empty, he returned to Wingenund, and desired him to come down to the water's edge, where he was to make a signal for War-Eagle, who ought to be now at no great distance. The youth accordingly went to the river's bank, and understanding from the Guide that there was no occasion for farther concealment, he gave three whistles in a peculiar tone, but exceedingly loud and shrill. For some time they listened for a reply. Nothing was heard, except the tap of the woodpecker upon the bark of the elm, and the notes of the various feathered choristers chirping their matin song.

After a pause of several minutes, the Guide said, "Surely some accident has detained War-Eagle! Perhaps he has failed in getting the canoe. Repeat the signal, Wingenund."

"War-Eagle is here," replied the youth, who was quietly leaning on his rifle, with an abstracted air.

Again the Guide listened attentively; and as he was unable to distinguish the slightest sound indicative of the chief's approach, he was rather vexed at the superior quickness implied in Wingenund's reply, and said somewhat testily, "A moose might hear something of him, or a bloodhound might find the wind of him, but I can make out nothing, and my ears an't used to be stuffed with cotton, neither!"

"Grande-Hâche is a great warrior, and Wingenund would be proud to follow in his war-path; eyes and ears are the gift of the Great Spirit."

"How know you that War-Eagle is here?" inquired the Guide impatiently.

"By that," replied the boy, pointing to a scarcely perceptible mark on the bank a few yards from his feet, "that is the moccasin of the War-Eagle; he has been to the hut this morning; below that foot-print you will see on the sand the mark of where his canoe has touched the ground."

"The boy is right," muttered Baptiste, examining the marks carefully. "I believe I am no hunter, but an ass after all, with no better ears and eyes than Master Perrot, or any other parlour-boarder."

In a very few minutes the sound of the paddle was heard, and War-Eagle brought his canoe to the bank; a brief conversation now took place between him and Baptiste, in which some particulars were arranged for Reginald's visit to the Western Prairie. The Guide then taking from his wallet several pounds of bread and beef, and a large parcel of tobacco, added these to the stores in the bottom of the canoe, and having shaken hands heartily with the chief and Wingenund, returned leisurely on his homeward way; but he still muttered to himself as he went; and it was evident that he could not shake off the annoyance which he felt at being "out-crafted," as he called it, "by a boy!"

We will not follow the tedious and toilsome voyage of War-Eagle and his young friend, in

the canoe, a voyage in which after descending the Ohio, they had to make their way up the Mississippi to its junction with the Missouri, and thence up the latter river to the mouth of the Osage river, which they also ascended between two and three hundred miles before they rejoined their band. It is sufficient for the purposes of our tale to inform the reader that they reached their destination in safety, and that Wingenund recovered from the effects of his severe wound.

When Baptiste returned to Mooshahne, he found the family surprised and annoyed at the sudden disappearance of their young Indian guest; but when he explained to Reginald that he had gone to rejoin his chief by War-Eagle's desire, Reginald felt that the best course had been adopted, as the boy might, if he had remained, have fallen in the way of the exasperated party who were seeking to revenge Hervey's death.

It was about noon when Mike Smith, and several of those who accompanied him the preceding day, arrived at Mooshahne, and insisted upon Baptiste shewing them the spot where he had told them that an Indian had been recently buried. Reginald declined being of the party, which set forth under the conduct of the Guide, to explore the scene of the occurrences mentioned in a former chapter.

During their absence, Reginald was lounging in his sister's boudoir, talking with her over the events of the preceding days, when they heard the sound of a vehicle driven up to the door, and the blood rushed into Lucy's face as she thought occurred to her that it might be Ethelston; the delusion was very brief, for a moment afterwards the broad accent of David Muir was clearly distinguishable, as he said to his daughter, "Noo Jessie, haud a grip o' Smiler, while I gie a pull at the door-bell."

Much to the surprise of the worthy "Merchaunt," (by which appellation David delighted to be designated,) the door was opened by no less a personage than Monsieur Gustave Perrot himself, who seeing the pretty Jessie in her father's spring-cart, hastened with characteristic gallantry, to assist her to descend; in the performance of which operation he extended both his hands to support her waist, saying in his most tender tone, "Take care, Miss Jessie; now shump, and trust all your leetle weight with me."

But while he was speaking, the active girl putting one foot on the step and touching him lightly on the arm, stood on the ground beside him.

"Weel, Mr. Perrot, and how's a wi ye the day," said David, who was busily employed in extracting various packages and parcels from the cart.

"All ver' well, thank you, Mr. Muir; wonderful things happen, though. My young Mr. Reginald he be drowned and stabbed, and quite well!"

"Gude save us!" said David, in horror; "drowned, and stabbed, and quite well!" Ye're surely no in earnest, Mr. Perrot!"

"I speak only the truth always,—Miss Jessie, the fresh air and the ride make your cheek beautiful rosy."

"Mr. Perrot," replied Jessie, smiling, "that

is a poor compliment! You are so gallant a gentleman, you should praise the roses in a lady's cheek without mentioning that she owes them to a rough road and a fresh breeze!"

This dialogue on roses was here interrupted by David, who said, "May be, Mr. Parrot, ye'll just let Smiler be ta'en round to the stable, and desire ane o' the lads to help us in with these wa' parcels; yon muckle basket, there, is brim-full of all the newest kick-shaws, and modes, as them call 'em, frae Philadelphia, so Jessie's just come wi' me, to gie Miss Lucy the first choice;—and she's a right to hae it too, for she's the bonniest and the best young lady in the Territory."

Mr. Perrot having given these necessary orders, David, with his papers, was soon closeted with the colonel, in his business room; and Jessie was ushered into the young lady's boudoir, where her brother still sat, with the intention of giving his sister the benefit of his advice in the selection of, what David called, kickshaws and modes, for her toilet. Meanwhile Perrot was preparing a formidable attack upon Jessie's heart, through the medium of some venison steaks, a delicate ragout of squirrel, and sundry other tit-bits, with which he hoped to propitiate the village beauty. As Jessie entered the room, her salutation of Lucy was modestly respectful; and she returned Reginald's bow with an unembarrassed and not ungraceful courtesy. While she was drawing out, and placing on a table, the silken contents of her basket, Reginald inquired of her whether any news was stirring in Marietta.

"None," she replied, "except the killing of Hervey. All the town is speaking of it, and they say it will cause more bloodshed; for Mike Smith vows, if he cannot find the real offender, he'll shoot down the first Indian he finds in the woods."

"Mike Smith is a hot-headed fool," replied Reginald; but remembering sundry reports which had reached his ear, he added, "I beg your pardon, Miss Jessie, if the words give you offence."

"Indeed you have given none, Master Reginald," said Jessie, colouring a little at the implied meaning of his words; "Mike comes very often to our store, but I believe it is more for whiskey than anything else."

"Nay," said Reginald; "I doubt you do him injustice. The say he prefers the end of the store which is the furthest from the bar."

"Perhaps he may," replied Jessie; "I am always better pleased when he stays away, for he is very ill-tempered and quarrelsome! Well, miss," she continued, "are not these pink ribbons beautiful, and these two light shawls?—they come from the British East India House."

"They are indeed the prettiest and most delicate that I ever saw," replied Lucy; "and see here, Reginald," said she, drawing him aside, "these French bead necklaces will do famously for some of your Delaware friends." She added in a whisper, "ask her if there is no other news at the town."

"What about," inquired her brother. A silent look of reproach was her only reply, as she turned away, and again busied herself with the silks. He was instantly conscious and ashamed of his thoughtlessness, which, after a few moments'

silence, he proceeded to repair, saying, "Pray tell me, Miss Jessie, has your father received no intelligence of the 'Pride of the Ohio.'"

"Alas! not a word," replied the girl, in a tone of voice so melancholy, that it startled them both.

"But why speak you in so sad a voice about the vessel, Jessie, if you have heard no bad news regarding her?" said Reginald, quickly.

"Because, sir, she has been very long overdue, and there are many reports of French ships of war; and we, that is, my father, is much interested about her."

Poor Lucy's colour came and went; but she had not the courage to say a word. After a short pause, Reginald inquired, "Have any boats come up lately from New Orleans?"

"Yes, sir, Henderson's came up only a few days ago, and Henry Gregson, who had been down on some business for my father, returned in her."

"That is the young man who assists your father in the store! I believe he is a son of the mate on board the *Pride*. I have remarked that he is a very fine looking young fellow!"

"He is the son of Captain Ethelston's mate," said Jessie, casting down her eyes, and busying herself with some of her ribbons and silks "But I hope," she continued, "that you, Mr. Reginald, are not seriously hurt. Mr. Perrot told me you had been drowned and stabbed!"

"Not quite so bad as that," said Reginald, laughing; "I had, indeed, a swim in the Muckingum, and a blow from a horse's hoof, but am none the worse for either. Do not forget, Miss Jessie, to send off a messenger immediately that any news arrive of the *Pride*. You know what a favourite she is, and how anxious we are here about her!"

"Indeed I will not forget," replied Jessie.

Lucy sighed audibly; and, after purchasing a few ribbons and shawls, as well as a stock of heads for her brother, she allowed Jessie to retire, begging, at the same time, her acceptance of one of the prettiest shawls in her basket. As the latter hesitated about receiving it, Lucy threw it over the girl's shoulder, saying playfully, "Nay, Jessie, no refusal; I am mistress here; and nobody, not even Mr. Reginald, disputes my will in this room!"

Jessie thanked the young lady, and, saluting her brother, withdrew to a back parlour, where Monsieur Perrot had already prepared his good things, and where her father only waited her coming to commence a dinner which his drive had made desirable, and which his dietary nerves told him was more savory than the viands set before him at Marietta by Mrs. Christie.

"Call ye this a squirrel ragoo?" said the worthy Merchant; "weel now it's an awfu' thing to think how the Lord's gifts are abused in the auld country! I hae seen dizens o' they wee deevils liltin' and loupin' among the woods in the Lothians; and yet the hungry chaps wha' can scarce earn a basin o' porritch, or a pot o' kail to their dinner, would as soon think o' eatin' a stoat or a fountart!"

While making this observation, Davie was dispatching the "ragoo" with a satisfaction which showed how completely he had overcome his insular prejudices. Nor were Perrot's culinary attentions altogether lost upon Miss Jessie;

for although she might not repay them entirely according to the wishes of the gallant Maitre d'Hotel, she could not help acknowledging that he was a pleasant, good-humoured fellow, and that his abilities as a cook were of the highest order. Accordingly, when he offered her a foaming glass of cider, she drank it to his health, with a glance of her merry eye sufficient to have turned the head of a man less vain and amorous than Monsieur Perrot.

The dinner passed pleasantly enough; and as David Muir drove his daughter back to Marietta, his heart being warmed and expanded by the generous cider (which, for the good of his health, he had crowned with a glass of old rum), he said, "Jessie, I'm thinkin' that Maister Perrot is a douce and clever man; a lassie might do waur than tak' up wi the like o' him! I'se warrant his nest will no be ill feathered!"

"Perhaps not," replied Jessie; and turning her head away, she sighed, and thought of Henry Gregson.

CHAPTER XIII.

In which the reader will find that the cough of an invalid has perils not less formidable than those which are to be encountered at sea.

We left Ethelston stretched on a sick couch in Guadaloupe, in the house of Captain L'Estrange, and tended by his daughter Nina, and by her brother, the young lieutenant. The latter grew daily more attached to the patient, who had been his captor, and was now his prisoner; but he was obliged, as soon as Ethelston was pronounced out of danger, to sail for Europe, as he was anxious to obtain that professional distinction which his parole prevented his gaining in service against the United States. And in France there seemed a promising harvest of combat and of glory, sufficient to satisfy the martial enthusiasm even of the most adventurous of her sons. When he sailed, he again and again pressed upon his sister to bestow every attention upon Ethelston; and as the Captain was much busied with his command, and as Madame L'Estrange was entirely devoted to her boudoir,—where, with two chattering parrots to amuse her, and a little black girl to fan her while listlessly poring over the pages of Florian in a fauteuil,—the whole charge devolved upon the willing and kind-hearted Nina. She was the third and youngest daughter of Monsieur and Madame L'Estrange; but (her two elder sisters being married) she was the only one resident with her parents.

Sixteen summers had now passed over her, and her disposition was like that of her brother.

frank, impetuous, and warm-hearted. Her feelings had never been guided or regulated by her handsome, but indolent mother; her mind had been allowed to seek its food at hap-hazard, among the romances, poems, and plays upon the shelves in the drawing-room. Her father spoiled, and her brother petted her. A governess also she had, whom she governed, and to whose instructions she owed little, except a moderate proficiency in music. Her countenance was a very beautiful mirror, reflecting the warm and impassioned features of her character. Her complexion was dark, though clear, and her hair

black and glossy. The pencilling of her eyebrows was exceedingly delicate; and the eyes themselves were large, speaking, and glowing with that humid lustre, which distinguishes Creole beauty. Nothing could exceed the rosy fulness of her lip, and the even whiteness of the teeth which her joyous smile disclosed. Her figure was exquisitely proportioned; and her every movement a very model of natural grace. She seemed, indeed, impregnated with the fervour of the sunny climate in which she had been reared; and her temper, her imagination, her passions, all glowed with its ardent, but dangerous warmth. According to the usage of her country, she had been betrothed, when a child, to a neighbouring planter, one of the richest in the island; but as he was absent in Europe, and there remained yet two years before the time fixed for the fulfilment of the contract, she rarely troubled her head about the marriage, or her future destiny.

Such was the girl who now officiated as nurse to Ethelston, and who, before she had seen him, had gathered from her brother such traits of his character, as had called forth all the interest and sympathy of her romantic disposition. Although not eminently handsome, we have before noted that his countenance was manly and expressive, and his manners courteous and engaging. Perhaps also the weakness remaining after the crisis of his fever, imparted, to the usually gentle expression of his features, that touching attraction, which is called by a modern poet "a loving languor." At all events, certain it is, that ere poor Nina had administered the third saline draught to her grateful patient, her little heart beat vehemently; and when she had attended his feverish couch one short week, she was desperately in love!

How fared it in the meantime with Ethelston? Did his heart run any risk from the dark eloquent eyes, and the gracefully rounded form of the ministering angel who hovered about his sick room? At present none, for Lucy was shrined there; and he had been taught by young L'Estrange to consider his sister in the light of a nursery-girl, still under the dominion of the governess.

Days and weeks elapsed, Ethelston's recovery progressed, and he was able to stroll in the shade of the orange and citron-groves, which sheltered Captain L'Estrange's villa to the northward. Here, with his eyes fixed on the sea, would he sometimes sit for hours, and devise schemes for returning to his home. On these occasions he was frequently accompanied by Nina, who walked by his side with her guitar in her hand; and under the pretence of receiving instructions from him in music, she would listen with delight, and hang with rapture, on every syllable that he uttered. Though he could not avoid being sensible of her ripening beauty, his heart was protected by the seven-fold shield of a deep and abiding attachment; and as he still looked upon Nina as a lovely girl, completing her education in the nursery, he gladly gave her all the assistance that she asked under her musical difficulties; and this he was able to do, from having made no small proficiency in the science during his long residence in Germany.

Sometimes he paid his respects to Madame L'Estrange; but that lady was so indolent, and

so exclusively devoted to her parrots and her lap-dog, that his visits to her were neither frequent, nor of long duration. The Captain was very seldom ashore; and thus Ethelston was obliged to spend his time alone, or in the society of the young girl who had nursed him so kindly during his illness. Her character seemed to have undergone a sudden and complete change. The conquering god, who had at first only taken possession of the outworks of her fancy, had now made himself master of the citadel of her heart. She loved with all the intense, absorbing passion of a nature that had never known control. The gaiety and buoyancy of her spirits had given place to a still, deep flood of feeling, which her reason never attempted to restrain. Even when with him she spoke little. Her happiness was too intense to find a vent in words; and thus she nursed and fed a flame, that needed only the breath of accident to make it burst forth with a violence that should burn up, or overleap all the barriers of self-control.

Nor must the reader imagine that Ethelston was dull or blind, because he observed not the state of Nina's affections. His own were firmly rooted elsewhere; he was neither of a vain, nor a romantic disposition; and he had been duly informed by Monsieur L'Estrange, that in the course of two years Nina was to be married to Monsieur Bertrand, the young planter, to whom, as we have before mentioned, she had been betrothed by her parents since her thirteenth year. He could not help seeing that although her intellect was quick, and her character enthusiastic, her education had been shamefully neglected both by Madame L'Estrange and the governess. Hence he spoke, counselled, and sometimes chid her, in the tone of an elder brother, heedless of the almost imperceptible line that separates friendship from love in the bosom of a girl nurtured under a West Indian sun.

In this state were matters, when, on a fine evening, Ethelston strolled alone into his favourite orange-grove, to look out upon the ocean, and in the enjoyment of its refreshing breeze, to ruminate on his strange captivity, and revolve various plans of escape.

Captain L'Estrange had paid a visit to his home on the preceding day, and finding his prisoner so completely restored to health and strength, had said to him, jokingly, "Indeed, fair sir, I think I must put you on your parole, or in chains; for after the character given of you by my son, I cannot allow so dangerous a person to be at large during the continuance of hostilities between our respective nations."

Ethelston answered half in earnest, and half in jest, "Nay, sir, then I must wear the chains, for assuredly I cannot give my parole; if an American vessel were to come in sight, or any other means of flight to offer itself, depend upon it, in spite of the kindness and hospitality I have met with here, I should weigh anchor in a moment."

"Well, that is a fair warning," said the old ommodore; "nevertheless I will not lock you up just yet, for I do not think it very likely that any strange sail will come under the guns of our fort; and I will run the risk of your flying away on the back of a sea-gull." Thus had they parted; and the old gentleman was again absent on a cruise.

Ethelston was, as we have said, reclining listlessly under an orange-tree, inhaling the cool breeze, laden with the fragrance of its blossoms, now devising impossible plans of escape, and now musing on a vision of Lucy's graceful figure gliding among the deep woods around Moos-hanne. As these thoughts passed through his mind, they imparted a melancholy shade to his brow, and a deep sigh escaped from his lips.

It was echoed by one yet deeper, close to his ear; and starting from his reverie, he beheld Nina, who had approached him unawares, and who, leaning on her guitar, had been for the last few minutes gazing on his countenance with an absorbed intensity, more fond and riveted than that with which the miser regards his treasure, or the widowed mother her only child.

When she found herself perceived, she came forward, and covering her emotion under an assumed gaiety, she said, "What is my kind instructor thinking of! He seems more grave and sad than usual."

"He is thinking," said Ethelston, good-humouredly, "that he ought to scold a certain young lady very severely for coming upon him slyly, and discovering that gravity and sadness in which a captive must sometimes indulge, but which her presence has already dissipated."

"Nay," said Nina, still holding her guitar, and sitting down on the bank near him; "you know that I am only obeying papa's orders in watching you; for he says you would not give your parole, and I am sure you were thinking of your escape from Guadaloupe."

"Perhaps you might have guessed more wide of the mark, Mademoiselle Nina," said Ethelston.

"And are you then so very anxious to—see your home again?" inquired Nina, hesitating.

"Judge for yourself, Nina," he replied, "when I remind you that for many months I have heard nothing of those who have been my nearest and dearest friends from childhood; nothing of the brave men who were captured with me when our poor brig was lost!"

"Tell me about your friends, and your home. Is it very beautiful! Have you the warm sun, and the fresh sea-breeze, and the orange-flow-ers, that we have here?"

"Scarcely," replied Ethelston, smiling at the earnest rapidity with which the beautiful girl founded her inquiries on the scene before her, "but we have in their place rivers on the bosom of which your father's frigate might sail; groves and woods of deep shade, impenetrable to the rays of the hottest sun; and prairies smiling with the most brilliant and variegated flowers."

"Oh! how I should love to see that land!" exclaimed Nina, her fervid imagination instantly grasping and heightening its beauties. "How I should love to dwell there!"

"Nay, it appears to me not unlikely that you may at some time visit it," replied Ethelston.

"This foolish war between our countries will soon be over, and your father may wish to see a region the scenery of which is so magnificent, and which is not difficult of access from here."

"Papa will never leave these islands, unless he goes to France, and that he hates," said Nina.

"Well then," continued Ethelston, smiling,

as he alluded for the first time to her marriage, "you must defer your American trip a year or two longer; then, doubtless, Monsieur Bertrand will gladly gratify your desire to see the Mississippi."

Nina started as if stung by an adder; the blood rushed and mantled over her face and neck; her eyes glowed with indignation, as she exclaimed, "I abhor and detest Monsieur Bertrand. I would die before I would marry him!" Then adding in a low voice, the sadness of which went to his heart, "and this from you too!" She covered her face with her hands and wept.

Never was man more astonished than Ethelston at the sudden storm which he had inadvertently raised. Remembering that Madame L'Estrange had told him of the engagement as being known to Nina, he had been led to suppose from her usual flow of spirits, that the prospect was far from being disagreeable to her. Young L'Estrange had also told him that Bertrand was a good-looking man, of high character, and considered, from his wealth, the best match in the French islands; so that Ethelston was altogether unprepared for the violent aversion which Nina now avowed for the marriage, and for the grief by which she seemed so deeply agitated. Still he was as far as ever from divining the true cause of her emotion, and conjectured that she had probably formed an attachment to one of the young officers on board her father's ship. Under this impression he took her hand, and sympathizing with the grief of one so fair and so young, he said to her, kindly, "Forgive me, Nina, if I have said anything to hurt your feelings; indeed I always have believed that your engagement to Monsieur Bertrand was an affair settled by your parents entirely with your consent. I am sure Monsieur L'Estrange loves his favourite child too well to compel her to a marriage against her inclination. Will you permit your Mentor (as you have more than once allowed me to call myself) to speak with him on the subject?"

Nina made no reply, and the tears coursed each other yet faster down her cheek.

"Your brother is absent," continued Ethelston; "you seem not to confide your little secrets to your mother—will you not let me aid you by my advice? I am many years older than you.—I am deeply grateful for all your kindness during my tedious illness; believe me, I will, if you will only trust me, advise you with the affectionate interest of a parent, or an elder brother."

The little hand trembled violently in his, but still no reply escaped from Nina's lips.

"If you will not tell me your secret," pursued Ethelston, "I must guess it. Your aversion to the engagement arises not so much from your dislike to Monsieur Bertrand, as from your preference of some other whom perhaps your parents would not approve!"

The hand was withdrawn, being employed in an ineffectual attempt to check her tears. The slight fillet which bound her black tresses had given way, and they now fell in disorder, veiling the deep crimson glow which again mantled over the neck of the weeping girl.

Ethelston gazed on her with emotions of deep sympathy. There was a reality, a dignity about

her speechless grief that must have moved a sterner heart than his; and as he looked upon the heaving of her bosom, and upon the exquisite proportions unconsciously developed in her attitude, he suddenly felt that he was speaking, not to a child in the nursery, but to a girl in whose form and heart the bud and blossom of womanhood were thus early ripened. It was, therefore, in a tone, not less kind, but more respectful than he had hitherto used, that he said, "Nay, Nina, I desire not to pry into your secrets—I only wish to assure you of the deep sympathy which I feel with your sorrow, and of my desire to aid or comfort you by any means within my power; but if my curiosity offends you, I will retire in the hope that your own gentle thoughts may soon afford you relief."

Again the little hand was laid upon his arm, as Nina, still weeping, whispered, "No, no,—you do not offend me.—Do not leave me, I entreat you!"

A painful silence ensued, and Ethelston more than ever confirmed in the belief that she had bestowed her affections on some young midddy, or lieutenant, under her father's command, continued in a tone which he attempted to render gay: "Well then, Nina, since you will not give your confidence to Mentor, he must appoint himself your confessor; and to commence, he is right in believing that your dislike to Monsieur Bertrand arises from your having given your heart elsewhere!"

There was no reply; but her head was bowed in token of acquiescence!

"I need not inquire," he pursued, "whether the object of your choice is, in rank and character, worthy of your affection?"

In an instant the drooping head was raised, and the dark tresses thrown back from her brow, as, with her eyes flashing through the moisture by which they were still bedewed, Nina replied, "Worthy!—worthy the affection of a queen!"

Ethelston, startled by her energy, was about to resume his inquiries, when Nina, whose excited spirit triumphed for the moment over all restraint, stopped him, saying, "I will spare you the trouble of farther questions. I will tell you freely, that till lately, very lately, I cared for none.—Monsieur Bertrand and all others were alike to me; but fate threw a stranger in my path.—He was a friend of my brother;—he was wounded.—For hours and hours I watched by his couch;—he revived;—his looks were gentle; his voice was music.—I drew counsel from his lips;—he filled my thoughts, my dreams, my heart, my being! But he—he considered me only as a silly child;—he understood not my heart;—he mocked my agony;—he saved my brother's life,—and is now accomplishing the sister's death!"

The excitement which supported Nina during the commencement of this speech, gradually died away. Towards its close, her voice grew tremulous, and as the last words escaped her quivering lips, exhausted nature gave way under the burden of her emotion, and she fainted!

The feelings of Ethelston may be better imagined than described. As the dreadful import of the poor girl's words gradually broke upon him, his cheeks grew paler and paler; and when, at their conclusion, her senseless form lay ex-

tended at his feet, the cold dew of agony stood in drops upon his forehead! But Nina's condition demanded immediate aid and attention. Mastering himself by a powerful effort, he snatched a lemon from a neighbouring tree; he cut it in half, and sustaining the still insensible girl, he chafed her hands, and rubbed her temples with the cool refreshing juice of the fruit. After a time, he had the consolation of seeing her restored gradually to her senses; and a faint smile came over her countenance as she found herself supported by his arm. Still she closed her eyes, as if in a happy dream, which Ethelston could not bring himself to disturb; and, as the luxuriant black tresses only half veiled the touching beauty of her countenance, he groaned at the reflection that he had inadvertently been the means of shedding the blight of unrequited love on a budding flower of such exquisite loveliness. A long silence ensued, softened, rather than interrupted, by the low wind as it whispered through the leaves of the orange grove; while the surrounding landscape, and the wide expanse of ocean, glowed with the red golden tints of the parting sun. No unlighted heart could have resisted all the assailing temptations of that hour. But Ethelston's heart was not unlighted; and the high principle and generous warmth of his nature served only to deepen the pain and sadness of the present moment. He formed, however, his resolution; and as soon as he found that Nina was restored to consciousness and to a certain degree of composure, he gently withdrew the arm which had supported her, and said, in a voice of most melancholy earnestness, "Dear Nina! I will not pretend to misunderstand what you have said.—I have much to tell you; but I have not now enough command over myself to speak, while you are still too agitated to listen. Meet me here to-morrow at this same hour; meanwhile, I entreat you, recal those harsh and unkind thoughts which you entertained of me; and believe me, dear, dear sister, that I would, rather than have mocked your feelings, have died on that feverish couch, from which your care revived me." So saying, he hastened from her presence in a tumult of agitation scarcely less than her own.

For a long time she sat motionless, in a kind of waking dream; his parting words yet dwelt in her ear, and her passionate heart construed them now according to its own wild throbbings, now according to its gloomiest fears. "He has much to tell me," she mused; "he called me dear Nina; he spoke not in a voice of indifference: his eye was full of a troubled expression that I could not read. *Aias! alas! 'twas only pity!* He called me 'dear sister!'—what can he mean?—Oh that to-morrow were come! I shall not outlive the night unless I can believe that he loves me!" And then she fell again into a reverie; during which all the looks and tones that her partial fancy had interpreted, and her too faithful memory had treasured, were recalled, and repeated in a thousand shapes; until exhausted by her agitation, and warned by the darkness of the hour, Nina retired to her sleepless couch.

Meanwhile Ethelston, when he found himself alone in his room, scrutinized with the most unsparring severity his past conduct, endeavour-

ing to remember every careless or unheeded word by which he could have awakened or encouraged her unsuspected affection. He could only blame himself that he had not been more observant; that he had considered Nina too much in the light of a child; and had habitually spoken to her in a tone of playful and confidential familiarity. Thus, though his conscience acquitted him of the most remote intention of trifling with her feelings, he accused himself of having neglected to keep a watchful guard over his language and behaviour, and resolved, at the risk of incurring her anger or her hatred, to tell her firmly and explicitly on the morrow, that he could not requite her attachment as it deserved, his heart having been long and faithfully devoted to another.

CHAPTER XIV.

Narrating the trials and dangers that beset Ethelston; and how he escaped from them, and from the Island of Guadeloupe.

The night succeeding the occurrences related in the last chapter brought little rest to the pillow either of Nina or of Ethelston; and on the following day, as if by mutual agreement, they avoided each other's presence, until the hour appointed for their meeting again in the orange grove. Ethelston was firmly resolved to explain to her unreservedly his long engagement to Lucy, hoping that the feelings of Nina would prove, in this instance, rather impetuous than permanent. The tedious day appeared to her as if it never would draw to a close. She fled from her mother, and from the screaming parrots; she tried the guitar, but it seemed tuneless and discordant; her pencil and her book were, by turns, taken up, and as soon laid aside; she strolled even at mid-day into the orange grove, to the spot where she had last sat by him, and a blush stole over her cheek when she remembered that she had been betrayed into an avowal of her love: and then came the doubt, the inquiry, whether he felt any love for her? Thus did she muse and ponder, until the hours, which in the morning had appeared to creep so slowly over the face of the dial, now glided unconsciously forward. The dinner-hour had passed unheeded; and before she had summoned any of the courage and firmness which she meant to call to her aid, Ethelston stood before her. He was surprised at finding Nina on this spot, and had approached it long before the appointed time, in order that he might prepare himself for the difficult and painful task which he had undertaken. But though unprepared, his mind was of too firm and regulated a character to be surprised out of a fixed determination; and he came up and offered his hand to Nina, greeting her in his accustomed tone of familiar friendship. She received his salutation with evident embarrassment; her hand and her voice trembled, and her bosom throbbled in a tumult of anxiety and expectation. Ethelston saw that he could not defer the promised explanation; and he commenced it with his usual gentleness of manner, but with a firm resolve that he would be honest and explicit in his language. He began by referring to his long illness—and, with gratitude, to her care and at-

tion during its continuance; he assured her, that having been told both by Madame L'Estrange and her brother, that she was affianced to Monsieur Bertrand, he had accustomed himself to look on her as a younger sister, and, as such, had ventured to offer her advice and instruction in her studies. He knew not, he dreamed not, that she could ever look upon him in any other light than that of a Mentor.

Here he paused a moment, and continued in a deeper and more earnest tone, "Nina—dear Nina, we *must* be as Mentor and his pupil to each other, or we must part. I will frankly lay my heart open to you. I will conceal nothing; then you will not blame me, and will, I hope, permit me to remain your grateful friend and brother. Nina, I am not blind either to your beauty, or to the many, many graces of your disposition. I do full justice to the warmth and truth of your affections: you deserve, when loved, to be loved with a whole heart—"

"O spare this!" interrupted Nina, in a hurried whisper; "Spare this, speak of yourself!"

"I was even about to do so," continued Ethelston; "but, Nina, such a heart I have not to give. For many months and years, before I ever saw or knew you, I have loved, and still am betrothed to another."

A cold shudder seemed to pass through Nina's frame while these few words were spoken, as if in a moment the health, the hope, the blossom of her youth were blighted! Not a tear, not even a sob gave relief to her agony; her bloodless lip trembled in a vain attempt to speak she knew not what, and a burning chill sat upon her heart. These words may appear to some strange and contradictory: happy, thrice happy ye, to whom they so appear! If you have never known what it is to feel at once a scorching heat parching the tongue, and drying up all the well-springs of life within, while a leaden weight of ice seems to benumb the heart, then have you never known the sharpest, extreme pangs of disappointed love!

Ethelston was prepared for some sudden and violent expression on the part of Nina, but this death-like, motionless silence almost overpowered him. He attempted, by the gentlest and the kindest words, to arouse her from this stupor of grief. He took her hand; its touch was cold. Again and again he called her name; but her ear seemed insensible even to his voice. At length, unable to bear the sight of her distress, and fearful that he might no longer restrain his tongue from uttering words which would be treason to his first and faithful love, he rushed into the house, and hastily informing Nina's governess that her pupil had been suddenly taken ill in the olive-grove, he locked himself in his room, and gave vent to the contending emotions by which he was oppressed.

It was in vain that he strove to calm himself by the reflection that he had intentionally transgressed none of the demands of truth and honour;—it was in vain that he called up all the long-cherished recollections of his Lucy and his home;—still the image of Nina would not be banished; now presenting itself as he had seen her yesterday, in the full glow of passion, and in the full bloom of youthful beauty,—and now, as he had just left her, in the deadly paleness and fixed apathy of despair. The terrible

thought that, whether guiltily or innocently, he had been the cause of all this suffering in one to whom he owed protection and gratitude, wrung his heart with pain that he could not repress; and he found relief only in falling on his knees, and praying to the Almighty that the sin might not be laid to his charge, and that Nina's sorrow might be soothed and comforted by Him, who is the God of consolation.

Meanwhile the governess had, with the assistance of two of the negro attendants, brought Nina into the house. The poor girl continued in the same state of insensibility to all that was passing around; her eyes were open, but she seemed to recognize no one, and a few vague indistinct words still trembled on her lips.

The doctor was instantly summoned, who pronounced, as soon as he had seen his patient, that she was in a dangerous fit, using sundry mysterious expressions about "febrile symptoms," and "pressure on the brain," to which the worthy leech added shakings of the head yet more mysterious.

For many days her condition continued alarming; the threatened fever came, and with it a protracted state of delirium. During this period Ethelston's anxiety and agitation were extreme; and proportionate was the relief that he experienced, when he learned that the crisis was past, and that the youthful strength of her constitution promised speedy recovery.

Meanwhile he had to endure the oft-repeated inquiries of the Governess, "How he happened to find Mademoiselle just as the fit came on?" and of Madame L'Estrange, "How it was possible for Nina to be attacked by so sudden an illness, while walking in the orange-grove!"

When she was at length pronounced out of danger, Ethelston again began to consider various projects for his meditated escape from the island. He had more than once held communication with his faithful Cupid on the subject, who was ready to brave all risks in the service of his master; but the distance which must be traversed, before they could expect to find a friendly ship or coast, seemed to exclude all reasonable hope of success.

It would be impossible to follow and pourtray the thousand changes that came over Nina's spirit during her recovery. She remembered but too well the words that Ethelston had last spoken; at one moment she called him perfidious, ungrateful, heartless; then she chid herself for railing at him, and loaded his name with every blessing, and the expression of the fondest affection; now she resolved that she would never see or speak to him more; then she thought that she must see him, if it were only to show how she had conquered her weakness. Amidst all these contending resolutions, she worked herself into the belief that Ethelston had deceived her, and that, because he thought her a child, and did not love her, he had invented the tale of his previous engagement to lessen her mortification. This soon became her settled conviction; and when it crossed her mind, she would start with passion and exclaim, "He shall yet love me, and me, alone!"

The only confidant of her love was a young negress who waited upon her, and who was indeed so devoted to her that she would have braved the Commodore's utmost wrath, or peti-

led her life to execute her mistress's commands.

It happened one evening that this girl, whose name was Fanchette, went out to gather some fruit in the orange-grove; and while, thus employed she heard the voice of some one speaking. On drawing nearer to the spot whence the sound proceeded, she saw Ethelston sitting under the deep shade of a tree, with what appeared a book before him.

Knowing that Nina was still confined to her room, he had resorted hither to consider his schemes without interruption, and was so busily employed in comparing distances, and calculating possibilities, on the map before him, that Fanchette easily crept to a place whence she could, unperceived, overhear and observe him. "I must and will attempt it," he muttered aloud to himself, "we must steal a boat. Cupid and I can manage it between us; my duty and my love both forbid my staying longer here; with a fishing-boat we might reach Antigua or Dominica, or at all events chance to fall in with an American or a neutral vessel. Poor dear Nina," he added, in a lower tone, "Would to God I had never visited this shore! *this*," he continued, drawing a locket from his breast, "this treasured remembrance of one far distant has made me proof against thy charms, cold to thy love, but not, as Heaven is my witness, unmoved or insensible to thy sufferings." So saying he relapsed into silent musing, and as he replaced the locket, Fanchette crept noiselessly from her concealment, and ran to communicate to her young mistress her version of what she had seen. Being very imperfectly skilled in English, she put her own construction upon those few words which she had caught, and thought to serve Nina best by telling her what she would most like to hear. Thus she described to her how Ethelston had spoken to himself over a map; how he had mentioned islands to which he would sail; how he had named her name with tenderness, and had taken something from his vest to press it to his lips."

Poor Nina listened in a tumult of joy; her passionate heart would admit no doubting suggestion of her reason. She was too happy to bear even the presence of Fanchette, and rewarding her for her good news by the present of a beautiful shawl which she wore at the moment, pushed the delighted little negress out of the room, and threw herself on a couch, where she repeated a hundred times that she had been to her orange-grove, where they had last parted, had named her name with tenderness, had pressed some token to his lips—what could that be? It might be a flower, a book, anything—it mattered not—so long as she only knew he loved her! Having long wept with impassioned joy, she determined to show herself worthy of his love, and the schemes which she formed, and resolved to carry into effect, evinced the wild force and energy of her romantic character. Among her father's slaves was one who, being a steady and skilful seaman, had the charge of a schooner (originally an American prize) which lay in the harbour, and which the Commodore sometimes used as a pleasure-yacht, or for short trips to other parts of the island: this man (whose name was Jacques) was not only a great favourite with the young lady, but was

also smitten with the black eyes and plump charms of M'amselle Fanchette, who thus exercised over him a sway little short of absolute. Nina having held a conference with her abigail, sent for Jacques, who was also admitted to a confidential consultation, the result of which, after occurrences will explain to the reader. When this was over, she acquired rather than assumed a sudden composure and cheerfulness, the delights of a plot seemed at once to restore her to health; and on the following day she sent to request that Ethelston would come to see her in her boudoir where she received him with a calmness and self-possession for which he was altogether unprepared. "Mr. Ethelston," said she, as soon as he was seated, "I believe you still desire to escape from your prison, and that you are devising various plans for effecting that object; you will never succeed unless you call me into your counsel."

Ethelston, though extremely surprised at the composure of her manner and language, replied with a smile, "M'amselle Nina, I will not deny that you have rightly guessed my thoughts; but as your father is my jailor, I did not dare to ask your counsel in this matter."

"Well, Mr. Mentor," said the wayward girl, "how does your wisdom propose to act without my counsel?"

"I confess I am somewhat at a loss," said Ethelston, good-humouredly; "I must go either through the air or the water, and the latter, being my proper element, is the path which I would rather attempt."

"And what should you think of me, if I were to play the traitress, and aid you in eluding the vigilance of my father, and afford the means of escape to so formidable an enemy?"

Ethelston was completely puzzled by this playful tone of banter in one whom he had last seen under a paroxysm of passion, and in whose dark eye there yet lurked an expression which he could not define; but he resolved to continue the conversation in the same spirit, and replied, "I would not blame you for this act of filial disobedience, and though no longer your father's prisoner, I would, if I escaped, ever remain his friend."

"And would you show no gratitude to the lady who effected your release?"

"I owe her already more—far more, than I can pay; and, for this last crowning act of her generosity and kindness, I would—"

As he hesitated, she inquired abruptly, "You would what, Ethelston?" For a moment she had forgotten the part she was acting, and both the look that accompanied these words, and the tone in which they were pronounced, reminded him that he stood on the brink of a volcanic crater.

"I would give her any proof of my gratitude that she would deign to accept, *yes any*," he repeated earnestly, "even to life itself, knowing that she is too noble and generous to accept aught at my hands which faith and honour forbid me to offer."

Nina turned aside for a moment, overcome by her emotion; but recovering herself quickly, she added, in her former tone of pleasantry, "She will not impose any hard conditions; but to the purpose, has your sailor-eye noticed a certain little schooner anchored in the harbour?"

"W!" Ethelston, eagerly, "a beau.

tiful craft of about twenty tons, on the other side of the bay?"

"Even the same."

"Surely I have! She is American built, and swims like a duck."

"Well then," replied Nina, "I think I shall do no great harm in restoring her to an American! How many men should you require to manage her?"

"I could sail her easily with one able seaman besides my black friend Cupid."

"Then," said Nina, "I propose to lend her to you; you may send her back at your convenience, and I will also provide you an able seaman; write me a list of the stores and articles which you will require for the trip, and send it me in an hour's time: prepare your own baggage, and be ready upon the shortest notice; it is now my turn to command and yours to obey. Good-bye, Mr. Mentor." So saying, she kissed her hand to him and withdrew.

Ethelston rubbed his eyes as if he did not believe their evidence. "Could this merry, ready-witted girl be the same as the Nina whom he had seen, ten days before, heart-broken, and unable to conceal or repress the violence of her passion?" The longer he mused, the more was he puzzled; and he came at length to a conclusion at which many more wise and more foolish than himself had arrived, that a woman's mind, when influenced by her affections, is a riddle hard to be solved. He had not, however, much time for reflection, and being resolved at all risks to escape from the island, he hastened to his room, and within the hour specified by Nina, sent her a list of the stores and provisions for the voyage.

Meanwhile Fanchette had not been idle, she had painted to Jacques, in the liveliest colours, the wealth, beauty, and freedom of the distant land of Ohio, artfully mingling with this description promises and allurements which operated more directly on the feelings of her black swain, so that the latter, finding himself entreated by Fanchette, and commanded by his young mistress, hesitated no longer to betray his trust and desert the Commodore.

Ethelston, having communicated the prosperous state of affairs to Cupid, and desired him to have all ready for immediate escape, hastened to obey another summons sent to him by Nina; he found her in a mood no less cheerful than before, and although she purposely averted her face, a smile, the meaning of which he could not define, played round the corner of her expressive mouth. Though really glad to escape homeward, and disposed to be grateful to Nina for her aid, he could not help feeling angry and vexed at the capricious eagerness with which she busied herself in contriving the departure of one to whom she had so lately given the strongest demonstration of tenderness; and although his heart told him that he could not love her, there was something in this easy and sudden withdrawal of her affection which wounded that self-love from which the best of men are not altogether free. These feelings gave an unusual coldness and constraint to his manner, when he inquired her farther commands.

To this question Nina replied by saying, "Then, Mr. Ethelston, you are quite resolved to leave us, and to risk all the chances and perils of this voyage?"

"Quite," he replied: "it is my wish, my duty, and my firm determination; and I entered the room," he added almost in a tone of reproof, "desirous of repeating to you my thanks for your kind assistance."

Nina's countenance changed; but still averting it from Ethelston, she continued in a lower voice, "And do you leave us without pain without regret?"

There was a tremor, a natural feeling in the tone in which she uttered these few words, that recalled to his mind all that he had seen her suffer, and drove from it the harsh thoughts which he had begun to entertain, and he answered in a voice from which his self-command could not banish all traces of emotion, "Dear Nina, I shall leave you with regret that would amount to misery, if I thought that my visit had brought any permanent unhappiness into this house. I desire to leave you as a Mentor should leave a beloved pupil—as a brother leaves a sister: with a full hope that when I am gone you will fulfil your parents' wishes, your own auspicious destinies, and that, after years and years of happiness among those whom Fate has decreed to be the companions of your life, you will look back upon me as upon a faithful adviser of your youth,—an affectionate friend who—"

Nina's nerves were not strung for the part she had undertaken; gradually her countenance had grown pale as marble; a choking sensation oppressed her throat, and she sunk in a chair, sobbing, rather than uttering, the word "Water." It was fortunately at hand, and having placed it in a glass by her side, Ethelston retired to the window to conceal his own emotion, and to allow time for that of Nina to subside.

After a few minutes she recovered her self-possession; and although still deadly pale, her voice was distinct and firm, as she said, "Ethelston, I am ashamed of this weakness; but it is over: we will not speak of the past, and will leave to fate the future. Now listen to me: all the arrangements for your departure will be complete by to-morrow evening. At an hour before midnight a small boat, with one man, will be at the Quai du Marché, below the place St. Louis. It is far from the fort, and there is no sentry near the spot; you can then row to the vessel and depart. But is it not too dangerous?" she added; "Can you risk it? for the wind whistles terribly, and I fear the approach of a hurricane!"

Ethelston's eye brightened as he replied, "A rough night is the fairest for the purpose, Nina."

"Be it so," she replied. "Now, in return for all that I have done for you, there is only one favour I have to ask at your hands."

"Name it," said Ethelston, eagerly.

"There is," she continued, "a poor sick youth in the town, the child of respectable parents in New Orleans; he desires to go home, if it be only to die there; and a nurse will take care of him on the passage if you will let him go with you?"

"Assuredly I will," said Ethelston; "and will take as much care of him as if he were my brother."

"Nay," said Nina, "they tell me he is ordered to be perfectly quiet, and no one attends him

but the nurse; neither will he give any trouble, as the coxswain says there is a small cabin where he can remain alone and undisturbed."

"You may depend," said Ethelston, "that all your orders about him shall be faithfully performed; and I will see, if I live, that he reaches his home in safety."

"He and his nurse will be on board before you," said Nina: "and as soon as you reach the vessel, you have nothing to do but to escape as quick as you can. Now I must bid you farewell! I may not have spirits to see you again!" She held out her hand to him; it was cold as ice; her face was still half-averted, and her whole frame trembled violently.

Ethelston took the offered hand, and pressed it to his lips, saying, "A thousand, thousand thanks for all your kindness! If I reach home alive I will make your honoured father ample amends for the theft of his schooner; and if ever you have an opportunity to let me know that you are well and happy, do not forget that such news will always gladden my heart." He turned to look at her as he went; he doubted whether the cold rigid apathy of her form and countenance was that of despair or of indifference; but he dared not trust himself longer in her presence; and as he left the room she sunk on the chair against which she had been leaning for support.

When Ethelston found himself alone, he collected his thoughts, and endeavoured in vain to account for the strange deportment of Nina in bidding him farewell. The coolness of her manner, the abrupt brevity of her parting address, had surprised him; and yet the tremor, the emotion, amounting almost to fainting, the forced tone of voice in which she had spoken, all forbade him to hope that she had overcome her unhappy passion; he was grieved that he had scarcely parted from her in kindness, and the pity with which he regarded her was, for the moment, almost akin to love.

Shaking off this temporary weakness, he employed himself forthwith in the preparations for his departure; among the first of which was a letter, which he wrote to Captain L'Estrange, and left upon his table. On the following day he never once saw Nina; but he heard from one of the slaves that she was confined to her room by severe headach.

The wind blew with unabated force, the evening was dark and lowering, as, at the appointed hour, Ethelston, accompanied by his faithful Cupid, left the house with noiseless step. They reached the boat without obstruction; pushed off, and in ten minutes were safe on deck; the coxswain whispered that all was ready; the boat was hoisted up, the anchor weighed, and the schooner was soon dashing the foam from her bows on the open sea.

CHAPTER XV.

What took place at Mooshanne during the stay of Ethelston in Guadaloupe.—Departure of Reginald for the far-west.

WHILE the events related in the last two chapters occurred at Guadaloupe, Reginald was busily employed at Mooshanne in completing the preparations for his projected visit to the

Delawares, in the Far-west; he had (by putting in practice the instructions given him by War-Eagle respecting Nekimi) at length succeeded in gaining that noble animal's affection; he neighed at Reginald's approach, knew and obeyed his voice, fed from his hand, and received and returned his carresses, as he had before done those of his Indian master. It was when mounted on Nekimi that our hero found his spirit most exulting and buoyant; he gave him the rein on the broadest of the neighbouring prairies, and loved to feel the springy fleetness and untiring muscles of this child of the western desert. Sometimes, after a gallop of many miles, he would leap from the saddle, to look with pride and pleasure on the spirited eye, the full veins, the expanded nostril of his favourite; at other times he would ride him slowly through the most tangled and difficult ground, admiring the instinctive and unerring sagacity with which he picked his way.

Among Reginald's other accomplishments, he had learned in Germany to play not unskillfully on the horn; and constantly carrying his bugle across his shoulders, Nekimi grew so accustomed to the sound, that he would come to it from any distance within hearing of its call. It appeared to Reginald so probable that the bugle might render him good service on his summer excursion, that he not only practised his horse to it, but he prevailed on Baptiste to learn his various signals, and even to reply on another horn to some of the simplest of them. The honest guide's first attempts to sound the bugle were ludicrous in the extreme; but he good-humouredly persevered, until Reginald and he could, from a considerable distance, exchange many useful signals agreed upon between them, and of course intelligible to none but themselves. Among these were the following: "Beware!"—"Come to me,"—"Be still,"—"Bring my horse," and one or two others for hunting purposes, such as "A bear!"—"Buffalo!" To these they added a reply, which was always to signify "I understand." But if the party called was prevented from obeying, this signal was to be varied accordingly.

At the same time Reginald did not omit to learn from the guide a number of Delaware words and phrases, in order that when he arrived among his new friends he might not be altogether excluded from communication with such of them as should not understand English; in these preparations, and occasional hunts in company with Baptiste, his time would have glided on agreeably enough, had he not observed with anxiety the settled melancholy that was gradually creeping over his sister Lucy; it was in vain that he strove to comfort her by reminding her of the thousand trifling accidents that might have detained Ethelston in the West Indies, and have prevented his letters from reaching home. She smiled upon him kindly for his well-meant endeavours, and not only abstained from all complaint, but tried to take her part in conversation; yet he saw plainly that her cheerfulness was forced, and that secret sorrow was at her heart. She employed herself assiduously in tending her mother, whose health had of late become exceedingly precarious, and who was almost always confined to her apartments. Lucy worked by

her side, conversed with her, read to her, and did all in her power to hide from her the grief that possessed her own bosom. Reginald marked the struggle, which strengthened, if possible, the love that he had always felt for his exemplary and affectionate sister.

One day he was sitting with her in the bou-doir, which commanded, as we have before observed, a view of the approach to the house, where they saw a horseman coming at full speed. As he drew near, he seemed to be a middle-aged man, wearing a broad-brimmed hat, a coarse over-coat, and loose trousers; his knees were high up on the saddle, and he rode in so careless and reckless a manner, that it was marvellous how the uncouth rider could remain on his horse in a gallop. Reginald threw open the window; and as the strange-looking figure caught a sight of him, the steed was urged yet faster, and the broad-brimmed hat was waved in token of recognition.

"Now Heaven be praised!" exclaimed Reginald aloud; "'tis Gregson, the mate!" He turned towards his sister: the blood had fled from her cheeks and lip, her hands were clasped together, and she whispered in a voice scarcely articulate, "Heaven be merciful!"

"Nay, Lucy," said her sanguine brother, "why this grief! are you not glad that the Pride is returned!"

"Oh, Reginald!" said Lucy, looking on him reproachfully through the tears which now streamed from her eyes. "Think you that if he had been alive and well, he would have allowed another to come here before him! Go and speak to the man—I cannot see him—you will return and tell me all."

Reginald felt the reproof, and kissing her affectionately, hastened from the room.

Who shall attempt to lift the veil from Lucy's heart during the suspense of the succeeding minutes! It is fortunate for human nature, that at such a moment the mind is too confused to be conscious of its own sufferings; the mingled emotions of hope and fear, the half-breathed prayer,—the irresistible desire to learn, contending with the dread of more assured misery,—all these unite in producing that agony of suspense which it is impossible to describe in words, and of which the mind of the sufferer can scarcely realize afterwards a distinct impression.

After a short absence, Reginald returned, and said to his sister, "Lucy, Ethelston is not here, but he is alive and safe."

She hid her face in her brother's breast, and found relief in a flood of grateful tears. As soon as Lucy had recovered her composure, her brother informed her of Ethelston's captivity, and of the serious, though not dangerous wounds, that he had received; but he mingled with the narration such warm praises of his friend's heroic defence of the brig, and so many sanguine assurances of his speedy release and return, that her fears and her anxiety were for a time absorbed in the glow of pride with which she listened to the praises of her lover's conduct, and in the anticipation of soon having his adventures from his own lips. The faithful mate received a kind welcome from the Colonel, and though the latter had sustained a severe loss in the brig, he viewed it as a misfortune

for which no one could be blamed; and directed all his anxiety and his inquiries to the condition of Ethelston, whom he loved as his own son.

"Depend on't, Colonel," said Gregson, "he'll come to no harm where he is, for L'Estrange is a fine old fellow, and Master Ethelston saved his son's neck from my cutlass. I was cuttin' at him in downright earnest, for my dander was up, and you know, Colonel, a man a'nt particular nice in a deck scurry like that!"

"And what made him so anxious to save the youngster!" inquired the Colonel.

"Why, I s'pose he thought the day was our own, and the lieutenant too smart a lad to be roughly handled for naught; but the young mad-cap put a pistol-ball into his arm by way of thanks."

"Well, and did Ethelston still protect him?"

"Ay, sir, all the same. I've served with a number of captains o' one sort or other, smugglers, and slave-cruizers, and old Burt, that the Cuba pirates used to call Gunpowder Jack, but I will say I never saw a better man than Ethelston step a deck, whether it's 'up stick and make sail,' or a heavy gale on a lee-shore, or a game at long bowls, or a hammer-away fight at yard-arm to yard-arm, it's all one to our skipper, he's just as cool and seems as well pleased, as when it's a free breeze, a clear sea, and Black Cupid has piped to dinner."

"He is a gallant young fellow," said the Colonel, brushing a little moisture from the corner of his eye; "and we will immediately take all possible measures for his liberation, both by applying, through Congress, for his exchange, and by communicating with the French agents at New Orleans."

The conversation was protracted for some time, and after its termination, the mate having satisfied himself that the Mooshanne cider had lost none of its flavour, and that Monsieur Perrot's flask contained genuine cognac, returned in high spirits to Marietta.

The preparations for Reginald's expedition now went briskly forward, as the business which the Colonel wished him to transact with the trading companies, on the Mississippi did not admit of delay. A large canoe was fitted out at Marietta, capable of containing sixteen or eighteen persons, and possessing sufficient stowage for the provisions and goods required; the charge of it was given to an experienced Voyageur, who had more than once accompanied Baptiste in his excursions to the Upper Mississippi and the Great Lakes; he was a steady determined man, on whose fidelity reliance might be placed, and well calculated, from the firmness of his character, to keep in order the rough and sturdy fellows who formed his crew. Born and bred in that wild border region which now forms the State of Michigan, the woods, rapids, and lakes had been familiar to him from his childhood; unlike most of his tribe, he was singularly grave and taciturn; he always wore a bearskin cap, and whether in his bateau, his canoe, or his log-hut, his bed was of the same material, so that he was known only by the name of "Bearskin;" his paternal appellation, whatever it might have been originally, having become altogether obsolete and unknown. His crew consisted of four stout fellows, who, like most of the Indian borderers

were as skilful in the use of the paddle on the river as in that of the rifle on the land. Among them was the gigantic form of Mike Smith, before mentioned in this narrative; all these were engaged by the Colonel, at a liberal salary, for six months, which was to be proportionately increased if they were detained in his service for a longer period. It was also settled that Monsieur Gustave Perrot should take his passage in the canoe; and to his care were entrusted the Indian presents, clothes, and other articles, which were his master's own property. Reginald had resolved to cross the Territory on horseback, accompanied by Baptiste, and he therefore meant to carry with him only such arms, and other articles, as were likely to be required on the journey.

The orders given to Bearskin were to make the best of his way, to St. Louis, and having delivered the letters with which he was entrusted, there to await Reginald's arrival. The cargo of the canoe consisted chiefly (with the exception of a full supply of arms and provisions) of powder, cutlery, clothes of various colours, paints, mirrors, and a great variety of beads. Her equipment was soon completed, and she left Marietta amid the cheers of the crowd assembled on the wooden pier in front of David Muir's store, the latter observing to our old friend the mate, who stood at his elbow, "I'm thinking, Maister Gregson, they chaps will hae enough o' the red-skin deevils, an' furrunkunin' amongst a when wild trappers and dafter-neer-do-weels ayont the Mississippi! Weel a weel, ye maun just step ben and tak' a stoup o' cognac to the success o' Bearskin and his crew."

Although there was much in the merchant's harangue that was like Greek or Hebrew to the mate, the closing invitation being adapted as well to his comprehension as to his inclination, he expressed a brief but cheerful acquiescence, and the worthy couple entered the house together. As soon as they were seated in the parlour, Jessie placed on the table some excellent corn-cakes and cheese, together with the before-mentioned cognac, and busied herself with even more than her wonted alacrity, to offer these good things to the father of the youth towards whom she entertained, as we have said, a secret but very decided partiality. She carried her hospitality so far as to bring a bottle of old madeira from David's favourite corner in the cellar, which she decanted with great dexterity, and placed before the mate. The jolly tar complimented the merchant, after his own blunt fashion, both on the excellence of his liquor, and the attractions of his daughter, saying, in reference to the latter, "I can tell you, Master Muir, that I hold Jessie to be as handsome and as handy a lass as any in the territory. If I were twenty years younger, I should be very apt to clap on all sail, and try to make a prize of her!"

At this moment his son entered from the store, under the pretext of speaking to David about the sale of some goods, but with the object of being for a few minutes near to Jessie. He had never spoken to her of love, being afraid that his suit would certainly be rejected by her parents, who, from their reputed wealth, would doubtless expect to marry their daughter to one of the principal personages in the

commonwealth of Marietta. As he entered, his eyes encountered those of Jessie, who was still blushing from the effect of the compliment paid to her by his father.

"Harry, my boy," shouted the mate, "you are just come in time; I have filled a glass of David's prime 84, and you must give me a toast! Now, my lad, speak up; heave a-head!"

"Father, I am ashamed of you!" replied the youth, colouring. "How can you ask for another toast when Miss Jessie's standing at your elbow?"

"The boy's right," said the sailor, "and he shall drink it, too; shan't he David?"

"I'm thinking y'll no need to ask him twice. Jessie, hand the lad a glass!"

At her father's bidding she brought another glass from the cupboard; and in giving it to young Gregson, one or other of them was so awkward, that instead of it he took her hand in his; and although he relinquished it immediately, there was a pressure, unconscious perhaps, but so distinctly perceptible to Jessie, that she blushed still deeper, and felt almost relieved by hearing her name called from the store in the loudest key of her mother's shrill voice, while it was repeated yet more loudly by the honest mate, who gave the toast as she left the room, "Here's Jessie Muir,—a long life and a happy one to her!"

Henry Gregson drank the madeira, but he scarcely knew whether it was sweet or sour, for his blood still danced with the touch of Jessie's hand; and setting down the glass, he returned abruptly to the store, whether in the hope of stealing another look at her, or to enjoy his own reflections on the last few minutes, the reader may determine for himself.

The mate and the merchant continued their sitting until the bottle of madeira was empty, and the flask of cogniac was considerably diminished; and although their conversation was doubtless highly interesting, and worthy of being listened to with the greatest attention, yet, as it did not bear immediately upon the events of our narrative, we will leave it unrecorded, among the many other valuable treasures of a similar kind, which are suffered day by day to sink into oblivion.

M. Perrot being now fairly under way, and having taken with him all the articles required by Reginald for his Indian expedition, our hero resolved no longer to delay his own departure, being about to encounter a very tedious land journey before he could reach St. Louis, and being also desirous of performing it by easy marches, in order that Nekimi might arrive at the Osage hunting-camp fresh, and ready for any of those emergencies in which success might depend upon his strength and swiftness. Baptiste was now quite in his element; and an early day being fixed for their departure, he packed the few clothes and provisions which they were likely to require on the journey, in two capacious leather bags, which were to be flung across the rough hardy nag which had accompanied him on more than one distant expedition, and he was soon able to announce to Reginald that he was ready to start at an hour's notice.

The parting of our hero from his family was somewhat trying to his firmness; for poor Lucy whose nerves were much affected by her own

worrows, could not control her grief; Aunt Mary also shed tears, while, mingled with her repeated blessings and excellent counsel, she gave him several infallible recipes for the cure of cuts, bruises, and the bite of rattle-snakes. The Colonel squeezed his hand with concealed emotion, and bade him remember those whom he left behind, and not incur any foolish risk in the pursuit of amusement, or in the excitement of Indian adventure. But it was in parting with his mother that his feelings underwent the severest trial, for her health had long been gradually declining; and although she evinced the resigned composure which marked her gentle uncomplaining character, there was a deep solemnity in her farewell benediction, arising from a presentiment that they might not meet again on this side of the grave. It required all the beauty of the scenery through which he passed, and all the constitutional buoyancy of his spirits, to enable Reginald to shake off the sadness which crept over him, when he caught from a rising ground the last glimpse of Mooshanne; but the fresh elasticity of youth ere long prevailed, and he ran his fingers through the glossy mane that hung over Nekimi's arching crest, anticipating with pleasure the wild adventures by flood and field that they would share together.

Reginald wore the deer-skin hunting-suit that we have before described; his rifle he had sent with the canoe, the bugle was slung across his shoulders, a brace of horse-pistols were in the bolsters, and a hunting knife hanging at his girdle completed his equipment. The sturdy guide was more heavily armed; for besides his long rifle, which he never quitted, a knife hung on one side of his belt, and at the other was slung the huge axe which had procured him the name by which he was known among some of the tribes; but in spite of these accoutrements, and of the saddle-bags before-mentioned, his hardy nag paced along with an enduring vigour that would hardly have been expected from one of so coarse and unpromising an exterior; sometimes their way lay through the vast prairies which were still found in the states Indiana and Illinois; at others among dense woods and rich valleys, through which flowed the various tributaries that swell Ohio's mighty stream, the guide losing no opportunity of explaining to Reginald as they went, all the signs and secret indications of Indian or border woodcraft that occurred. They met with abundance of deer, and at night they made their fire; and having finished their venison supper, camped under the shelter of some ancient oak or sycamore. Thus Reginald's hardy frame became on this preliminary journey more inured to the exposure that he would have to undergo among the Osages and Delawares of the Far-west; they fell in now and then with straggling bands of hunters and of friendly Indians, but with no adventures worthy of record; and thus, after a steady march of twenty days, they reached the banks of the Mississippi, and crossed in the ferry to St. Louis.

CHAPTER XVI.

The Escape of Ethelston from Guadaloupe, and the Consequences which ensued from that Expedition.

We left Ethelston on the deck of the little

schooner, which was bearing him rapidly from the shores of Guadaloupe, under the influence of an easterly wind, so strong that all his attention was absorbed in the management of the vessel. During the night the gale increased, and blew with unabated violence for forty-eight hours. "The Sea-gull," for so she was called, scudded lightly before it; and on the third day Ethelston had made by his log upwards of five hundred miles of westerly course.

Having only two hands on board, and the weather being so uncommonly boisterous, he had been kept in constant employment, and had only been able to snatch a few brief intervals for sleep and refreshment; he found Jacques the coxswain an active able seaman, but extremely silent and reserved, obeying exactly the orders he received, but scarcely uttering a word even to Cupid; it was he alone who attended upon the invalid and the nurse in the after cabin; and the weather having now moderated, Ethelston asked how the youth had borne the pitching and tossing of the vessel during the late gale. Jacques replied, that he was not worse, and seemed not to suffer from the sea. The captain was satisfied, and retired to his cabin; he had not been there long, before Cupid entered; and carefully shutting the door behind him, stood before his master with a peculiar expression of countenance, which the latter well knew to intimate some unexpected intelligence.

"Well, Cupid, what is it?" said Ethelston, "is there a suspicious sail in sight?"

"Very suspicious, Massa Ethelston," replied the Black, grinning and lowering his voice to a whisper, "and suspicious goods aboard the schooner."

"What do you mean, Cupid?"

"There is some trick aboard. I not like that Jacques that never speak, and I not like that sick boy and his nurse, that nobody never see."

"But why should you be angry, Cupid, with the poor boy because he is sick? I have promised to deliver him safe to his friends at New Orleans, and I hope soon, with this breeze, to perform my promise."

"Massa Ethelston, I believe it all one damn trick—I not believe there is one sick boy; when Jacques come in and go out of that cabin he creep, and look, and listen, and watch like the Colonel's grey cat at the cheese cupboard; Cupid no pretend to much learnin', but he no made fool of by damn French nigger, and he no tell Massa Ethelston a lie." So saying, the African withdrew as quietly as he had entered.

After musing some time on his follower's communication and suspicions, he resolved to unravel whatever mystery might be attached to the matter, by visiting the invalid immediately. On his knocking gently at the door for admission, he was answered from within by the nurse that her patient was asleep, and ought not now to be disturbed; but being determined not to allow another day to pass in uncertainty, he went on deck, and summoning Jacques, told him to go down presently and inform the nurse that in the evening, as soon as her patient was awake, he should pay him a visit.

Jacques received this mandate with some confusion, and began to stammer something about the "poor boy not being disturbed."

"Harkee, sir," said Ethelston sternly; "I am captain on board this craft, and will be obeyed; as you go into that cabin three or four times a day to attend upon the invalid, methinks my

presence cannot be so dangerous. I will take the risk upon myself: you hear my orders, sir, and they are not to be trifled with!"

Jacques disappeared, and Ethelston remained pacing the deck. In about half an hour the latter came up to him, and said, "The young gentleman will receive the captain at sundown."

"Very well," replied Ethelston, and continued to pace the deck, revolving in his mind all the strange events of the last month,—his illness, the unfortunate passion of Nina, and her strange behaviour when he bade her farewell.

At the appointed time he went down, and again knocked at the side cabin door for admission; it was opened by the nurse, apparently a young woman of colour, who whispered to him in French, "Go in, sir, and speak gently to him, for he is very delicate." So saying she left the cabin, and closed the door behind her.

Ethelston approached the sofa, on which the grey evening light permitted him to see a slight figure, covered with a mantle; and addressing the invalid kindly, he said, "I fear, young sir, you must have suffered much during the gale."

"No, I thank you," was the reply, but so faintly uttered as to be scarcely audible.

"Can I do anything to make your stay on board more comfortable?"

"Yes," was the whispered answer.

"Then tell me what, or how; as I have promised to do all in my power to make the voyage agreeable to you."

After a pause of a minute, during which the invalid seemed struggling with repressed emotion, the mantle was suddenly thrown aside, the recumbent figure sprang from the sofa, and Nina stood before him! "Yes," she said, "you *have* promised—and my ears drank in the promise—for it, and for you I have abandoned home, country, kindred,—what do I say,—I have abandoned nothing; for you are to me home, kindred, country, everything! Dear, dear Ethelston! this moment repays me for all I have suffered." As she spoke thus, she threw her arms round his neck, and hid her blushing face upon his breast.

Ethelston was so completely taken by surprise, that for a moment he could not utter a syllable. Mistaking his silence for a full participation in her own impassioned feelings, and looking up in his face, her eyes beaming with undisguised affection, and her dark tresses falling carelessly over her beautiful neck, she continued, "Oh speak—speak one gentle word,—nay, rather break not this delicious silence, and let me dream here for ever."

If Ethelston was for a moment stupified, partly by surprise and partly by the effect of her surpassing loveliness, it was *but* for a moment. His virtue, pride, and honour were aroused, and the suggestions of passion found no entrance to his heart. Firmly, but quietly replacing her on the sofa she had quitted, he said, in a voice more stern than he had ever before used when addressing her, "Nina, you have grieved me more than I can express; you have persisted in seeking a heart which I frankly told you was not mine to give; I see no longer in you the Nina whom I first knew in Guadaloupe, gentle, affectionate, and docile—but a wild, headstrong girl, pursuing a wayward fancy, regardless of truth, and of that maidenly reserve, which is woman's sweetest charm. Not only have you thus hurt my feelings, but you have brought a stain upon my honour,—nay, interrupt me not," he added, seeing that she was about to speak; "for

I must tell you the truth, and you must learn to bear it, even though it may sound harsh to your ears. I repeat, you have brought a stain upon my honour,—for what will your respected father think of the man whom he received wounded, suffering, and a prisoner? whom he cherished with hospitable kindness, and who now requites all his benefits by stealing from his roof the daughter of his love, the ornament and blessing of his home? Nina, I did not think that you would bring this disgrace and humiliation upon my name! I have now a sacred and a painful duty before me, and I will see you no more until I have restored you to the arms of an offended father. I hope he will forgive you, as I do, for the wrong that you have done to both of us. Farewell, Nina." With these words, spoken in a voice trembling with contending emotions, he turned and left the cabin.

Reader, have you ever dwelt in Sicily, or in any other southern island of volcanic formation? If so, you may have seen a verdant spot near the base of the mountain, where the flowers and the herbage were smiling in the fresh beauty of summer, where the luxuriant vine mingled her tendrils with the spreading branches of the elm, where the air was loaded with fragrance, and the ear was refreshed by the hum of bees and the murmur of a rippling stream,—on a sudden, the slumbering mountain-furnace is aroused—the sulphurous crater pours forth its fiery deluge, and in a moment the spot so lately teeming with life, fertility, and fragrance, is become the arid, barren abode of desolation. If, reader, you have seen this fearful change on the face of nature, or if you can place it vividly before your imagination, then may you conceive the state of Nina's mind, when her long-cherished love was thus abruptly and finally rejected by the man for whom she had sacrificed her home, her parents, and her pride! It is impossible for language to portray an agony such as that by which all the faculties of her soul and body seemed absorbed and benumbed; she neither spoke, nor wept, nor gave any outward sign of suffering, but with bloodless and silent lips, sat gazing on vacancy.

Fanchette returned, and looked on her young mistress with fear and dread. She could neither elicit a word in reply, nor the slightest indication of her repeated entreaties being understood. Nina suffered her hands to be chafed, her temples to be bathed, and at length broke into a loud hysteric laugh, that rang through the adjoining cabin, and sent a thrill to the heart of Ethelston. Springing on deck, he ordered Jacques to go below, and aid Fanchette in attending on her young lady, and then, with folded arms, he leaned over the low bulwark, and sat meditating in deep silence on the events of the day.

The moon had risen, and her beams silvered the waves through which the schooner was cutting her way; scarcely a fleeting cloud obscured the brightness of the sky, and all nature seemed hushed in the calm and peaceful repose of night. How different from the fearful storm now raging in the bosom of the young girl from whom he was divided only by a few inches of plank! He shuddered when that thought arose, but his conscience told him that he was acting aright, and indulging in the reverie that possessed him, he saw a distant figure in the glimmering moonlight which, as it drew near, grew more and more distinct, till it wore the form, the features, and the approving smile of his Lucy! Confirmed and

strengthened in his resolutions, he started from his seat, and bade the astonished Cupid, who was now at the helm, to prepare to go about, and stand to the eastward; Jacques was called from below, the order was repeated in a sterner voice, the sails were trimmed, and in a few minutes the schooner was close hauled and laying her course, as near as the wind would permit, for Guadaloupe.

While these events were passing on board the Seagull, Captain L'Estrange had returned in the frigate to Point à Pitre. His grief and anger may be better imagined than described when he learned the flight of his daughter and of his prisoner, together with the loss of his yacht and two of his slaves.

Concluding that the fugitives would make for New Orleans, he dispatched the Hironnelle immediately in pursuit, with orders to discover them if possible, and to bring them back by stratagem or force. He also wrote to Colonel Brandon, painting in the blackest colours the treachery and ingratitude of Ethelston, and calling upon him, as a man of honour, to disown and punish the perpetrator of such an outrage on the laws of hospitality.

Meanwhile the latter was straining every nerve to reach again the island from which he had so lately escaped. In this object he was hindered, not only by baffling winds, but by the obstinacy of Jacques, who, justly fearing the wrath of his late master, practised every manœuvre to frustrate Ethelston's design. But the latter was on his guard; and unless he was himself on deck, never trusted the helm in the coxswain's hands.

He learned from Fanchette, that Nina was in a high fever and quite delirious; but though he required constantly after her, and ordered every attention to be paid to her that was within his power, he adhered firmly to the resolution that he had formed of never entering her cabin.

After a few days' sailing to the eastward, when Ethelston calculated that he should not now be at a great distance from Guadaloupe, he fell in with a vessel, which proved to be the Hironnelle. The Seagull was immediately recognised; and the weather being fair, the lieutenant and eight men came on board. The French officer was no sooner on the deck, than he ordered his men to seize and secure Ethelston, and to place the wo blacks in irons.

It was in vain that Ethelston indignantly re-nonstrated against such harsh and undeserved treatment. The officer would listen to no explanation; and without deigning a reply, ordered his men to carry their prisoners on board the Hironnelle.

On reaching Point à Pitre, they were all placed in separate places of confinement; and Nina was, not without much risk and difficulty, conveyed to her former apartment in her father's house. The delirium of fever seemed to have permanently affected the poor girl's brain. She sang wild snatches of songs, and told those about her that her lover was often with her, but that he was invisible. Sometimes she fancied herself on board a ship, and asked them which way the wind blew, and whether they were near the shore. Then she would ask for a guitar, and tell them that she was a mermaid, and would sing them songs that the fishes loved to hear.

The distracted father often sat and listened to these incoherent ravings, until he left the room in an agony not to be described; and when alone, vented the most fearful imprecations on the sup-

posed treachery and ingratitude of Ethelston. He could not bring himself to see the latter; for, said he, "I must kill him, if I set eyes on his hateful person;" but he one day wrote the following lines, which he desired to be delivered to his prisoner:

"A FATHER, whose indignation is yet greater than his agony, desires to know what plea you can urge in extenuation of the odious crimes laid to your charge—the deliberate theft of his slaves and yacht, and the abduction and ruin of his child, in recompense for misplaced trust, kindness, and hospitality?"

Poor Ethelston, in the gloomy solitude of the narrow chamber where he was confined, read and re-read the above lines many times before he would trust himself to reply to them. He felt for the misery of L'Estrange, and he was too proud and too generous to exculpate himself by the narration of Nina's conduct; nay, although he knew that by desiring L'Estrange to examine separately Fanchette and Jacques, his own innocence, and the deceit practised upon him, would be brought to light, he could not bring himself to forget that delicacy which Nina had herself forgotten; nor add, to clear himself, one mite to the heavy weight of visitation that had already fallen upon her. He contented himself with sending the following answer:

"SIR,

"Your words, though harsh, would be more than merited by the crimes of which you believe me guilty. There is a Being above, who reads the heart, and will judge the conduct of us all. If I am guilty of the crimes imputed to me, His vengeance will inflict on me, through the stings of conscience, punishment more terrible even than the wrath of a justly-offended father could desire for the destroyer of his child. If I am not guilty, He, in His own good time, will make it known, and will add to your other heavy sorrows, regret for having unjustly charged with such base ingratitude,

"Your servant and prisoner,

"E. ETHELSTON."

On receiving the above letter, which seemed dictated by a calm consciousness of rectitude, L'Estrange's belief of his prisoner's guilt was for a moment staggered; and had he bethought himself of cross-examining the other partners in the escape, he would doubtless have arrived at the truth; but his feelings were too violently excited to permit the exercise of his reason; and tearing the note to pieces, he stamped upon it, exclaiming, in a paroxysm of rage, "Dissembling hypocrite! does he think to cozen me with words, as he has poisoned poor Nina's peace?"

Her disorder now assumed a different character. The excitement of delirium ceased, and was succeeded by a feebleness and gradual wasting, which baffled all the resources of medicine; and such was the apathy and stupor that clouded her faculties, that even her father could scarcely tell whether she knew him or not. In this state she continued for several days; and the physician at length informed L'Estrange that he must prepare himself for the worst, and that all hope of recovery was gone.

Madame L'Estrange had, under the pressure of anxiety, forgotten her habitual listlessness, and watched by her daughter's couch with a mother's unwearied solicitude; on the night succeeding the above sad announcement, Nina sunk into a quiet sleep, which gave some hope to her

sanguine parents, and induced them also to permit themselves a few hours' repose.

In the morning she awoke; her eye no longer dwelt on vacancy; a slight flush was visible on her transparent cheek, and she called her father, in a voice feeble, indeed, but clear and distinct. Who shall paint the rapture with which he hailed the returning dawn of reason and of hope? But his joy was of brief duration; for Nina, beckoning him to approach yet a step, said, "God be thanked that I may yet beg your blessing and forgiveness, dearest father!" Then, pressing her wasted hand upon her brow, she continued, after a short pause, "Yes, I remember it all now—all; the orange-grove—the flight—the ship—the last meeting! Oh! tell me, where is he? where is Ethelston?"

"He is safe confined," answered L'Estrange, scarcely repressing his rage; "he shall not escape punishment. The villain shall yet know the weight of an injured father's—" Ere he could conclude the sentence, Nina, by a sudden exertion, half rose in her bed, and, grasping his arm convulsively, said, "Father, curse him not—you know not what you say; it is on me, on me alone, that all your anger should fall; listen, and speak not, for my hours are numbered, and my strength nearly spent." She then proceeded to tell him, in a faint but distinct voice, all the particulars already known to the reader, keeping back nothing in her own defence, and confessing how Ethelston had been deceived, and how she had madly persisted in her endeavours to win his love, after he had explicitly owned to her that his heart and hand were promised to another.

"I solemnly assure you," she said, in conclusion, "that he never spoke to me of love, that he warned me as a brother, and reproved me as a father; but I would not be counselled. His image filled my thoughts, my senses, my whole soul—it fills them yet; and if you wish your poor Nina to die in peace, let her see you embrace him as a friend and son." So saying she sank exhausted on her pillow.

L'Estrange could scarcely master the agitation excited by this narration. After a short pause he replied, "My poor child! I fear you dream again. I wrote only a few days ago to Ethelston, charging him with his villany, and asking what he could say in his defence? His reply was nothing but a canting subterfuge."

"What was it?" inquired Nina, faintly.

L'Estrange repeated the words of the note. As he did so, a sweet smile stole over her countenance, and, clasping her hands together, she exclaimed, "Like himself—noble, generous Ethelston! Father, you are blind; he would not exculpate himself, by proclaiming your daughter's shame! If you doubt me, question Fanchette—Jacques—who know it all too well; but you will not doubt me, dear, dear father! By that Being to whose presence I am fast hastening, I tell you only the truth; by His name I conjure you to comfort my last moments, by granting my last request!"

L'Estrange averted his face, and rising almost immediately, desired an attendant to summon Ethelston without delay.

A long pause ensued; Nina's lips moved as if in silent prayer; and her father, covering his face with his hands, struggled to control the anguish by which his firmness was all but overpowered. At length Ethelston entered the room; he had been informed that Nina was very ill, but

was by no means aware of the extremity of her danger. Naturally indignant at the treatment he had lately received, knowing it to be undeserved, and ignorant of the purpose for which he was now called, his manner was cold and somewhat haughty, as he inquired the commands which Captain L'Estrange might have for his prisoner.

The agonized father sought in vain for utterance; his only reply was to point to the almost lifeless form of his child.

One glance from the bed to the countenance of L'Estrange was sufficient to explain all to Ethelston, who sprang forward, and, wringing the old captain's hand, faltered, in a voice of deep emotion, "Oh! forgive me for so speaking; I knew nothing—nothing of this dreadful scene!" Then, turning from him, he fixed his eyes upon Nina, while the convulsive working of his features showed that his habitual self-command was scarcely equal to support the present unexpected trial.

The deadly paleness of her brow contrasted with the disordered tresses of her dark hair—thick long eyelashes, reposing upon the transparent cheek, which wore a momentary hectic glow—the colourless lip, and the thin, wan fingers, crossed meekly upon her breast—all gave to her form and features an air of such unearthly beauty that Ethelston almost doubted whether the spirit still lingered in its lovely mansion; but his doubts were soon resolved, for, having finished the unuttered but fervent prayer which she had been addressing to the Throne of Grace, she again unclosed her eyes, and when they rested upon his countenance, a sweet smile played round her lip, and a warmer flush came over her cheek. Extending her hand to him, she said, "Can you forgive me for all the wrong I have done you?"

In reply, he pressed her fingers to his lips, for he could not speak. She continued: "I know that I grievously wronged my parents; but the wrong which I did to you was yet more cruel. God be thanked for giving me this brief but precious hour for atonement. You more than once called me your sister and your friend! be a brother to me now. And you, dearest father, if your love outweighs my fault,—if you wish your child to die happy, embrace him for my sake, and repair the injustice that you have done to his generous nature!"

The two men looked at each other; their hearts were melted, and their cordial embrace brought a ray of gladness to Nina's eyes. "God be thanked!" she murmured faintly. "Let my mother now come, that I may receive her blessing too."

While L'Estrange went to summon his wife to a scene which the weakness of her mind and nerves rendered her unequal to support, Nina continued: "Dear, dear Ethelston, let me hear your voice; the madness, the passion, the jealousy, that filled my bosom are all past, but the love is there, imperishable; tell me, my friend, counsellor, brother, that you are not angry with me for saying so now."

Again the wasted fingers were pressed to his burning lip; his tongue could not yet find utterance, but a tear which fell upon them told to the sufferer that there was no indifference in that silence.

Captain L'Estrange now entered, accompanied by his wife. Although a weak and foolish woman, her heart was not dead to those nat-

nal affections of a mother which the present scene might be expected to call forth; she wept long and violently over her dying child, and perhaps her grief might be embittered by a whisper of conscience that her sufferings were more or less attributable to neglected education. Fearing that her mother's excessive agitation might exhaust Nina's scanty store of remaining strength, Ethelston suggested to Captain L'Estrange to withdraw her into the adjoining apartment; and, approaching the sufferer, he whispered a few words in her ear. A sweet smile played upon her countenance as she answered, "Yes, and without delay."

Following her retiring parents from the room, he motioned to the priest, who was waiting at the door, to enter; and the sad party remained together while the confessor performed the rites of his sacred office. Madame L'Estrange was so overpowered by her grief, that she was removed, almost insensible, to her own apartment, while, upon a signal from the holy man, Ethelston and the father re-entered that of Nina.

Addressing the latter, she said in a faint voice, "Dearest father, I have made my peace with Heaven; let me add one more prayer to you for peace and forgiveness on earth."

"Speak it, my child; it is already granted," said the softened veteran.

"Pardon, for my sake, Fanchette and Jacques: they have committed a great offence; but it was I who urged them to it."

"It is forgiven: and they shall not be punished," replied L'Estrange: while Ethelston, deeply touched by this amiable remembrance of the offending slaves at such a moment, whispered to her in a low voice,

"Blessed are the peace-makers; for they shall be called the children of God!"

A grateful pressure of the hand which he had placed in hers, was the only reply, as she continued, addressing L'Estrange, "And let them marry, father, I know they love each other; and those who love should marry." Here her voice became feebler and feebler, as, once more opening her dark eyes, which shone with preternatural lustre upon Ethelston, she added, "You, too, will marry; but none will ever love you like your . . . sister!—closer—closer yet! let me feel your breath. Father, join your hand to his—so! This death is—Par—"

The closing word died upon her lips; but the angelic smile that lingered there seemed to emanate from that Paradise which their last moments strove in vain to name. Her earthly sorrows were at rest, and the bereaved father fell exhausted into Ethelston's arms.

CHAPTER XVII.

Excursion on the Prairie.—The Party fall in with a veteran Hunter.

WE must now return to Reginald and his trusty follower, Baptiste, whom we left at St. Louis, where they were busily employed in disposing of Colonel Brandon's share of the peltries brought in by the trapping party, which he had partly furnished the preceding year. They did not find much difficulty in effecting an advantageous sale to two of the other partners in the expedition,—active, enterprising men, who, from their connection with the Mackinaw Fur Company, were sure of reselling at considerable profit.

As soon as these affairs were settled, Reginald, who had been joined by Perrot, Bearskin, and the remaining crew of the canoe, resolved to defer no longer his proposed journey into the Osage country. He left all the arrangements to Baptiste and Bearskin, under whose superintendence the preparations advanced so rapidly, that at the end of a week they were satisfactorily completed.

It had been determined to leave the canoe at St. Louis, and to perform the journey by land; for this purpose a strong saddle-horse was purchased for each of the party, together with six pack-horses, and as many mules, for the transfer of the ammunition, baggage, and presents for their Indian allies. Four additional Canadian "coureurs des Bois" were engaged to take charge of the packs; so that when they started for the Western Prairies, the party mustered twelve in number, whose rank and designation were as follows:—

Reginald Brandon; Baptiste, his lieutenant, Bearskin, who, in the absence of the two former, was to take the command; M. Perrot, Mike Smith, with three other border hunters, and the four Canadians, completed the party.

Baptiste had taken care to place among the packages an abundance of mirrors, cutlery, and other articles most highly prized by the savages. He had also selected the horses with the greatest care, and two spare ones were taken, in case of accidents by the way. When all was ready, even the taciturn Bearskin admitted that he had never seen a party so well fitted out, in every respect, for an Indian expedition.

It was a lovely morning when they left St. Louis, and entered upon the broad track which led through the deep Missourian forest, with occasional openings of prairie, towards a trading post lately opened on the Osage, a river which runs from S.W. to N.E. and falls into the Missouri. Of all the party, none were in such exuberant spirits as Perrot, who, mounted on an active, spirited little Mestang horse,* capering beside the bulky figure of Mike Smith, addressed to him various pleasantries in broken English, which the other, if he understood them, did not deign to notice.

It was now near the close of May, and both the prairie and the woodland scenery were clad in the beautiful and varied colours of early summer; the grassy road along which they wound their easy way was soft and elastic to the horses' hoofs; and as they travelled farther from the settlements scattered near St. Louis, the frequent tracks of deer which they observed, tempted Reginald to halt his party, and encamp for the night, while he and Baptiste sallied forth to provide for them a venison supper.

After a short hunting ramble they returned, bearing with them the saddle of a fine buck. A huge fire was lighted; the camp-kettles, and other cooking utensils were in immediate request, and the travellers sat down to enjoy their first supper in the Missourian wilderness.

Monsieur Perrot was now quite in his element, and became at once a universal favourite, for never had any of the party tasted coffee or flour-cakes so good, or venison steaks of so delicate a flavour. His good humour was as inexhaustible as his inventive culinary talent; and they were almost disposed to believe in his

* Mestang, a horse bred between the wild and the tame breeds; they are sometimes to be met with among the traders to Santa Fé.

boasting assurance, that so long as there was a buffalo-hide, or an old moccasin left among them, they should never want a good meal.

Having supped and smoked a comfortable pipe, they proceeded to bivouac for the night. By the advice of Baptiste, Reginald had determined to accustom his party, from the first, to those precautionary habits which might soon become so essential to their safety; a regular rotation of sentry duty was established, the horses were carefully secured, and every man lay down with his knife in his belt, and his loaded rifle at his side; the packs were all carefully piled, so as to form a low breastwork, from behind which they might fire, in case of sudden attack; and when these dispositions were completed, those who were not on the watch wrapped themselves in their blankets or buffalo-skins, and with their feet towards the fire, slept as comfortably as on a bed of down.

For two days they continued their march in a northwest direction, meeting with no incident worthy of record; the hunters found abundance of game of every description, and Monsieur Perrot's skill was daily exercised upon prairie-hens, turkeys, and deer. On the third day, as they were winding their way leisurely down a wooded valley, the sharp crack of a rifle was heard at no great distance. Reginald, desiring to ascertain whether Indians or white men were hunting in the neighbourhood, halted his party, and went forward, accompanied by Baptiste, to endeavour, unperceived, to approach the person whose shot they had heard. A smooth, grassy glade facilitated their project, and a slight column of smoke curling up from an adjoining thicket, served to guide them towards the spot. Ere they had advanced far, the parting of the brushwood showed them that the object of their search was approaching the place where they stood, and they had barely time to conceal themselves in a bush of sumach, when the unknown hunter emerged from the thicket, dragging after him a fine deer. He was a powerful man of middling height, not very unlike Baptiste in dress and appearance, but even more embrowned and weather-beaten than the trusty guide; he seemed to be about fifty years of age, and the hair on his temples was scant and grey; his countenance was strikingly expressive of boldness and resolution, and his eye seemed as clear and bright as that of a man in the early prime of life. Leaning his rifle against an adjoining tree, he proceeded to handle and feel his quarry, to ascertain the proportions of fat and meat; the examination seemed not unsatisfactory, for when it was concluded he wiped the perspiration from his brow, and with a complacent smile muttered half aloud, "Ah, 'taint every day as a man can find a saddle like that in old Kentucky now—what with their dogs, and girdlins, and clearins, and hog-feedings, and the other devilments of the settlements, the deer's all driven out of the country, or if it aint driven out, they run all the fat off, so that it's only fit to feed one of your tradin' townbred fellows, who wouldn't know a prime buck from a Lancaster sheep!"

After this brief soliloquy, the veteran sportsman tucked up the sleeve of his hunting-shirt, and proceeded to skin and cut up his quarry, with a skill and despatch that showed him to be a perfect master of his craft. Reginald and Baptiste had remained silent observers of his proceedings, but the former inferred from the pleased twinkle of the Guide's grey eyes, and the

comic working of the muscles of his mouth, that the solitary hunter was no stranger to him; touching Baptiste lightly, he whispered, "I see that we have come across an acquaintance of yours in this remote place."

"That we have, Master Reginald," said the Guide; "and you'd have known him too, if you'd spent some of the years in Kentuck, as you passed at those colleges in the old country; but we'll just step out and hail him, for though he aint particular fond of company, he's not the man to turn his back on a friend to whom he has once given his hand."

So saying, he rose from his hiding place, and coming out on the open glade, before Reginald could inquire the stranger's name, the Guide said aloud, "A prime buck, Colonel, I see your hand's as steady as ever!"

At the first sound of a voice addressing him in his own language, a shade of displeasure came across the hunter's countenance, but as he recognised the speaker, it disappeared instantly, and he replied, "Ha! Baptiste, my old friend, is that you? What chaise are you on here?"

So saying, he grasped the horny hand of the Guide, with a heartiness which proved that the latter was really welcome.

"Why, Colonel, I'm out on a kind o' mixed hunt this turn, with this young gentleman, whose father, Colonel Brandon, you've known many a day. Master Reginald, I'm sure you'll be glad to be acquainted with Colonel Boone, howbeit you little expected to find him in this part of the airth."

At the mention of the stranger's name, Reginald's hand was raised unconsciously to his cap, which he doffed respectfully as he said, "I am indeed glad to meet the celebrated Daniel Boone, whose name is as familiar to every western hunter as that of Washington or Franklin in our cities."

"My young friend," said the Colonel, laughing good-humouredly, "I am heartily glad to see your father's son, but you must not bring the ways of the city into the woods, by flattering a rough old bear-hunter with fine words."

"Nay," said Reginald, "there is no flattery, for Baptiste here has spoken of you to me a hundred times, and has told me, as often, that a better hunter, or a better man does not breathe. You seem to have known him some time, and must, therefore, be able to judge whether he is of a flattering sort or not."

"Why, it wasn't much his trade, I allow," replied the Colonel, "in old times when he and I hunted bear for three weeks together in the big laurel thicket at Kentucky Forks. I believe, Baptiste, that axe at your belt is the very one with which you killed the old she, who wasn't pleased because we shot down two of her cubs; she hadn't manners enough to give us time to load again, and when you split her skull handsomely, she was playing a mighty unpleasant game with the stock of my rifle. Ah, that was a reasonable quiet country in those days," continued the Colonel; "we had no trouble, but a lively bit of a skirmmage, now and then, with the Indians, until the Browns, and Frasers, and Micklehams, and heaven knows how many more came to settle in it, and what with their infernal ploughs, and fences, and mills, the untin' was clean spoilt; I stayed as long as I could, for I'd a kind o' likin' to it; but at last I couldn't go ten mile any way without comin' to some clearin' or log-hut, so says I to myself, 'Colonel, the sooner

you clear out o' this, the better you'll be pleased."

"Well, Colonel," said the Guide, "I heard you had moved away from the Forks, and had gone further down west, but they never told me you had crossed the big river."

"I only came here last fall," replied the Colonel, "for I found in Kentucky that as fast as I moved, the settlers and squatters followed; so I thought I'd dodge 'em once for all, and make for a country where the deer and I could live comfortably together."

"As we have thus accidentally fallen in with you," said Reginald, "I hope you will take a hunter's meal with us before we part; our men and baggage are not a mile from this spot, and Colonel Boone's company will be a pleasure to us all."

The invitation was accepted as frankly as it was given.

Baptiste shouldered the Colonel's venison, and in a short time the three rejoined Reginald's party. Daniel Boone's name alone was sufficient in the West to ensure him a hearty welcome. Perrot's talents were put into immediate requisition, and ere long the game and poultry of the prairie were roasting before a capital fire, while the indefatigable Frenchman prepared the additional and unusual luxuries of hot maize cakes and coffee.

During the repast, Reginald learned from Colonel Boone that various parties of Indians had been lately hunting in the neighbourhood. He described most of them as friendly, and willing to trade in meat or skins for powder and lead; he believed them to belong to the Kansas, a tribe once powerful, and resident on the river called by that name falling into the Missouri, about a hundred miles to the N.W. of the place where our party were now seated; but the tribe had been of late reduced by the ravages of the small-pox, and by the incursions of the Pawnees—a nation more numerous and warlike, whose villages were situated a hundred miles higher up the same river.*

The Colonel described the neighbourhood as abounding in elk, deer, bear, and turkeys; but he said that the beaver and buffalo were already scarce, the great demand for their skins having caused them to be hunted quite out of the region bordering on the settlements. After spending a couple of hours agreeably with our party, the veteran sportsman shouldered his trusty rifle, and wishing our hero a successful hunt, and shaking his old comrade Baptiste cordially by the hand, walked off leisurely in a northerly direction, towards his present abode; which was not, he said, so far distant but that he should easily reach it before sundown.

As the last glimpse of his retiring figure was lost in the shades of the forest, the Guide uttered one of those grunts which he sometimes unconsciously indulged. Reginald knew that on these occasions there was something on his mind, and guessing that it referred to their departed guest, he said,

"Well, Baptiste, I am really glad to have seen Daniel Boone; and I can truly say, I am not disappointed; he seems to be just the sort of man that I expected to see."

"He is a sort," said the Guide, "that we don't see every day, Master Reginald. Perhaps he ain't much of a talker; an' he don't use to quarrel unless there's a reason for 't; but if he's once aggravated, or if his friend's in a scrape, he's rather apt to be dangerous."

"I doubt it not," said Reginald; "there is a quiet look of resolution about him; and, in a difficulty, I would rather have one such man with me than two or three of your violent, noisy brawlers."

As he said this his eye inadvertently rested upon the huge figure of Mike Smith, who was seated at a little distance lazily smoking his pipe, and leaning against a log of fallen timber. The Guide observed the direction of Reginald's eye, and guessed what was passing in his mind. A grave smile stole for a moment over his features; but he made no reply, and in a few minutes, the marching orders being issued, the party resumed their journey.

On the following day they reached a point where the track branched off in two directions; the broader, and more beaten, to the N.W.; the other towards the S.W. The Guide informed them that the former led along by the few scattered settlements, that were already made on the southern side of the Missouri, towards the ferry and trading-post near the mouth of the Kansas river; while the smaller, and less beaten track, led towards the branch of Osage river, on which the united party of Delawares and Osages, whom they sought, were encamped.

Having followed this track for fifty miles, they came to a spot, then known among hunters by the name of the Elk Flats, where the branch on the Osage, called Grand River, is fordable. Here they crossed without accident or difficulty, except that M. Perrot's horse missed his footing, and slipped into a deeper part of the stream. The horse swam lustily, and soon reached the opposite bank; but the Frenchman had cast himself off, and now grasped with both hands an old limb of a tree that was imbedded near the middle of the river; he could just touch the ground with his feet, but, being a bad swimmer, he was afraid to let go his hold, for fear of being again swept away by the current, while his rueful countenance, and his cries for assistance, provoked the mirth of all the party.

After enjoying his valet's alarm for a few minutes, Reginald, who had already crossed, entered the river again with Nekimi, and approaching Perrot, desired him to grasp the mane firmly in his hand, and leave the rest to the animal's sagacity, which instruction being obeyed, he was safely brought ashore, and in a short time was laughing louder than the rest at his own fright, and at the ludicrous predicament from which he had been extricated.

The packages were all conveyed across without accident, and the party found themselves encamped in what was then considered a part of the Osage country. Here they were obliged to use greater vigilance in the protection of their camp and of their horses, during the night, as they had not yet smoked the pipe with the chiefs, and were liable to an attack from a party of warriors or horsestealers.

The night passed, however, without any disturbance; and on the following day at noon, they reached a spot which Baptiste recognized as a former camping-place of the Osages, and which he knew to be not distant from their present village. Here his attention was suddenly drawn

* The Pawnee nations have of late years fixed their winter villages on the banks of the Nebraska, or Platte River, many hundred miles to the N.W. of the spot named in the text; but at the date of our narrative they dwelt on the banks of the Kansas, where the ruins of their principal village are still faintly to be discerned.

to an adjoining maple, on the bark of which sundry marks were rudely cut, and in a fork of the tree were three arrows, and as many separate bunches of horsehair. He examined all these carefully, and replaced them exactly as he found them; after which he informed Reginald that three braves of the Osages had gone forward during the past night on a war-excursion towards the Kanzas, and all these marks were left to inform their followers of their purpose, and the exact path which they intended to pursue. He also advised Reginald to halt his party here, while he went on himself with one of the men to the village, it being contrary to the customs of Indian etiquette for a great man to come among them unannounced.

Reginald adopted his counsel, and the sturdy Guide, accompanied by one of the *coureurs des Bois*, set out upon his mission, the result of which will appear in the following chapter.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Reginald and his Party reach the Indian Encampment.

THE Guide and his companion pursued their way leisurely along a beaten track, which led them through a well-timbered valley, watered by one of the branches of Grand River, until it emerged upon a rising slope of open prairie. Having gained its summit, they saw at a little distance the Indian encampment stretched along the banks of a rivulet, which, after curving round the base of the hill on which they now stood, found its way to the line of heavy timber that marked the course of the main river. They were soon hailed by a mounted Delaware scout, to whom Baptiste explained the peaceful nature of his mission, and desired to be shown into the presence of the principal chiefs.

As the Guide walked through the scattered lodges of the Delawares, his eye rested on more than one Indian to whom he was well known; but as he was now acting in the capacity of ambassador, it was not consistent with Indian usage that he should speak or be spoken to by others on the way. So well did he know the habits of the people among whom he now found himself, that when he arrived before the lodge of the Great Chief, he passed by War-Eagle and Wingenund, who had come to its entrance on the approach of a stranger, and giving them merely a silent sign of recognition, took the place pointed out to him in the centre of the lodge, by the side of the venerable man who was the head of this emigrant band of the Lenapé; to whom, as the highest proof of their respect and veneration, they had given the name of Tamenund,* by which alone he was now known throughout the nation.

* The name of Tamenund is doubtless familiar to all Americans who have taken the slightest interest in the history of the Indian tribes, as well as to that more numerous class who have read the graphic and picturesque descriptions penned by the great American novelist; nevertheless, it may be necessary, for the information of some European readers, to state, that Tamenund was an ancient Lenapé chief, whose traditional fame is so great in the tribe, that they have from time to time given his name to chiefs, and even to white men, whom they desired especially to honour. At the time of the revolutionary war, so numerous were the traditions and legends respecting this hero, that he was in some quarters established as the patron saint of America, under the name of St. Tammany; and hence arose the Tammany societies and Tammany buildings in various parts of the Union. See *Heckewelder's Historical Account of the Indian Nations*, chap. xl., and *The Last of the Mohicans*, vol. iii., p. 152, &c.

The pipe of welcome having been presented, and been smoked for a few minutes with becoming gravity, Baptiste opened to Tamenund the object of his visit, and informed him that a white warrior and chief, already known to some of the Delawares present, desired to eat, to smoke, and to hunt with them for a season as a brother. To this Tamenund, who had already been informed by War-Eagle of the character and conduct of Reginald, as well as of his promised visit, replied with becoming dignity and hospitality, that the young white chief should be welcome; that his heart was known to be great among the Delawares, and that both he and his people should be held as brothers; at the same time he informed the Guide, that as they were about to move their encampment immediately to a more favourable spot, it might be better for the White Chief to join them on the following morning, when all should be prepared for his reception.

The Guide having acceded to this suggestion, rose to take his leave, and retired with his companion from the village. Before they had gone a mile on their return, they heard behind them the trampling of horses, and Baptiste recognised War-Eagle and Wingenund approaching at full speed, who greeted him cordially, and made many inquiries about Netis and the Lily of Mooshanne.

Having acquired the desired information, it was agreed, that before noon on the following day Reginald should come to the spot where they were now conversing, and that War-Eagle should be there to escort and accompany him to his first meeting with the Delaware and Osage chiefs.

These preliminaries being arranged, the Indians galloped back to the village, and Baptiste returned without accident or interruption to Reginald's camp, where he gave an account of his mission and of the arrangements for the morrow's conference.

Early on the following morning they set forth towards the Indian village. By Baptiste's advice, Reginald attired himself more gaily than usual; his hunting-shirt and leggins of elkskin were ornamented with fringes; the bugle slung across his shoulders was suspended by a green cord adorned with tassels; on his head he wore a forage-cap encircled by a gold band; a brace of silver-mounted pistols were stuck in his belt, and a German boar-knife hung at his side; he had allowed Baptiste to ornament Nekimi's bridle with beads, after the Indian fashion, and the noble animal pranced under his gallant rider as if conscious that he was expected to show his beauty and his mettle. The dress and appearance of Reginald, though fanciful and strange, were rendered striking by the grace and muscular vigour of his frame, as well as by the open, fearless character of his countenance; and the party of Whitemen went gaily forward, confident in the favourable impression which their young leader would make on their Indian allies.

When they reached the spot where Baptiste had, on the preceding day, parted from War-Eagle, they descried two Indians sitting at the root of an old maple-tree, as if awaiting their arrival; a single glance enabled Reginald to recognise them, and springing from his horse, he greeted War-Eagle and Wingenund with affectionate cordiality, and read in the looks of both, though they spoke little, that he was heartily welcome. When they had saluted Baptiste, Ra-

gnald introduced them in form to the other members of his party, and among the rest, to Monsieur Perrot, who having as yet seen few Indians, and those of the meanest class, was surprised at the noble and dignified appearance of War-Eagle, to whom he doffed his cap with as much respect as if he had been a field-marshal of France.

Having made a short halt, during which the pipe was passed round, and some cakes of Indian corn and honey set before their guests, the party again moved forward, under the guidance of War-Eagle. Leaving the heavy timber in the valley, they ascended the opposite hill, where a magnificent prospect opened upon their view; below them was an undulating prairie of boundless extent, through the middle of which ran a tributary branch of Grand River; behind them lay the verdant mass of forest from which they had lately emerged; the plain in front was dotted with the lodges of the Delawares and the Osages, while scattered groups of Indians, and grazing horses, gave life, animation, and endless variety to the scene.

Halting for a moment on the brow of the hill, War-Eagle pointed out to Reginald the lodge of his father Tamenund, distinguished above the rest by its superior size and elevation, and at the same time showed him at the other extremity of the encampment, a lodge of similar dimensions, which he described as being that of the Osage chief.

"How is he called?" inquired Reginald.

"Mahéga," replied the War-Eagle.

At the mention of this name the Guide uttered one of those peculiar sounds, something between a whistle and a grunt, by which Reginald knew that something was passing in his mind, but on this occasion, without apparently noticing the interruption, he continued, addressing War-Eagle, "Will Mahéga receive me too as a brother—is the Osage chief a friend to the Whitemen?"

"Mahéga is a warrior," replied the Indian; "he hunts with the Lenapé, and he must be a friend of their brother."

Not only did this answer appear evasive, but there was also something more than usually constrained in the tone and manner of War-Eagle, which did not escape the observation of Reginald, and with the straightforward openness of his character, he said, "War-Eagle, my heart is open to you, and my tongue can be silent if required—speak to me freely, and tell me if Mahéga is a friend or not; is he a brave or a snake?"

War-Eagle, fixing his searching eye upon Reginald's countenance, replied, "Mahéga is a warrior—the scalps in his lodge are many—his name is not a lie, but his heart is not that of a Lenapé—War-Eagle will not speak of him:—Grand Hâche knows him, and my brother's eyes will be open."

Having thus spoken, the young chief added a few words in his own tongue to Baptiste, and making a sign for Wingenund to follow, he galloped off at speed towards the encampment.

Reginald, surprised, and somewhat inclined to be displeased by their abrupt departure, turned to the Guide, and inquired the cause of it, and also the meaning of War-Eagle's last words.

Baptiste, shaking his head significantly, replied in a low voice, "I know Mahéga well—

at least I have heard much of him; his name signifies 'Red-hand,' and, as the young chief says, it tells no lie, for he has killed many; last year he attacked a war-party of the Outagamis* near the Great River, and cut them off to a man; he himself killed their chief and several of their warriors—they say he is the strongest and the bravest man in the nation."

"It seems to me," said Reginald, "that War-Eagle and he are not very good friends."

"They are not," replied Baptiste; "the young Delaware has evidently some quarrel with him, and therefore would not speak of him—we shall learn what it is before many days are over; meanwhile, Master Reginald, say nothing to any others of the party on this subject, for they may take alarm, or show suspicion, and if they do, your summer hunt may chance to end in rougher play than we expect. I will keep my eye on 'Red-hand,' and will soon tell you what tree he's making for."

"Why did they gallop off so abruptly?" inquired Reginald.

"They are gone to rejoin the bands which are coming out to receive us on our entrance," replied the Guide. "We must put our party in their best array, and get the presents ready, for we have not many minutes to spare."

The event proved the correctness of his calculation; for they had scarcely time to select from the packs those articles destined to be presented to the chiefs at this interview, before they saw two large bands of mounted Indians gallop towards them from the opposite extremities of the encampment. As they drew near that which came from the Delaware quarter, and was headed by War-Eagle in person, they checked their speed, and approached slowly, while their leader, advancing in front of the band, saluted Reginald and his party with dignified courtesy. Meanwhile, the body of Osages continued their career with headlong speed, shouting, yelling, and going through all the exciting manœuvres of a mock fight, after their wild fashion. Their dress was more scanty and less ornamented than that of the Delawares; but being tricked out with painted horsehair, porcupine quills, and feathers, it bore altogether a more gay and picturesque appearance; neither can it be denied that they were, in general, better horsemen than their allies; and they seemed to delight in showing off their equestrian skill, especially in galloping up to Reginald's party at the very top of their speed, and then either halting so suddenly as to throw their horses quite back upon their haunches, or dividing off to the right and to the left, and renewing their manœuvres in another quarter with increased extravagance of noise and gesture.

Reginald having learned from Baptiste that this was their mode of showing honour to guests on their arrival, awaited patiently the termination of their manœuvres; and when at length they ceased, and the Osage party reined their horses up by the side of the Delawares, he went forward and shook hands with their leader, a warrior somewhat older than War-Eagle, and of a fine martial appearance. As soon as he found an opportunity, Reginald, turning to Wingenund, who was close behind him, inquired, in English, if that Osage chief was "Mahéga?"

* The tribe called by white men "the Foxes," who inhabit chiefly the region between the Upper Mississippi and Lake Michigan.

"No," replied the youth, "that is a brave,* called in their tongue the Black-Wolf. Mahéga," he added with a peculiar smile, "is very different."

"How do you mean, Wingenund?"

"Black-Wolf," replied the youth, "is a warrior, and has no fear, but he is not like Mahéga; an antelope is not an elk!"

While this conversation was going on, the party entered the encampment, and wound their way among its scattered lodges, towards that of Tamenund, where, as the War-Eagle informed Reginald, a feast was prepared for his reception, to which Mahéga and the other Osage leaders were invited.

On arriving before the great lodge, Reginald and his companions dismounted, and giving their horses to the youths in attendance, shook hands in succession with the principal chiefs and braves of the two nations. Reginald was much struck by the benevolent and dignified countenance of the Delaware chief; but in spite of himself, and of a preconceived dislike which he was inclined to entertain towards Mahéga or Red-hand, his eye rested on that haughty chieftain with mingled surprise and admiration. He was nearly a head taller than those by whom he was surrounded; and his limbs, though cast in a Herculean mould, showed the symmetrical proportions which are so distinctive of the North American Indians; his forehead was bold and high, his nose aquiline, and his mouth broad, firm, and expressive of most determined character; his eye was rather small, but bright and piercing as a hawk's; his hair had been all shaven from his head, with the exception of the scalp-lock on the crown, which was painted scarlet, and interwoven with a tuft of horsehair dyed of the same colour. Around his muscular throat was suspended a collar formed from the claws of the grizzly bear, ornamented with parti-coloured beads, entwined with the delicate fur of the white ermine; his hunting-shirt and leggings were of the finest antelope skin, and his moccasins were adorned with beads and the stained quills of the porcupine. He leaned carelessly on a bow, which few men in the tribe could bend. At his back were slung his arrows in a quiver made of wolf-skin, so disposed that the grinning visage of the animal was seen above his shoulder, while a war-club and scalping-knife, fastened to his belt, completed the formidable Mahéga's equipment.

As he glanced his eye over the party of white men, there was an expression of scornful pride on his countenance, which the quick temper of their youthful leader was ill disposed to brook, had not the prudent counsels of the Guide prepared him for the exercise of self-command. Nevertheless, as he turned from the Osage chief to the bulky proportions of his gigantic follower, Mike Smith, he felt that it was like comparing a lion with an ox; and that in the event of a

quarrel between them, the rifle alone could render his issue doubtful.

The feast of welcome was now prepared in the lodge of Tamenund, which was composed of bison skins stretched upon poles, arranged in the form of a horse-shoe, and covering an extent of ground apparently not less than twenty yards in length. Reginald observed also several smaller lodges immediately adjoining that of the chief, on one side, and on the other a circular tent of wax-cloth, or painted canvass, evidently procured from white men, as it was of excellent texture, and its door, or aperture, protected by double folds of the same material.

While he was still looking at this comparatively civilized dwelling, with some curiosity to know by whom it might be tenanted, the folds of the opening were pushed aside, and an elderly man appeared, who, after contemplating for a moment the newly-arrived group, came forward to offer them a friendly salutation. He was apparently between fifty and sixty; but his years were not easily guessed, for his snow-white hair might seem to have numbered seventy winters; while from the uprightness of his carriage, and the elasticity of his step, he seemed scarcely past the vigour of middle life. In figure he was tall and slight; his countenance, though tanned by long exposure to the sun, was strikingly attractive, and his mild blue eye beamed with an expression of benevolence not to be mistaken. His dress was a black frock of serge, fastened at the waist by a girdle of the same colour, from which was suspended a small bag, wherein he carried the few simples and instruments requisite for his daily offices of charity and kindness. Dark grey trousers of the coarsest texture, and moccasins of buffalo hide, completed the dress of Paul Müller, already mentioned by Wingenund to Reginald as the "Black Father;" under which name, translated according to their various languages, the pious and excellent Missionary was known among the Delawares, Osages, Ioways, Otoes, Kongsas, and other tribes then inhabiting the regions lying between the Missouri and the Arkansas.

Such was the man who now came forward to greet the newly-arrived party; and such was the irresistible charm of his voice and manner, that from the first Reginald felt himself constrained to love and respect him.

The feast being now ready, and Reginald having pointed out Baptiste and Bearskin as his officers, or lieutenants, they were invited with him to sit down in the lodge of Tamenund, with the principal chiefs of the Delawares, the Chief and Great Medicine Man* of the Osages, and the Black Father. (Mike Smith and the other white men being feasted by a brave in an adjoining lodge.) The pipe was lighted, and having been passed twice round the party with silent gravity, the Great Medicine made a speech, in which he praised the virtues and hospitality of Tamenund, and paid many compliments to the white guests; after which a substantial dinner was set before

* In describing the manners and distinctions of rank among the Indians of the Missouri plains, it is necessary to adopt the terms in common use among the guides and traders, however vague and unsatisfactory those terms may be. In these tribes the chieftainship is partly hereditary and partly elective; there is usually one Great Chief, and there are also chiefs of a second degree, who are chiefs of different bands in the tribe; next to these in rank are the "Braves," the leading warriors of the nation; and in order to be qualified for admission into this rank, an Indian must have killed an enemy or given other sufficient evidence of courage and capacity. When a war-council is held, the opinion of the principal Brave is frequently preferred before that of the chief.

* "Medicine-men." This term (commonly used by traders among the Indians beyond the Mississippi) signifies the "priests," or "mystery-men," who are set apart for the celebration of all religious rites and ceremonies. They are the same class as those who were described by Charlevoix, and other early French writers, as "Jongleurs," because they unite medical practice to their sacerdotal office, and, more especially in the former, exercise all manner of absurd mummerly. Their dress, character, and habits vary according to the tribe to which they belong; but they are genuine "Jongleurs" throughout.

them, consisting of roasted buffalo-ribs, venison, and boiled maize.

Reginald had never before been present at an Indian feast, and though he had the appetite naturally belonging to his age and health, he soon found that he was no match, as a trencherman, for those among whom he was now placed; and before they had half finished their meal, he replaced his knife in its sheath and announced himself satisfied.

The old chief smiled good-humouredly, and said that he would soon do better, while Mahéga, quietly commencing an attack upon a third buffalo-rib, glanced at him with a look of contempt that he was at no pains to conceal, and which, as may well be imagined, increased our hero's dislike for the gigantic Osage.

CHAPTER XIX.

Reginald and his party at the Indian encampment.

WHILE Reginald and his two companions were feasting with Tamenund, a similar repast was laid before the rest of the party, in the lodge of a brave named Maque-o-nah, or the "Bear-asleep," at which Mike Smith occupied the centre, or principal seat, and next to him sat Monsieur Perrot—the latter personage being very curious to see the culinary arrangements made for this, his first Indian banquet. He was horrified at observing the carelessness with which they thrust half the side of a buffalo to the edge of a huge fire of undried wood, leaving a portion of the meat to be singed and burnt, while other parts were scarcely exposed to the heat; he could not refrain from expressing to one of the Canadian *coureurs des Bois*, in his own language, his contempt and pity for the ignorant savages, who thus presumed to desecrate a noble science, which ranked higher, in his estimation, than poetry, painting, or sculpture; but he was warned that he must be very careful neither to reject, nor show any distaste for the food set before him, as, by so doing, he would give mortal offence to his entertainers. It was ludicrous in the extreme to watch the poor Frenchman's attempts at imparting to his features a smile of satisfaction, when a wooden bowl was placed before him, filled with half boiled maize, and beside it one of the buffalo ribs, evidently least favoured by the fire, as it was scarce warmed through, and was tough and stringy as shoe-leather. After bestowing upon sundry portions of it many fruitless attempts at mastication, he contrived, unperceived, to slip what remained of the meat into the pocket of his jacket, and then laughed with great self-satisfaction at the trick he had played his uncivilized hosts.

When the feast was concluded in Tamenund's lodge, Reginald desired his men to unpack one of the bales, which he pointed out, and to spread its contents before him; the savages gathered round the coveted and glittering objects, with eager but silent astonishment, while he separated the presents which, by the advice of Baptiste, were now distributed among their chiefs: to Tamenund he apportioned a large blanket of scarlet cloth, a silver mounted pistol, and a basket containing mirrors, beads, and trinkets, for his wives and daughters. To Mahéga a bridle

ornamented with beads, several pounds of tobacco, powder, and lead, a fowling-piece, and a blanket of blue woollen-stuff. The features of the Osage Chief relaxed into a grim smile of satisfaction as he received these valuable gifts, and he so far overcame the repulsive sternness of his usual character as to seize Reginald's hand, and to tell him that he was a great chief, and good to his Indian brothers. The other presents having been distributed among the chiefs and braves, according to their rank, the feast was broken up and they retired to their respective lodges; Reginald, Baptiste, and M. Perrot, being accommodated in that of Tamenund himself, and Bearskin, with the rest of the white-men's party, in those lodges which have before been mentioned as being contiguous to that of the old chief.

During the first night that he spent in his new quarters, the excitement, and novelty of the scene, banished sleep from the eyes of Reginald, and finding himself restless, he arose half an hour before daybreak, to enjoy the early freshness of the morning. Throwing his rifle over his arm, he was about to leave the lodge, when Baptiste touched him, and inquired in a low voice, if he were prepared with a reply in case of being challenged by any of the scouts around the encampment; with some shame he confessed he had forgotten it, and the guide then instructed him, if he were challenged, to say "*Lenape n'a ki Netis*," or "I am Netis, the friend of the Delawares." Being thus prepared, and carrying with him the few articles requisite for a prairie toilet, he stepped out into the open air. Close by the opening of the lodge he saw a tall figure stretched on the grass, enveloped in a buffalo-robe, the hairy fell of which was silvered with the heavy night-dew; it was War-Eagle, who rarely slept in lodge or tent, and whose quick eye, though he neither moved nor spoke, discerned his white brother in a moment, although the latter could not recognize his friend.

Reginald pursued his way through the encampment to its extremity, where the streamlet before mentioned wound its course among the dells and hillocks of the prairie, until it reached the larger river that flowed through the distant forest. After following the banks of the stream for one or two miles, the red streaks in the eastern horizon gave notice of day's approach, and observing near him a hill, somewhat more elevated than those by which it was surrounded, Reginald climbed to its top, in order to observe the effect of sunrise on that wild and picturesque scene.

To the westward, the undulations of the prairie, wrapped in heavy folds of mist, rose in confused heaps like the waves of a boundless ocean: to the south, he could just distinguish the lodges and the smouldering fires of the encampment, whence, at intervals, there fell upon his ear mingled and indistinct sounds, disagreeable perhaps in themselves, but rendered harmonious by distance, and by their unison with the wildness of the surrounding objects; while to the eastward lay a dense and gloomy range of woods, over the summits of whose foliage the dawning sun was shedding a stream of golden light.

Reginald gazed upon the scene with wonder.

and delight; and every moment while he gazed called into existence richer and more varied beauties. The mists and exhalations rising from the plain curled themselves into a thousand fantastic shapes around the points and projections of the hills, where they seemed to hang like mantles which the Earth had cast from her bosom, as being rendered unnecessary by the appearance of the day; swarms of children and of dusky figures began to emerge from the encampment, and troops of horses to crop the pasture on the distant hills, while the splendour of the sun, now risen in its full glory, lit up with a thousand varying hues the eastern expanse of boundless forest. Reginald's heart was not insensible to the impressions naturally excited by such a scene; and while he admired its variegated beauties, his thoughts were raised in adoration to that Almighty and beneficent Being, whose temple is the Earth, and whose are the "cattle upon a thousand hills."

Having made his way again to the banks of the stream, and found a spot sheltered by alder and poplar trees, he bathed and made his morning toilet; after which he returned towards the encampment, his body refreshed by his bath, and his mind attuned to high and inspiring thoughts by the meditation in which he had been engaged. As he strolled leisurely along, he observed a spot where the trees were larger, and the shade apparently more dense than the other portions of the valley; and, being anxious to make himself acquainted with all the localities in the neighbourhood of his new home, he followed a small beaten path, which, after sundry windings among the alders, brought him to an open space screened on three sides by the bushes, and bounded on the fourth by the stream. Reginald cast his eyes around this pleasant and secluded spot, until they rested upon an object that rivetted them irresistibly. It was a female figure seated at the root of an ancient poplar, over a low branch of which one arm was carelessly thrown, while with the other she held a book, which she was reading with such fixed attention as to be altogether unconscious of Reginald's approach. Her complexion was dark, but clear and delicate, and the rich brown hair which fell over her neck and shoulders, still damp and glossy from her morning ablutions, was parted on her forehead by a wreath of wild flowers twined from among those which grew around the spot; the contour of her figure, and her unstudied attitude of repose, realized the classic dreams of Nymph and Nereid, while her countenance wore an expression of angelic loveliness, such as Reginald had never seen or imagined.

He gazed—and gazing on those sweet features, he saw the red full lips move unconsciously, while they followed the subject that absorbed her attention, and forgetful that he was intruding on retirement, he waited, entranced, until those downcast eyes should be raised. At length she looked up, and seeing the figure of a man within a few paces of her, she sprang to her feet with the lightness of a startled antelope, and darting on him a look of mingled surprise and reproof, suppressed the exclamation of alarm that rose to her lips. Reginald would fain have addressed the lovely being before him, he would fain

unintended intrusion; but the words died upon his lips, and it was almost mechanically that he doffed his hunting cap, and stood silent and uncovered before her! Recovering from the momentary confusion, she advanced a step towards him, and with an ingenuous blush held out her hand, saying in a gentle tone of inquiry, and with the purest accent, "Netis, my brother's friend?"

"The same, fair creature," replied Reginald, whose wonder and admiration were still more excited by the untaught grace and dignity of her manner, as well as by hearing his own tongue so sweetly pronounced; "but, in the name of Heaven, who—what—whence can you be?" Blushing more deeply at the animation and eagerness of his manner, she was for a moment silent, when he continued, striking his hand on his forehead:—"Oh, I have it, fool, tortoise, that I was. You are 'Prairie-bird,' the sister of whom Wingenund has told me so much." Then, gently pressing the little hand which he had taken, he added, "Dear Wingenund! he saved my life; his sister will not consider me a stranger!"

Again a warmer blush mantled on the cheek of Prairie-bird, as she replied, "You are no stranger: you speak of Wingenund's good deed: you are silent about your own! You drew War-Eagle from the deep and swift waters. I have heard it all, and have often wished to see you and thank you myself." There was a modest simplicity in her manner as she uttered these few words that confirmed the impression made on Reginald by the first glimpse of her lovely form and features; but beyond this there was something in the tone of her voice that found its way direct to his heart; it fell upon his ear like an old familiar strain of music, and he felt unwilling to break the silence that followed its closing accents.

It is not our province, in a simple narrative of this kind, to discuss the oft-disputed question, whether love at first sight deserves the name of love; whether it is merely a passing emotion, which, though apparently strong, a brief lapse of time may efface; or, whether there be really secret irresistible natural impulses, by which two human beings, who meet together for the first time, feel as if they had known and loved each other for years, and as if the early cherished visions of fancy, the aspirations of hope, the creations of imagination, the secret, undefined longings of the heart, were all at once embodied and realized.* We are inclined to believe that, although not frequent, instances sometimes occur of this instinctive sympathy and attraction, and that, when they do so, the tree of affection, (like the fabled palm at the touch of the Genius' wand,) starts into immediate luxuriance of flower and foliage, striking its tenacious roots far into the kindly soil, destined thenceforward to become the nurture of its verdant youth, the support of its mature strength, and at length the resting-place of its leafless and time-stricken decay.

Such seemed to be the case with Reginald and Prairie-bird, for as they looked one at the other, each was unconsciously occupied with teeming thoughts that neither could define nor

* See Schiller's "Bride of Messina."

express, and both felt relieved at hearing approaching footsteps and the voice of the Black Father, who called out in English,

"Come, my child, I have allowed you full time this morning; we will return to the camp." As he spoke his eye fell upon Reginald, and he added, courteously, "You have been early abroad, young sir."

"I have," replied Reginald. "I went to the top of yonder heights to see the sunrise, and was amply repaid by the beauty of the scene; on my return, I wandered accidentally into this secluded spot, and trust that my intrusion has been forgiven."

"I believe that my dear child and pupil would forgive a greater offence than that, in one who has shown so much kindness to her brothers," replied the Missionary, smiling; and he added, in a low voice, addressing the Prairie-bird in his own language, "Indeed, my child, I think he deserves our friendly welcome; for, unless his countenance strongly belies his character, it expresses all those good qualities which Wingenund taught us to expect."

"Stay, sir," said Reginald, colouring highly; "let me not participate without your knowledge, in your communications to Prairie-bird. I have travelled much in Germany, and the language is familiar to me."

"Then, my young friend," said Paul Müller, taking his hand kindly, "you have only learned from what I said, how hard a task you will have to fulfil the expectations that Wingenund has led us to entertain."

"I can promise nothing," replied Reginald, glancing towards the maiden, "but a true tongue, a ready hand, and an honest heart; if these can serve my friend's sister, methinks she may expect them without being disappointed."

The words in themselves were nothing remarkable, but there was an earnest feeling in the tone in which they were spoken that made Prairie-bird's heart beat quicker; she answered him by a look, but said nothing. Wonderful is the expression, the magic eloquence of the human eye, and yet how is its power tenfold increased when the rays of its glance pass through the atmosphere even of dawning love. Reginald longed to know whence and who she could be, this child of the wilderness, who had so suddenly, so irresistibly, engaged his feelings; above all he longed to learn whether her heart and affections were free, and that single look, translated by the sanguine self-partiality of love, made him internally exclaim, "Her heart is not another's!" Whether his conjecture proved correct the after course of this tale will show, meanwhile we cannot forbear our admiration at the marvellous rapidity with which our hero, at his first interview with Prairie-bird settled this point to his own satisfaction. The little party now strolled towards the camp, and as they went, Reginald, seeing that Prairie-bird still held in her hand the book that he had seen her peruse with so much attention, said,

"May I inquire the subject of your studies this morning?"

"Certainly," she replied, with grave and sweet simplicity; "it is the subject of my study every morning; the book was given me by my

dear father and instructor now by my side. I have much to thank him for; all I know, all I enjoy, almost all I feel, but most of all for this book, which he has taught me to love, and in some degree to understand."

As she spoke she placed in Reginald's hand a small copy of Luther's translation of the Bible; in the fly-leaf before the title page was written, "Given to Prairie-bird by her loving father and instructor, Paul Müller." Reginald read this inscription half aloud, repeating to himself the words "Müller," "father," and coupling them with the strange enigmas formerly uttered by Wingenund respecting the origin of Prairie-bird, he was lost in conjecture as to their meaning.

"I see your difficulty," said the Missionary; "you do not understand how she can call Wingenund and War-Eagle brothers, and me father. In truth, she has from her earliest childhood been brought up by Tamenund as his daughter, and as I reside chiefly with this Delaware band, I have made it my constant occupation and pleasure to give her such instruction as my humble means admit; she has been entrusted to us by the mysterious decrees of Providence; and though the blood of neither flows in her veins, Tamenund and I have, according to our respective offices, used our best endeavours to supply the place of natural parents."

"Dear, dear father," said Prairie-bird, pressing his hand to her lips, and looking up in his face with tearful eyes, "you are and have been everything to me, instructor, comforter, guide, and father! My Indian father, too, and my brothers are all kind and loving to me. I have read in the books that you have lent me many tales and histories of unkindness and hatred between parents and children, among nations enlightened and civilized. I have had every wish gratified before expressed, and every comfort provided. What could a father do for a child, that you have not done for me?"

As she spoke she looked up in the Missionary's face with a countenance so beaming with full affection, that the old man pressed her in his arms, and kissing her forehead, muttered over her a blessing that he was too much moved to pronounce aloud; after a pause of a few minutes, he said to Reginald, with his usual benevolent smile, "We only know you yet by your Indian name of 'Netis'—how are you called in the States? We inquired of War-eagle and Wingenund, but they either did not remember, or could not pronounce your name?"

"Reginald Brandon," replied our hero.

Prairie-bird started, and abruptly said, "Again, again; say it once more!"

Reginald repeated it, and she pronounced the first name slowly after him, pressing her hand upon her forehead, and with her eye fixed on vacancy, while broken exclamations came from his lips.

"What are you thinking of, dear child?" said the Missionary, somewhat surprised and alarmed by her manner.

"Nothing, dear Father," she replied, with a faint smile; "it was a dream, a strange dream which that name recalled and confused my head; we are now close to the camp, I will go in and rest awhile; perhaps you may like to talk more with Ne—I mean," she added hesi-

tating, "with Reginald." So saying, and saluting them with that natural grace which belonged to all her movements, she withdrew towards the camp, and Reginald's eyes followed her retreating figure until it was lost behind the canvass-folds that protected the opening to her tent

CHAPTER XX.

Reginald holds a conversation with the missionary.

REGINALD still kept his eyes on the opening through which Prairie-bird had disappeared into the tent, as though they could have pierced through the canvass that concealed from his view its lovely inhabitant: his feelings were in a state of confusion and excitement, altogether new to him; for if, in his European travels, he had paid a passing tribute of admiration to the beauties who had crossed his path, and whom his remarkable personal advantages had rendered by no means insensible to his homage, the surface only of his heart had been touched, whereas now its deepest fountains were stirred, and the troubled waters gushed forth with overwhelming force.

He was recalled to himself by the voice of the missionary, who, without appearing to notice his abstraction, said, "My son, if you choose that we should prolong our walk, I am ready to accompany you." If the truth must be told, Reginald could at that moment scarcely endure the presence of any human being: he felt an impulse to rush into the woods, or over the plain, and to pour forth in solitude the torrent of feelings by which he was oppressed; but he controlled himself, not only because he really felt a respect for the good missionary, but also because he hoped through him to obtain some information respecting the extraordinary being who had taken such sudden possession of his thoughts; he replied, therefore, that he would willingly accompany him, and they took their way together along the banks of the streamlet, alternately observing on the scenery and surrounding objects.

This desultory conversation did not long suit the eager and straightforward character of Reginald Brandon; and he changed it by abruptly inquiring of his companion, whether he knew anything of the history and parentage of Prairie-bird.

"Not much," replied Paul Müller, smiling; "she was with this band of Delawares when I first came to reside among them; if any one knows her history it must be Tamenund; but he keeps it a profound secret, and gives out among the tribe that she was sent to him by the Great Spirit, and that as long as she remains with the band they will be successful in hunting and in war."

"But how," inquired Reginald, "can he make such a tale pass current among a people who are well known to consider the female sex in so inferior and degraded a light?"

"He has effected it," replied the missionary, "partly by accident, partly by her extraordinary beauty and endowments, and partly, I must own, by my assistance, which I have given because I thereby ensured to her the kindest and most

respectful treatment, and also endeavoured, under God's blessing, to make her instrumental in sowing the seed of His truth among these benighted savages."

"Let me understand this more in detail," said Reginald, "if the narration does not trouble you."

"Her first appearance among the Delawares, as they have told me," said the missionary, was as follows:—"Their prophet, or great medicine man, dreamed that under a certain tree was deposited a treasure that should enrich the tribe and render them fortunate: a party was sent by order of the chief to search the spot indicated, and on their arrival they found a female child wrapped in a covering of beaver skin, and reposing on a couch of Turkey of feathers; these creatures being supposed to preside peculiarly over the fate of the Delawares, they brought back the child with great ceremony to the village, where they placed her under the care of the chief; set apart a tent or lodge for her own peculiar use, and ever since that time have continued to take every care of her comfort and safety."

"I suppose," interrupted Reginald, "the dreams of the great medicine, and all its accompaniments, were secretly arranged between him and the chief?"

"Probably they were," replied Paul; "but you must beware how you say as much to any Delaware; if you did not risk your life, you would give mortal offence. After all, an imposition that has resulted in harm to no one, and in so much good to an interesting and unsuspected creature, may be forgiven."

"Indeed I will not gainsay it," replied our hero; "pray continue your narrative."

"My sacred office, and the kindly feeling entertained towards me by these Indians, gave me frequent opportunities of seeing and conversing with Olitipa, or the 'Prairie-bird'; and I found in her such an amiable disposition, and so quick an apprehension, that I gave my best attention to the cultivation of talents, which might, I hoped, some day produce a harvest of usefulness. In reading, writing, and in music, she needed but little instruction; I furnished her from time to time with books, and paper, and pencils; an old Spanish guitar, probably taken from some of the dwellings of that people in Missouri, enabled her to practise simple melodies, and you would be surprised at the sweetness with which she now sings words, strung together by herself in English and German, and also in the Delaware tongue, adapting them to wild airs, either such as she hears among the Indians, or invents herself; I took especial pains to instruct her in the practical elements of a science that my long residence among the different tribes has rendered necessary and familiar to me,—I mean that of medicine, as connected with the rude botany of the woods and prairies; and so well has she profited by my instruction, and by her own persevering researches, that there is scarcely a tree, or gum, or herb possessing any sanatory properties which she does not know and apply to the relief of those around her.

"Indeed," said Reginald, laughing; "I had not expected to find this last among the accomplishments of Prairie-bird."

"You were mistaken then," replied Paul Müller; "nay, more; I fear that, in your estimate of what are usually termed female accomplishments, you have been accustomed to lay too much stress on those which are light or trifling, and too little on those which are useful and properly feminine; even in settled and civilized countries the most grievous fevers and ailments to which we are subject, require the ministrations of a female nurse; can it be then unreasonable that we should endeavour to mingle, in their education, some knowledge of the remedies which they may be called upon to administer, and of the bodily ills which it is to be their province to alleviate?"

"You are right," answered Reginald, modestly; "and I entreat your pardon for the hasty levity with which I spoke on the subject. I am well aware that, in olden times, no young woman's education was held to be complete without some knowledge both of the culinary and healing arts; and I much doubt whether society has not suffered from their having altogether abandoned the cultivation of these in favour of singing, dancing, and reading of the lightest kind."

"It is the character of the artificial state to which society is fast verging," replied Paul; "to prefer accomplishments to qualities, ornament to usefulness, luxury to comfort, tinsel to gold; setting aside the consideration of a future state, this system might be well enough, if the drawing-room, the theatre, and the ball, were the sum of human life; but it is ill calculated to render man dignified in his character, and useful to his fellow-creatures, or woman what she ought to be,—the comfort, the solace, the ornament of home."

"These observations may be true as regards England or France," replied Reginald: "but you surely would not apply them to our country?"

"To a certain extent, I do," answered the missionary. "I have been now thirty years on this continent, and have observed that, as colonists, the Americans have been very faithful imitators of these defects in their mother country; I am not sure that they will be rendered less so by their political emancipation."

The conversation was now straying rather too far from the subject to which Reginald desired to confine it; waving, therefore, all reply to the missionary's last observation, he said, "If I understood you aright, there were, beyond these studies and accomplishments of Prairie-bird, some other means employed by you, to give and preserve to her the extraordinary influence which you say that she possesses over the Indians."

"There were," replied Paul Müller: "among others, I enabled her to vaccinate most of the children in this band, by which means they escaped the fatal effects of a disorder, that has committed dreadful ravages among the surrounding tribes; and I have instructed her in some of the elementary calculations of astronomy; owing to which they look upon her as a superior being, commissioned by the Great Spirit to live among them, and to do them good; thus her person is safe, and her tent as sacred from intrusion as the great medicine lodge; I am allowed to occupy a compartment in it,

where I keep our little stores of books and medicines, and she goes about the camp on her errands of benevolence, followed by the attachment and veneration of all classes and ages!"

"Happy existence!" exclaimed Reginald; "and yet," he added, musing; "she cannot, surely, be doomed through life to waste such sweetness on an air so desert!"

"I know not," answered the missionary. "God's purposes are mysterious, and the instruments that he chooses for effecting them, various as the flowers on the prairie. Many an Indian warrior has that sweet child turned from the path of blood, more than one uplifted tomahawk has fallen harmless at the voice of her entreaty; nay, I have reason to hope that in Wingenund, and in several others of the tribe, she has partially uprooted the weeds of hatred and revenge, and sown, in their stead, the seeds of Gospel truth. Surely, Reginald Brandon, you would not call such an existence wasted?"

"That would I not, indeed," replied the young man, with emphasis; "it is an angel's office!" he added, inaudibly, "and it is performed by an angel!"

Although he could have talked, or listened, or the subject of the Prairie-bird for hours together, Reginald began already to feel that sensitive reserve respecting the mention of her name to another which always accompanies even the earliest dawnings of love; and he turned the conversation by inquiring of the venerable missionary, whether he would kindly communicate something of his own history; and explain how he had come from so remote a distance to pass the evening of life among the Indians.

"The tale is very brief, and the motives very simple. I was born in Germany, and having early embraced the tenets of the United Brethren, of whom you have probably heard in that country under the name of 'Herrnhüter,' I received a pressing invitation from Heckewalder, then in England, to join him in his projected missionary journey to North America. I gladly accepted the offer, and after a short stay in London, embarked with that learned and amiable man,—who soon became what he now is,—the nearest and dearest friend I have on earth,—and I placed myself under his guidance in the prosecution of the grand objects of our undertaking, which were these:—to endeavour to convert the Indian nations to Christianity, not as the Spaniards had pretended to attempt, by fire, and sword, and violence, but by going unarmed and peaceably among them, studying their languages, characters, and history; and while showing in our own persons an example of piety and self-denial, to eradicate patiently the more noxious plants from their moral constitution, and to mould such as were good and wholesome to the purposes of religious truth. God be praised, our labours have not been altogether without effect; but I blush for my white brethren when I confess that the greatest obstacle to our success has been found in the vices, the open profligacy, the violence, and the cruelty of those who have called themselves Christians. Heckewalder has confined his exertions chiefly to the Indians remaining in Pennsylvania and the Western territory, mine have been mostly employed among the wandering

and wider tribes who inhabit this remote and boundless region."

"I have often heard your pious friend's name," said Reginald; "he enjoys the reputation of being the most eminent Indian linguist in our country, and he is supposed to know the Delaware language as well as his own."

"He is indeed," said Paul, "the most skilful and successful labourer in this rude, but not unfruitful vineyard; now and then, at remote intervals, I contrive, by means of some returning hunter or Indian agent, to communicate with him, and his letters always afford me matter of consolation and encouragement; though I was much cast down when he announced to me the cruel and wanton massacre of his Indian flock near the banks of the Ohio."

"I have heard of it," replied Reginald; "I regret to say that the outrage was committed not very far from the spot where my father lives."

"Do you live in that neighbourhood?" exclaimed the missionary, suddenly catching his arm; "then you may, perhaps—but no, it cannot be," he muttered to himself. "This youth can know nothing of it."

"My honoured friend," replied Reginald, colouring at the idea suggested by the words which he had overheard. "I trust you do not believe that my father or any of my kindred had a share in those atrocities!"

"You misunderstood me altogether, I assure you," answered the missionary; "my exclamation had reference to another subject. But I see War-Eagle coming this way; probably he is bent upon some hunting excursion in which you may wish to be his companion."

"I shall gladly do so," replied Reginald, "as soon as I have breakfasted; my faithful follower, Perrot, desired very much that I should taste some collops of venison, which he said that he could dress in a style somewhat superior to that of the Indian cookery. Will you share them with me?"

The missionary excused himself, as he had already taken his morning meal, and was about to return to the tent of Prairie-bird.

Reginald assured the good man of the pleasure which he had found in his conversation, and expressed a hope that he would be enabled soon to enjoy it again, as there was much information respecting the habits, religion, and character of the different Indian tribes which he felt anxious to acquire, and which none could be better able to communicate.

"Whatever instruction or information I may have collected during my residence among them, is freely at your service," replied Paul Müller; "and if you find yourself in any difficulty or embarrassment where my advice can be of use, you may always command it. You know," he added, smiling, "they consider me great medicine, and thus I am able to say and do many things among them which would not be permitted in another white man." So saying, he shook hands with Reginald, and returned slowly towards the encampment.

War-Eagle now came up, and greeting his friend with his usual cordiality, inquired whether he would accompany him in the chase of the elk, herds of which had been seen at no great distance. Reginald acceded to the proposal, and,

having hastily despatched the collops prepared by Perrot, the two friends left the village on foot, and took their way towards the timber in the valley.

The day was hot, and the speed at which the agile Indian unconsciously strode along, would have soon discomfited a less active pedestrian than Reginald; but having been well seasoned in his hunting excursions with Baptiste, he found no difficulty in keeping pace with his friend, and amused himself as they went, by asking him a variety of questions respecting the country, the tribe, and its language, to all of which War-Eagle replied with much intelligence and candour.

As Reginald had not seen Wingenund, he asked his companion how it happened that the youth did not accompany them. "He is gone," replied War-Eagle, "to bring turkeys to the camp."

"Does he shoot them?" inquired Reginald.

"No, he takes them—my white brother shall see; it is not far from the Elk Path."

When they reached the wooded bottom, War-Eagle struck into a small track which seemed to have been made by a streamlet in spring, and, having followed it for about a mile, they came to a more open woodland scene, where the Indian pointed, as they passed along, to scattered feathers and foot-tracts of turkeys in abundance. They had not proceeded far, when he uttered a low exclamation of surprise as he discovered Wingenund stretched at the foot of a tree, with his eyes busily fixed upon something which he held in his hand, and which so riveted his attention that he was not aware of their approach. Beside him lay two old and two young turkeys which he had caught and killed; the friends had not looked at him many seconds, before he raised his eyes and perceived them; starting to his feet he made an ineffectual attempt to conceal that which he had been holding in his hand, which was, in fact, a sheet of coarse white paper. Reginald drew near and said to him, "Come, Wingenund, you must show Netis what you hold in your hand; I am sure it is no harm, and if it is a secret, I will keep it."

Wingenund, in some confusion, handed the scroll to Reginald, who saw at the first glance that it was a fragment of an elementary vocabulary of Delaware and English words, written in a free, bold character; he ran his eye over the paper which contained chiefly phrases of the most simple kind, such as "*N'menne*, I drink," "*N'ani pa wi*, I stand," "*Tokelan*, it rains," "*Loo*, true," "*Yuni*, this," "*Na-mi*, that," &c., &c.; and a smile came over his features when his eye met his own name, "Netis," with its translation, "dear friend." Below this he read, "*N'quti*, Nisha, Nacha, Newo, and a succession of single words, which he rightly conjectured to be numerals, 1, 2, 3, 4, &c., and at the bottom of the page was a long sentence in the Lenape tongue, which began as follows: "*Ki wetochemelenk talli epian awassagame*, &c."—"What is this last sentence, Wingenund?" inquired Reginald.

"It is the prayer," replied the youth, "that the Good Spirit taught the white men to say, when he came to live among them."

"And who wrote all these words for you?"

"Prairie-bird wrote them, and every day she

teaches me to understand the marks on the paper."

Reginald's eyes strayed unconsciously to that part of the sheet where he had seen his own name written by the Prairie-bird's hand. "Happy boy!" he mentally ejaculated, "to sit at her feet and draw instruction from her lips! With such a teacher, methinks I could learn the Lenape tongue in a month!—What says my brother?" he continued, aloud, addressing War-Eagle, whose fine countenance wore an expression of indifference, almost amounting to contempt—"What says my brother of this paper?"

"It is perhaps good," replied the Indian, gravely; "for the black father, and for the white man—but not for the Lenape. The Great Spirit has given him a heart to feel, and a hand to fight, and eyes to see the smallest track on the grass—that is enough. Our fathers knew no more, and they were great, and strong, and brave! Chiefs among the nations! What are we now—a few, and weak, and wandering; it is better for us to live and die like them, and we shall hunt with them in the happy fields. Let us go and show Netis where Wingendund takes the turkeys." So saying, he turned and led the way, followed by his two companions.

CHAPTER XXI.

an arrival at Mooshanne.—A calm ashore after a storm at sea. ☉

WHILE the events, narrated in the preceding chapter, were occurring in the Western wilderness, the family at Mooshanne had been thrown into a state of the greatest dismay and confusion, by the arrival of Captain L'Estrange's first letter, announcing the flight of Ethelston with his daughter, and depicting his conduct in the blackest colours. Colonel Brandon had perused its contents half a dozen times, and they had produced traces of anxiety upon his countenance, too evident to escape the observation of Lucy, so that he was obliged to break to her by degrees the painful intelligence of her lover's infidelity; with a calmness that surprised him, she insisted on reading the letter; as she proceeded her brow crimsoned with indignation, and those blue eyes, usually beaming with the gentlest expression, flushed with an angry lustre.

Colonel Brandon knew full well the affection she had long conceived for Ethelston, and though his own feelings were deeply wounded by the misconduct of one whom he had loved and trusted as a son, they were, at present, overpowered by the fears which he entertained of the effect which this unexpected blow might produce on Lucy's health and happiness. He was, therefore, relieved by observing the anger expressed on her countenance, and prepared himself to hear the deserved reproaches on her former lover, which seemed ready to burst from her tongue. What was his surprise when he saw her tear the letter in pieces before his face, and heard her, while she set her pretty little foot upon them, exclaim,

"Dear, dear father, how could you for a moment believe such a tale of vile, atrocious falsehood!"

However disinclined the Colonel might be to believe anything to the disadvantage of Ethelston, there was so much circumstantial evidence to condemn him, that he felt it his duty to prepare his child for the worst at once, and to point out to her how they already knew that Ethelston had been wounded and conveyed to the house of L'Estrange, that his long absence was unexplained, and lastly that the character of the French Commodore, as an officer and a man of honour, was unimpeached.

Lucy heard him to the end, the glow on her cheek assumed a warmer hue and the little foot beat with a nervous and scarcely perceptible motion on the floor, as she replied, "Father, I will believe that the letter is a forgery, or that the French officer, or Commodore, or Admiral, is a madman, but never that Ethelston is a villain."

"My dear Lucy," said the Colonel; "I am almost as unwilling to think ill of Ethelston as you can be yourself; but, alas! I have seen more than you of the inconstancy of men; and I know, too well, that many who have enjoyed a good reputation, have yet been found unable to withstand temptation, such as may have beset Ethelston while an inmate of the same house with the Creole beauty—"

"Dear Father," answered Lucy, colouring yet more deeply; though it were possible that Ethelston, in the presence of greater attractions, may have yielded to them his affections and withdrawn them from one who had hoped to possess and treasure them for life, though this may be possible, it is not possible that he should be guilty of a violation of the laws of hospitality and honour, such as that slanderous paper lays to his charge; promise me, dearest father, to suspend your belief, and never to speak on this subject again, until it is God's pleasure that the truth shall be brought to light."

"I promise you, my sweet child," said her father; "and may that Merciful Being grant that your trust be not disappointed."

"I have no fears," said Lucy, and as she spoke her eyes beamed with that full undoubting love, such as can only be felt by one who has never known what it is to deceive or to be deceived.

Days and weeks passed on without any intelligence of Ethelston; and while the fears of Colonel Brandon become more confirmed, the agony of suspense, and the sickness of deferred hope began to prey upon the spirits of his daughter; she never alluded to the forbidden subject, but her nervous anxiety, when the weekly letter-bag was opened, clearly showed that it was ever in her mind; nevertheless she continued her occasional excursions to Marietta, and visited, as usual, those around Mooshanne who were sick or in distress, so that neither her mother, nor aunt Mary, detected the anxiety by which she was tortured. One evening, half an hour before sunset, as the family party were seated at their simple supper, the clatter of a horse's hoofs was heard approaching at full speed, from which the rider dismounted, and lifting the latch of the unlocked door, entered the house. Traversing the vestibule with hasty strides, and apparently guided by instinct to the apartment in which the family were assembled, he threw open the door, and Ethelston stood

before the astonished party. His countenance was haggard from fatigue and exposure to the sun, and his whole appearance indicated exhaustion. Lucy turned deadly pale, and Colonel Brandon's constrained manner, as he rose from his chair, must have convinced the new comer that his return was productive of other feelings than those of unmingled pleasure. He was moving, however, a few steps forward to pay his first respects to Mrs. Brandon, when the Colonel, touching him lightly on the arm, said, "Mr. Ethelston, I must crave a few words with you in the adjoining room."

Hitherto Lucy had remained silent, with her eyes fixed intently on Ethelston's countenance, he returned her look with one as long and fixed, the expression of his eyes was mournful, rather than joyous, but there was no trace of uneasiness or of shame. Springing from her seat, she placed her hand imploringly on the Colonel's arm, saying,

"Dear father, I told you so from the first—I knew it always.—I read it now plain as the sun in heaven—that vile letter was a string of falsehoods—he is returned as he left us, with an untarnished honour."

"Thank you, dear Lucy," said Ethelston, advancing and pressing her extended hands to his lips; "blessings on that trusting affection which has rendered it impossible for you to believe ought to the prejudice of one on whom you have deigned to fix it. Colonel Brandon," he continued, "I can guess how you have been misled, and appearances were, for a short time, so much against me, that I acquit, of all intentional malice, those who have misled you! Judge for yourself whether, if I were stained by the crime of which I have been accused, I could now ask, on my bended knee, for the blessing of you, my second father, and thus hold in mine, as I dare to do, the hand of your pure, trusting, and beloved child."

There was a truth in every tone of his voice, and a convincing dignity in his manner that swept away all doubts like a torrent: the Colonel embraced him with cordial affection: Aunt Mary kissed her favourite nephew over and over again, Mrs. Brandon wept tears of joy on his neck, and Lucy was so overpowered with delight, that she was perhaps scarcely conscious of all that passed around.

After they were in some degree recovered from their emotion, and had pressed Ethelston to take some refreshment; he said to the Colonel, "Now I am prepared to give you an account of my adventures, and to explain those circumstances that led to the misunderstanding under which you have so long laboured."

"Not a word—not a word will I hear of explanation, to-night, my dear boy," replied the Colonel. "I am already ashamed that I have not shown the same undoubting confidence in your rectitude both of purpose and conduct, that has been evinced from first to last by Lucy. You are weary and exhausted, the agitation of this scene has been trying to all of us; we will defer your narrative until to-morrow. Our first duty this evening, is to return our thanks to Providence for having protected you through all danger, and restored you safe to the comforts of home."

As he spoke, the worthy old gentleman took

down a bible from the shelf, and, having desired Lucy to summon all the servants into the room, he read an appropriate chapter, and added to the selected prayer for the evening, a few impressive and affecting words of thanksgiving for the safe return of the long lost member of the family.

This duty was scarcely concluded, when the outer door was violently opened; a heavy step was heard approaching, and, without waiting to be admitted or announced, the sturdy figure of Gregson entered the room.

"The captain himself, as I live," said the honest mate. "Beg pardon, Colonel Brandon, but I heard a report of his having been seen going ten knots an hour through Marietta. So I up sticks, made sail, and was in his wake in less time than our nigger cook takes to toss off a glass of grog."

"Give me your hand, Gregson," said Ethelston, kindly; "there is not a truer, or an honesteer one between Marietta and China."

"Thank ye, thank ye, Captain," said the mate, giving him a squeeze that would have broken the knuckles of any hand but a sailor's; "the flipper's well enough in its way, and I trust the heart's somewhere about the right place but what the devil have they been at with you in Guadeloupe," he added, observing his chief's wearied and wasted appearance; "considering how long those rascally Frenchmen have had you in dock, they've sent you to sea in a precious state, both as to hull and rigging."

"I confess I am not over ship-shape," said Ethelston, laughing, "but my present condition is more owing to the fatigues of my tedious journey from New Orleans, than to any neglect on the part of the Frenchmen."

The Colonel now invited the worthy mate to be seated, and Lucy brewed for him, with her own fair fingers, a large tumbler of toddy, into which, by her father's desire, she poured an extra glass of rum. Ethelston, pretending to be jealous of this favour, insisted on his right to a draught, containing less potent ingredients, but administered by the same hand, and an animated conversation ensued, in the course of which Gregson inquired after the welfare of his old friend Cupid, the black cook.

"Poor fellow, he is no more," replied Ethelston, in a tone of deep feeling; "he died as he had lived, proud, brave, faithful to the last. I cannot tell you the story now, it is too sad a one for this our first evening at home;" as he spoke, his eyes met those of Lucy, and there he read all that his overcharged heart desired to know.

Soon after the allusion to this melancholy incident, the little party broke up; the evening being already far advanced, Gregson returned to Marietta; and the members of the colonel's family retired to their respective apartments, leaving Ethelston alone in the drawing-room. For a few minutes he walked up and down, and pressed his hand upon his forehead, which throbbled with various and deep emotions. He took up the music whereon Lucy had written her name, the needle-work on which her fingers had been employed; he sat down on the chair she had just left, as if to satisfy himself with the assurance that all around him was not a dream; and again he vented the full gratitude

o his heart in a brief but earnest ejaculation of thanksgiving. After a short indulgence in such meditations, he retired to that rest of which he stood so much in need. The room that had been prepared for him was up stairs, and, on crossing a broad passage that led to it, he suddenly met Lucy, who was returning to her own from her mother's apartment. Whether this meeting was purely accidental, or whether Lucy remembering that she had not said Good-night, quite distinctly to her lover, lingered in her mother's room until she heard his step on the stair, we have no means of ascertaining, and therefore leave it undecided; certain it is, however, that they did meet in the passage above mentioned, and that Ethelston putting down his candle on a table that stood by, took Lucy's unresisting hand and pressed it in his own; he gazed on her blushing countenance with an intensity that can only be understood by those who, like him, have been suddenly restored to a beloved one, whose image had been ever present during a long absence, assuaging the pain of sickness, comforting him in trials, dwelling with him in the solitude of a prison, and sustaining him in the extremest perils of the storm, the fight, and the shipwreck! Though he had never been formally betrothed to her in words, and though his heart was now too full to give utterance to them, he had heard enough below to satisfy him that she had never doubted his faith—he felt that their troth was tacitly plighted to each other, and now it was almost unconsciously that their lips met and sealed the unspoken contract.

That first, long, passionate, kiss of requited love! Its raptures have been the theme of glowing prose, of impassioned verse, in all ages and climes; the powers of language have been exhausted upon it, the tongue and the pen of Genius have, for centuries borrowed for its description the warmest hues of fancy and imagination—and yet how far short do they fall of the reality! how impossible to express in words an electric torrent of feeling, more tumultuous than joy, more burning than the desert's thirst,—yet sweeter and more delicious than childhood's dream of Paradise, pouring over the heart a stream of bliss, steeping the senses in oblivion of all earthly cares, and so mysteriously blending the physical with the immaterial elements of our nature, that we feel as if, in that embrace, we could transfuse a portion of our soul and spirit into the beloved object, on whose lip that first kiss of long-treasured love is imprinted.

Brief and fleeting moments! they are gone almost before the mind is conscious of them! They could not, indeed, be otherwise than brief, for the agony of joy is like that of pain, and exhausted nature would sink under its continued excess. Precious moments, indeed! to none can they be known more than once in life; to very many, they can never be known at all. They can neither be felt nor imagined by the mere worldling, nor the sensualist; the sources of that stream of bliss must be unadulterated by aught low, or selfish; it is not enough that

“Heart and soul and sense in concert move;”

desire must go hand in hand with purity, and virtue be the handmaid of passion, or the blissful scene will lose its fairest and brightest hues.

The step of some servant was heard approaching, and Lucy, uttering a hasty good-night, returned to her room, where she bolted her door, and gaye herself up to the varied emotions by which she was overcome. Tears bedewed her eyes, but they were not tears of grief; her bosom was agitated, but it was not the agitation of sorrow; her pillow was sleepless, but she courted not slumber, for her mind dwelt on the events of the past day, and gratitude for her lover's return, together with the full assurance of his untarnished honour, and undiminished affection, rendered her waking thoughts sweeter than any that sleep could have borrowed from the Land of Dreams.

On the following morning, after breakfast, when the family were assembled in the library, Ethelston, at the request of Colonel Brandon, commenced the narrative of his adventures. As the reader is already acquainted with them, until the closing scene of poor Nina's life, we shall make mention of that part of his tale, no farther than to state that, so far as truth would permit, in all that he told as well as all that he forbore to tell, he feelingly endeavoured to shield her memory from blame; the sequel of his story we shall give as narrated in his own words.

“I remained only a few days with L'Estrange after his daughter's death; during which time I used my best endeavours to console him; but, in spite of the affectionate kindness which he showed me, I felt that my presence must ever recall and refresh the remembrance of his bereavement, and I was much relieved when the arrival of one of his other married daughters with her family, gave me an excuse and an opportunity for withdrawing from Guadalupe. The vessel which had brought them from Jamaica proposed to return immediately, and I easily obtained L'Estrange's permission to sail with her, only on the condition of not serving against France during the continuance of these hostilities: when I bade him farewell he was much affected, and embraced me as if he were parting with a son, so I have at least the melancholy satisfaction of knowing that I retain his best wishes and his esteem.

“My voyage to Port-royal was prosperous; on arriving I found a brig laden with fruit just about to sail, in a few days, for New Orleans. I confess I did not much like the appearance either of the vessel, or her commander, but such was my impatience to return to Moshanne, that I believe I would have risked the voyage in an open boat,” here Ethelston looked at Lucy, on whose countenance a blushing smile showed that she well knew the meaning of his words: “I embarked,” he continued “accompanied by my faithful Cupid, on board the ‘Dos Amigos;’ the captain was an ignorant rum-drinking Creole, besides himself there was only one white man in the crew, and the coloured men were from all countries and climates, the most reckless and turbulent gang that I had ever seen on board a ship. During the first half of the voyage, the weather being favourable, we crept along the southern coast of Cuba and past almost within sight of the Isla de Pinos, which I had so much cause to remember, thence we steered a northwesterly course, and doubled the Cape of Saint Antonio in safety

whence we had a prospect of a fair run to the Balise; but, two days after we had lost sight of the Cuban coast, it came on to blow a gale of wind which gradually increased until it became almost a hurricane from the south-west.

The brig drove helplessly before it, and from her leaky and shattered condition, as well as from the total want of seamanship exhibited by her drunken captain, I hourly expected that she would founder at sea; for twenty-four hours the gale continued with unabated violence, and the weather was so thick that no object could be discerned at two hundred yards distance; I remained constantly on deck, giving such assistance as I could render, and endeavouring to keep the captain's lips from the rum-bottle, to which he had more frequent recourse as the danger became more imminent. Being, at length, wearied out, I threw myself in my clothes on my cot, and soon fell asleep. I know not how long I slept, but I was awakened by a violent shock, accompanied by a grating grinding sound, from which I knew in an instant that the brig had struck on a rock; almost before I had time to spring from my cot, Cupid dashed into the cabin and seizing me with the force of a giant, dragged me on deck. At this moment the foremast fell with a tremendous crash, and a heavy sea swept over the devoted vessel, carrying away the boat, all loose spars, and many of the crew; Cupid and I held on by the main rigging and were not swept away; but wave after wave succeeded each other with resistless fury, and in a few moments we were both struggling, half stunned and exhausted, in the abyss of waters, holding on convulsively to a large hen-coop, which had providentially been thrown between us.

"One wild shriek of despair reached my ear, after which nothing was heard but the tumultuous roar of the angry elements."

At this part of Ethelston's narrative, Lucy covered her face with her hands, as if she would thereby shut out the dreadful view, and in spite of all her struggle for self-command, a tear stole down her colourless cheek.

"It was, indeed, a fearful moment," he continued, "and yet I did not feel deserted by hope; I was prepared for death, I prayed fervently, and I felt that my prayer was not unheard; even then, in the strife of foaming sea and roaring blast, God sent the vision of an angel to comfort and sustain me! It wore the form of one who has ever dwelt in my thoughts by day, and in my dreams by night; who seemed as near to me then, as she does now that her gentle tears are flowing at this recital of my trials."

While speaking the last words, his low voice trembled until it fell into a whisper, and Lucy, overcome by her feeling, would have fallen from her chair, had not his ready arm supported her. A dead silence reigned in the room, Aunt Mary wept aloud, and Colonel Brandon walked to the window to conceal his emotion. After a few minutes, as she turned again towards them; Ethelston, who still supported Lucy, beckoned him to approach, and addressing him in a tone of deep and earnest feeling, said,

"Colonel Brandon, my guardian, friend and benefactor; add yet this one to all your former benefits, and my cup of gratitude will be full in-

deed," as he spoke he took the unresisting hand of Lucy in his own; the Colonel looked inquiringly and affectionately at his daughter, who did not speak, but raised her tearful eyes to his, with an expression not to be misunderstood. Pressing their united hands between his own, and kissing Lucy's forehead he whispered,

"God bless you, my children:" after a pause he added, with a suppressed smile, "Ethelston shall finish his narrative presently;" and taking Aunt Mary's arm he left the room.

We will imitate the Colonel's discretion, and forbear to intrude upon the sacred quiet of a scene where the secret long-cherished love of two overflowing hearts was at length unreservedly interchanged; we need only say that ere the Colonel returned with Aunt Mary, after an absence of half an hour, Lucy's tears were dried, and her cheeks were suffused with a mantling blush, as she sprang into her father's arms, and held him in a long and silent embrace.

"Come, my child," said the Colonel, when he had returned her affectionate caress; "sit down, and let us hear the conclusion of Ethelston's adventures—we left him in a perilous plight, and I am anxious to hear how he escaped from it."

"Not without much suffering, both of mind and body, my dear sir," continued Ethelston in a serious tone of voice; "for the sea dashed to and fro with such violence the frail basket-work to which Cupid and I were clinging, that more than once I was almost forced to quit my hold, and it was soon evident that its buoyant power was not sufficient to save us both, especially as Cupid's bulk and weight were commensurate with his gigantic strength; his coolness under these trying circumstances was remarkable; observing that I was almost fainting from the effects of a severe blow on the head from a floating piece of the wreck, he poured into my mouth some rum from a small flask that he had contrived to secure, and then replacing the stopper, thrust the flask into my breast pocket, saying, "Capt'n drink more when he want;" at this moment a large spar from the wreck was driven past us, and the faithful creature said, "Capt'n, hencoop not big enough for two Cupid swim and take spar to ride;" and ere I could stop him he loosed his hold and plunged into the huge wave to seize the spar; more I could not see, for the spray dashed over me, and the gloom and the breakers hid him in a moment from my sight. I felt my strength failing, but enough remained for me to loose a strong silk kerchief from my neck, and to lash myself firmly to the hencoop; again and again the wild sea broke over me: I felt a tremendous and stunning blow—as I thought, the last, and I was no more conscious of what passed around.

"When I recovered my senses I found myself lying upon some soft branches, and sheltered by low bushes, a few hundred yards from the sea-beach; two strange men were standing near me, and gave evident signs of satisfaction when they saw my first attempts at speech and motion; they made me swallow several morsels of sea biscuit steeped in rum, and I was soon so far restored as to be able to sit up, and to

earn the particulars of my situation. The island near which the brig had been wrecked, was one of the Tortugas; the two men who had carried me up to a dry spot from the beach, belonged to a small fishing-craft, which had put in two days before the hurricane for a supply of water, and in hopes of catching turtle. Their vessel was securely moored in a little natural harbour, protected by the outer ledge of rocks; the reef on which the brig had struck was upward of a mile from the spot where they had found me, and I could not learn from them that they had seen any portion of her wreck, or any part of her crew alive or dead.

"As soon as my bruised condition permitted me to drag my limbs along, I commenced a careful search along the low rocky shore, in hopes of learning something of the fate of Cupid, and at length was horrified on discovering the mutilated remains of the faithful creature, among some crevices in the rocks. He had clung to the spar which still lay beside him with the pertinacious strength of despair; his hands and limbs were dreadfully mangled, and his skull fractured by the violence with which he had been driven on the reef. I remembered how he had resigned the hencoop to save my life; and the grief that I evinced for his loss moved the compassion of the fisherman, who aided me to bury him decently on the island.

"We remained there two days longer, until the gale had subsided, during which time I frequently visited poor Cupid's grave; and though many of our countrymen would be ashamed of owning such regret for one of his colour, I confess that when on that lonely spot I called to mind his faithful services, and his last noble act of generous courage, I mourned him as a friend and brother.

"When the fishing-smack put to sea, I prevailed on her captain to visit the reef where the brig had struck, but we found not a spar nor plank remaining; nor am I to this moment aware whether any others of her crew survived the wreck, but it is more than probable that they perished to a man. Upon the promise of a considerable sum of money, I prevailed upon the fisherman to give me a passage to New-Orleans, where we arrived without accident or adventure, and my impatience to reach home only permitted me to stay in that city a few hours, when, having provided myself with a horse, I rode on hither by forced marches, and arrived in the travel-worn condition that you observed yesterday."

CHAPTER XXII.

An Elk-hunt.—Reginald makes his first essay in surgery.—The reader is admitted into Prairie-Bird's tent.

We left Reginald Brandon in the skirt of the forest bounding the Western Prairie, accompanied by Wingenund and War-Eagle. The latter, having taken the lead, conducted his companions through a considerable extent of ground, covered with bushes of alder and scrub-oak, until they reached an open forest glade, where the Indian pointed out to Reginald a large square building, composed of rough logs, and covered with the same material. In the

centre of one side was a low aperture or door, about fifteen inches in height, in front of which was a train of maize laid by Wingenund; on approaching this turkey-pen, or trap, they observed that there were already two prisoners, a large gobbler and a female bird, although not more than an hour had elapsed since the lad had taken out the four turkeys which have been before mentioned. When the captives became aware of the approach of the party, they ran about the pen from side to side, thrusting out their long necks, peering through the crevices in the logs, jumping and flying against the top, in their violent endeavours to escape.

"Do they never stoop their heads," inquired Reginald, "and go out at the same door by which they entered?"

"Never," replied Wingenund.

"That is singular," said Reginald, "for the bird is in general very sagacious and difficult to be taken or killed;—how does it happen that they are so unaccountably stupid as not to go out where they came in?"

Before answering the question addressed to him, Wingenund cast a diffident look towards War-Eagle, and on receiving from the chief a sign to reply, he said,

"Netis knows that the Great Spirit distributes the gifts of wisdom and cunning like the sunshine and the storm, even the Black-Father does not understand all his ways. How can Wingenund tell why the turkey's eye is so quick, his ear so sharp, his legs so swift!—and yet he is sometimes a fool; when he picks up the maize, his head is low; he walks through the opening; he is in a strange place; he is frightened; and fear takes from him all the sense that the Great Spirit had given him. Wingenund knows no more."

"My young brother speaks truly and wisely beyond his years," said Reginald, kindly. "It is as you say, fear makes him forget all the capacities of his nature; it is so with men—why should it be otherwise with birds? Does War-Eagle say nothing?"

"My brother's words are true," replied the chief, gravely; "he has picked out one arrow, but many remain in the quiver."

"My brother speaks riddles," said Reginald. "I do not understand him."

"Fear is a bad spirit," replied the chief, raising his arm and speaking with energy. "It creeps round the heart of a woman, and crawls among the lodges of the Dakotahs; it makes the deer leap into the river when he would be safer in the thicket; it makes the turkey a fool and keeps him in the pen: but there are other bad spirits that make the heart crooked and the eyes blind."

"Tell me, how so?" inquired Reginald, desirous of encouraging his Indian friend to continue his illustration.

"Does my brother know the antelope," replied War-Eagle; "he is very cunning and swift; his eye is quick as the turkey's; the hunter could not overtake him: but he lies down in a hollow and hides himself; he fastens a tuft of grass to his bow and holds it over his head; the Bad Spirit gets into the antelope; he becomes a fool; he comes nearer and nearer to look at the strange sight;—the hunter shoots and he dies. There are many bad spirits. The

Wyandot who struck at my white brother, he was a cunning snake; he had taken scalps, the ball of his rifle did not wander; if he had crept in the bushes on my brother's path, Netis would now be in the happy hunting-fields of the white warriors. But a Bad Spirit took him; he offered food while his heart was false, and he thrust his head under the tomahawk of War-Eagle. There are many bad spirits. I have spoken."

Reginald listened with interest to these sentiments of his Indian friend, expressed, as they were, in broken sentences and in broken English, the purport of them being, however, exactly conveyed in the foregoing sentences; but he refrained from pursuing the subject farther, observing that War-Eagle was slinging the turkeys over Wingenund's shoulder, and preparing to pursue their course, in search of the elk. Leaving the youth to return with his feathered burden to the encampment, the two friends continued their excursion, War-Eagle leading the way, and stopping every now and then to examine such tracks as appeared to him worthy of notice. They had not proceeded far, when they reached a spot where the path which they were following crossed a small rivulet, and, the soil being soft on its bank, there were numerous hoof-prints of deer and elk, but so confused by the trampling of the different animals, that Reginald could not distinguish the one from the other. It was not so, however, with the Indian, who pointing downward to a track at his foot, he made a sign, by raising both his hands above his head, to indicate a pair of antlers, and whispered to Reginald "very big."

"An elk?" inquired the latter; making a silent affirmative sign, War-Eagle pursued the trail which conducted them to the top of a small rising ground, where it appeared to branch in several directions, and became almost imperceptible from the shortness of the grass and the hardness of the soil. But these seemed to offer no impediment to the Indian's pursuit of his quarry, for turning short at a right angle to their former course, he descended the hillock in a different direction, walking with a swift noiseless step as if he saw his game before him.

Reginald's surprise overcame even his eagerness for the sport, trained as he had been in the woods, and justly held one of the quickest and most skillful hunters in the territory; he had looked in vain on the ground which they were now traversing for the slightest point or foot-mark; touching, therefore, his friend lightly on his shoulder, he whispered, "Does my brother guess the elk's path?—or can he smell it like the Spaniard's dog?"

A good-humoured smile played on the Delaware's lip as he replied, "The trail of the elk is broad and easy; War-Eagle could follow it by the moon's light! My white brother will see; he is an elk chief; his squaws are with him."

As he spoke he showed several marks which Reginald could scarcely distinguish on the short grass; a few yards farther War-Eagle added, pointing to a low bush beside them, "If Netis does not see the elk's foot, he can see his teeth."

On examining the bush Reginald perceived that a small fresh twig from the side of it had been recently cropped, and suppressing his astonishment at his friend's sagacity, in following

with such apparent ease a trail that to him was scarcely discernible, he allowed him to proceed without farther interruption, closely watching his every movement, in the hope that he might be able to discover some of the indications by which the Indian was guided. Moving lightly forward, they soon had occasion again to cross the brook before mentioned; and on the soft edge of its banks, War-Eagle pointed in silence to the track of the large hoof of the elk, and to the smaller print left by the feet of its female companions. Desiring Reginald to remain still, the Indian now crept stealthily forward to the top of a small hillock covered with brushwood, where he lay for a few seconds with his ear touching the ground. Having once raised his head to look through a low bush in front of him, he sank again upon the ground, and made a signal for his friend to creep to the spot. Reginald obeyed, and peering cautiously through the leaves of the same bush, he saw the stately elk browsing at a distance of a hundred and fifty yards, the two hind being beyond him; the intervening ground being barren and almost flat, offering no cover for a nearer approach, his first impulse was to raise his rifle for a distant shot; but War-Eagle, gently pressing down the barrel, motioned him to crouch behind the bush. When they were again concealed, the Delaware whispered to his friend, that he would go round and creep on the elk from the opposite quarter.

Reginald in reply pointed to the top branches of a young poplar gently waving in the breeze.

"War-Eagle knows it," said the Indian gravely, "the wind is from that quarter; it is not good; but he will try; if elk smell him, he comes this way, and Netis shoot him." So saying, he crept down the little hillock by the same path which they had followed in the ascent, and then striking off in an oblique direction was soon lost to view.

Reginald, still concealed behind the bush, silent and motionless, with his hand on the lock of his rifle, watched intently every movement of the antlered monarch of the woods; the latter, unconscious of danger, lazily picked the tenderest shoots from the surrounding bushes, or tossed his lofty head to and fro, as if to display the ease and grace with which it bore those enormous antlers. More than once, as he turned to brush off from his side some troublesome fly, Reginald thought he had become suddenly aware of the Indian's approach; but it was not so, for in spite of the disadvantage of the wind, the practised Delaware moved towards his unsuspecting prey with the stealthy creep of a panther. Reginald's impatience was such that minutes seemed to him hours; and his fingers played with the lock of his rifle, as if he could no longer control their movement; at length a sudden snort from one of the hinds announced that she smelt or heard some object of alarm as she came trotting to the side of her lordly protector.

Turning himself to windward, and throwing forward his ears, the elk listened for a moment, while his upturned and wide distended nostril snuffed the breeze, to discover the danger of which he had been warned by his mate. That moment was not lost by the Delaware, and the report of his rifle echoed through the forest. Tossing his head with a sudden start the elk fled from his now discovered foe, and

bounding over the barren space in front of the bush where Reginald was concealed. With a coolness that did great credit to his nerves as a hunter, the latter remained motionless, with his eye on the game and his finger on the trigger, until the elk passed his station at speed; then he fired, and with so true an aim, that ere it had gone fifty yards, the noble beast fell to the earth, and immediately Reginald's hunting knife put an end to its pain and to its life. The young man looked over the quarry with pride and pleasure, for it was the largest he had ever seen; and the shot (which had pierced the heart) was well calculated to raise War-Eagle's opinion of his skill in wood-craft. While he was still contemplating the animal's bulk and fine proportions, the exclamation "good!" uttered in English, gave him the first notice that the Delaware was at his side.

"Ha! my friend," said Reginald, grasping his hand cordially; "you sent him down towards me in fine style. Tell me, War-Eagle, are there many elk as large in this country?"

"Not many," replied the Indian; "War-Eagle told his white brother that the elk's foot on the trail was big."

"Was my brother very far when he shot?" inquired Reginald; "when his rifle speaks, the ball does not wander in the air."

"War-Eagle was far," replied the Indian, quietly, "but the elk carries the mark of his rifle—Netis shot better;" on examination, it appeared that the chief was right. His bullet had passed through the fleshy part of the animal's neck, but not having cut the wind-pipe, the wound was not mortal, and but little blood had flowed from it.

While the Indian was busied in skinning and cutting up the elk, Reginald amused himself by reconnoitring the ground over which his friend had crept before he shot, and he was struck by the extraordinary sagacity with which the latter had made his approach; for on that side there were but few and scattered bushes, nor was there any rugged or broken ground favourable for concealment.

When the choicest portions of meat were duly separated and enveloped in the skin, War-Eagle hung them up on an adjacent tree, carefully rubbing damp powder over the covering, to protect the meat from the wolves and carrion birds; after which the friends proceeded on their excursion.

Having found fresh tracks of elk leading towards the open prairie, they followed them, and succeeded in killing two more, after which they returned to the encampment, whence War-Eagle despatched a young Indian with a horse, and with directions as to the locality of the meat, which he was instructed to bring home.

As Reginald walked through the lodges of the Osage village, he observed a crowd of Indians collected before one of them, and curiosity prompted him to turn aside and observe what might be passing. Making his way without difficulty through the outer circle of spectators, he found himself before a lodge, in front of which a wounded boy of twelve or fourteen years of age, was extended on a buffalo-robe. On inquiry, Reginald learned from an Indian who could speak a few words of English, that the lad had been struck down and trampled on by a vicious horse; although no sound escaped from

his lips, the involuntary writhing of the youthful sufferer showed the acuteness of the pain which he endured; while a bulky Indian, in the garb of an Osage Medicine-man, was displaying beside him the various absurd mummeries of his vocation.

This native quack was naked to the waist; his breast and back being painted over with representations of snakes and lizards. Instead of the usual breech-cloth, or middle garment, he wore a kind of apron of antelope skins, hemmed, or skirted with feathers of various colours: the borders of his leggings, were also adorned with the wings of an owl; in one hand he held a tomahawk, the haft of which was painted white, and in the other a hollow gourd containing a few hard beans, or stones of the wild cherry, which latter instrument he rattled incessantly round the head of his patient, accompanying this *Æsculapian* music with the most grotesque gesticulations, and a sort of moaning howl—all these being intended to exorcise and drive away the evil spirit of pain.

While Reginald was contemplating the strange spectacle with mingled curiosity and compassion, he heard a confused murmur among those Indians nearest to the corner of the lodge, and thought he could distinguish the name of *Olitipa*; nor was he mistaken, for almost immediately afterwards the crowd divided, and *Prairie-bird* appeared before the lodge. Her dress was the same as that in which Reginald had before seen her, excepting that, in place of the chaplet of wild flowers, she wore on her head a turban of party-coloured silk, the picturesque effect of which, blending with her dark hair and the oriental character of her beauty, reminded our hero of those Circassian enchantresses whom he had read of in eastern fable, as ruling satrap or sultan, with a power more despotic than his own!

Prairie-bird, walking gently forward with modest self-possession, took her place by the side of the sufferer, as if unconscious of the numerous eyes that were observing all her movements; the Medicine-man, whose exorcisms had been hitherto attended with no success, retreated into the lodge, whence he narrowly and silently observed the proceedings of his fair rival in the healing art.

It was not difficult for *Prairie-bird* to ascertain that the boy's hurts were very serious, for the hot brow, the dry lip, the involuntary contortions of the frame, gave clear evidence of acute pain and fever. She deeply regretted that the Missionary had been absent when she was summoned, as his assistance would have been most useful, nevertheless, she resolved to do all in her power towards the mitigation of sufferings, the cure of which seemed beyond the reach of her simple remedies. Opening a bag that hung at her girdle, she drew from it some linen bandage, and various salves and simples, together with a small case of instruments belonging to Paul Muller, and kneeling by her young patient's side, she breathed a short, but earnest prayer for the blessing of Heaven on her humble exertions. During this pause, the Indians observed a strict and attentive silence; and Reginald felt a kind of awe mingle itself with his impassioned admiration, as he contemplated the unaffected simplicity and loveliness of her kneeling figure

A serious wound in the young patient's temple claimed her first care, which having washed and closed, she covered with a healing plaster, but observing that the symptoms of fever had rather increased than diminished, she knew that the lancet should be immediately applied, and cast her anxious eyes around in the hope that the missionary might have heard of the accident, and be now on his way to the lodge. While looking thus around, she became for the first time aware of Reginald's presence, and a slight blush accompanied her recognition of him; but her thoughts recurring immediately to the object of her present attention, she asked him in a clear low voice to come nearer, on which he moved forward from the circle of spectators, and stood before the lodge.

Prairie-bird, pointing to the form of the young Indian, said in English, "The poor boy is much hurt, he will die if he is not bled; the Black Father is absent; can Reginald take blood from the arm?"

"I do not pretend to much skill in surgery, fair Prairie-bird," replied the young man, smiling; "but I have learned to bleed my horse and my dog, and if the necessity be urgent, methinks I can open a vein in this boy's arm without much risk of danger."

"It is indeed urgent," said the maiden, earnestly; "here are Paul Müller's instruments; I pray you take a lancet and proceed without delay."

Thus urged, Reginald selected a lancet, and having proved its sharpness, he passed a bandage tightly round the sufferer's arm, and set about his first surgical operation with becoming care and gravity, the Osages drawing near and looking on in attentive silence. Before applying the lancet, he said in a low voice to Prairie-bird, "Must I allow a considerable quantity of blood to flow 'ere I staunch it?" and on her making an affirmative sign, he added, "Let me entreat you to turn your eyes away, it is not a fitting sight for them, and they might affect the steadiness of my nerves."

With a deep blush Prairie-bird cast down her eyes, and began to employ them busily in searching her little bag for some cordial drinks and healing ointment, to be administered after the bleeding should be over.

Reginald acquitted himself of his task with skill and with complete success, and found no difficulty in staunching the blood, and placing a proper bandage on the arm; after which the restoratives prepared by Prairie-bird were applied, and in a very short time they had the satisfaction of finding the symptoms of fever and pain subside, and were able to leave the youthful patient to repose, Prairie-bird promising to visit him again on the morrow.

An elderly brave of the Osages now stepped forward, and presented Prairie-bird with a girde of cloth, ornamented with feathers, quills, and beads of the gayest colours, an offering which she received with that modest grace which was inseparable from her every movement; the same brave (who was, in fact, the father of the wounded boy), presented Reginald with a painted buffalo robe, which, as soon as he had displayed its strange designs and devices, he desired a young Indian to convey to the white chief's lodge. Our hero having, in re-

turn, given to the Osage a knife with an ornamented sheath, which he had worn, in addition to his own, in case of being suddenly called upon to make such a present, prepared to accompany Prairie-bird to her lodge.

As they left the circle, Reginald's eye encountered that of Mahéga, fixed with a scowling expression on himself and his fair companion, but he passed on without noticing the sullen and haughty chief, being resolved not to involve himself in any quarrel in her presence. They walked slowly towards the lodge of Tamenund, and it must be confessed that they did not take exactly the shortest path to it, Reginald leading the way, and Prairie-bird following his occasional deviations with marvellous acquiescence.

The young man turned the conversation on the character of Paul Müller, knowing it to be a subject agreeable to Prairie-bird, and well calculated to give him an opportunity of listening to that voice which was already music to his ear; nor was he disappointed, for she spoke of him with all the warmth of the most affectionate regard; and the expression of her feelings imparted such eloquence to her tongue and to her beaming eyes, that Reginald looked and listened in enraptured silence. As they drew near her tent, she suddenly checked herself, and looking up in his face with an archness that was irresistible, said, "Pray pardon me, I have been talking all this time, when I ought to have been listening to you, who are so much wiser than myself."

"Say not so," replied Reginald, with an earnestness that he attempted not to conceal; "say not so, I only regret that we have already reached your tent, for I should never be weary of listening to your voice."

Prairie-bird replied with that ingenuous simplicity peculiar to her:

"I am glad to hear you say so, for I know you speak the truth, and it makes me very happy to give you pleasure; now I must go into my tent."

So saying she held out her hand to him, and nothing but the presence of several Indians loitering near, prevented his obeying the impulse which prompted him to press it to his lips; checking it by an effort of prudence, he withdrew into the lodge of Tamenund, and mused on the qualities of this extraordinary child of the wilderness, her beauty, her grace, her dignity, and above all, that guileless simplicity that distinguished her beyond all that he had ever seen; in short, he mused so long on the subject that we will leave him to his meditations, as we fear it must be confessed that he was almost, if not quite, "in love," and the reflections of parties so circumstanced, are rarely interesting to others.

What were the feelings of Prairie-bird when she once more found herself alone in her tent, and vainly endeavoured to still the unwonted tumult in her heart? Her thoughts, in spite of herself, would dwell on the companion who had escorted her from the Osage lodge; his words still rang in her ears; his image was before her eyes; she felt ashamed that one, almost a stranger, should thus absorb all her faculties, and was the more ashamed from being conscious that she did not wish it were otherwise;

her heart told her that it would not exchange its present state of tumult and subjection for its former condition of quiet and peace!

Best the reader should be inclined to judge her as harshly as she judged herself, we will beg him to remember the circumstances and history of this singular girl. Brought up among a roving tribe of Indians, she had fortunately fallen into the hands of a family remarkable for the highest virtues exhibited by that people; the missionary, Paul Müller, had cultivated her understanding with the most affectionate and zealous care; and he was, with the exception of an occasional trader visiting the tribe, almost the only man of her own race whom she had seen; and though entertaining towards Tameaud the gratitude which his kindness to her deserved, and towards War-Eagle and Wingeneud the affectionate regard of a sister, both the knowledge imparted by the missionary, and her own instinctive feeling had taught her to consider herself among them as a separate and isolated being. These feelings she had of course nourished in secret, but they had not altogether escaped the penetration of Wingeneud, who, it may be remembered, had told Reginald on their first meeting that the antelope was as likely to pair with the elk, as was his sister to choose a mate among the chiefs of the Osage or the Lenape.

On the return of the two Delawares from their excursion to the Muskingum, Wingeneud had related to Prairie-bird the heroic gallantry with which the young white chief had plunged into the river to save War-Eagle's life; he had painted, with untutored but impassioned eloquence, the courage, the gentleness, the generosity, of his new friend. Prairie-bird's own imagination had filled up the picture, and the unseen preserver of her Indian brother was therein associated with all the highest qualities that adorned the heroes of such tales as she had read or heard recounted by the missionary.

She had reached that age when the female heart, unsupported by maternal protection, and severed from the ties of kindred, naturally seeks for something on which to rest its affection. Are we then to wonder if, when Reginald Brando first stood before her, when she saw in his noble form and expressive features all her secret imaginations more than realized, when he addressed her in her own tongue, and in a tone of voice gentle even to tenderness; are we to wonder, or to blame, this nursling of the wilderness, if the barriers of pride and reserve gave way beneath the flood which swept over them with fresh and irresistible force! Often had she, on various pretexts, made Wingeneud repeat to her the adventures and occurrences of his excursion to the Ohio; and as the artless boy described, in language as clear as his memory was tenacious, the dwelling of Reginald's father, the range of buildings, the strange furniture, the garden, the winding brook that bounded its enclosure, and above all the fair features and winning gentleness of the Lily of Mooshanne, Prairie-bird would cover her averted face with her hands, as if struggling to banish or to recall some wild delusive dream, and her lips would move in unconscious repetition of "Mooshanne." Surprised at her agitation, Wingeneud had once so far laid aside the strictness of In-

dian reserve as to inquire into its cause, and she replied, with a melancholy smile,

"Wingeneud has painted the Lily of Mooshanne in colours so soft and sweet, that Olitipe longs to embrace and love her as a sister."

The boy fixed his penetrating eye upon her countenance, in deep expressive silence, but the innate delicacy of his feeling triumphed, and Prairie-bird's secret meditations were thence forward undisturbed.

To return from this retrospective digression Prairie-bird's tent was divided, by a partition of buffalo skins, into two compartments, in the outer of which were her guitar, the books lent her by the missionary, a small table and two chairs or rather stools, the latter rudely but efficiently constructed by his own hands; in the corner also stood the chest, where his medicines, instruments, and other few valuables were deposited; in the inner compartment was a bed, composed of Mexican grass, stretched upon four wooden feet, and covered with dressed antelope skins and blankets of the finest quality. Here also was a chest containing her quaint but not ungracious apparel, and the other requisites for her simple toilet; at night a female slave, a captive taken from one of the southern tribes, slept in the outer compartment, and the ever watchful Wingeneud stretched himself on a buffalo robe across the aperture, so that the slumbers of the fair Prairie-bird were securely guarded even during the absence of Paul Müller; and when he was with the tribe, his small tent was separated from hers only by a partition of skins, which in case of alarm might be cut open by a sharp knife in a moment. There was, in truth, little fear for the security of this extraordinary girl, who was looked upon, as we have before observed, by all the tribe with mingled awe and affection.

In the outer of the two compartments above-mentioned she was now sitting, with her eyes cast upon the ground, and her fingers straying unconsciously over the strings of her guitar, when she was aroused from her long reverie by the soft voice of the female slave who had entered unperceived, and who now said in the Delaware tongue,

"Are Olitipe's ears shut, and is the voice of Wingeneud strange to them?"

"Is my brother there?" replied the maiden, ashamed at her fit of absence; "tell him, Lita, that he is welcome."

The girl addressed by the name of Lita was about seventeen years of age, small, and delicately formed, exceedingly dark, her wild and changeable countenance being rather of a gipsy than of an Indian character. She had been taken, when a child, by a war-party which had penetrated into the country of the Comanches, a powerful and warlike tribe still inhabiting the extensive prairies on the Mexican and Texian frontier. She was devotedly attached to Prairie-bird, who treated her more like a friend than a slave, but towards all others she observed a habitual and somewhat haughty silence; had her fate condemned her to any other lodge in the encampment, the poor girl's life would have been a continued succession of blows, labour, and suffering; for her spirit was indomitable, and impracticable to every other control than kindness; but as the good-humoured Ta-

menund had appropriated her services to his favourite child, she passed most of her time in Olitipa's tent, and thus avoided the ill-usage to which she might otherwise have been exposed.

Such was the girl who now went to the folding aperture of the tent, and desired Wingenund to come in. The youth entered, followed by a boy bearing a large covered dish or basket of wicker-work, which having placed on the table, he withdrew. Prairie-bird could not fail to observe in her young brother's countenance and carriage an unusual staidness and dignity, and she remarked at the same time, the circumstance of his having brought with him the boy to carry her basket, a service which he had been accustomed to perform with his own hands. Making him a sign to sit down, she thus accosted him in terms allusive to the customs of the tribe:—

"Has my young brother dreamed? has the breath of the Great Spirit passed over his sleep?"

"It is so," replied Wingenund. "The chiefs and the braves have sat at the council-fire; the name of Wingenund was on their tongues, the deeds of his fathers are not forgotten; he is not to do the work of squaws; his name will be heard among the warriors of the Lenape."

From this reply Prairie-bird knew that her young brother was about to undergo the fasting and other superstitious ordeals, through which those youths were made to pass who wished to be enrolled among the warriors of the tribe at an earlier age than usual; these superstitious observances were repugnant to her good sense and enlightened understanding, and as she had hitherto acted in the capacity of mistress and instructress, she was perhaps not pleased at the prospect of his suddenly breaking loose from her gentle dominion; she said to him, therefore, in a tone more grave than usual:

"Wingenund has heard the Black-Father speak; were his ears shut? does he not know that there is one God above, who rules the world alone! the totems,* and the symbols, and the dreams of the medicine-men, are for those poor Indians whose minds are under a cloud. Wingenund cannot believe these things!"

"My sister speaks wisely," replied the youth; "the wind cannot blow away her words; but Wingenund is of the Lenape, the ancient people; he wishes to live and die among their braves; he must travel in the path that his fathers have trod, or the warriors will not call his name when the hatchet is dug up."

"Let not the hatchet be dug up," said the maiden, anxiously. "Have I not told my brother that God is the avenger of blood spilt by man? why should his foot be set on the war-path?"

"While the hatchet is below the earth," replied the youth, in the low, musical accent of his tribe, "Wingenund will sit by his sister and listen to her wisdom; he will go out with War-Eagle and bring back the skin of the antelope

or the doe for her apparel, the meat of the deer and the bison for her food; he will open his ears to the counsel of the Black-Father, and will throw a thick blanket over thoughts of strife and blood. But if the Washashee" (the Osage) "bears a forked tongue," (here the youth sank his voice to a whisper of deep meaning,) "if he loosens the scalp-knife while his hand is on the poacan,* if the trail of the Dahcotah is found near our village, Wingenund must be awake; he is not a child; the young men will hear his voice, and the old men shall say "He is the son of his father." It is enough; let my sister eat the meat that War-Eagle has sent her; for three suns Wingenund tastes not food."

So saying, she had thrown his robe over his shoulder and left the tent. Prairie-bird gazed long and thoughtfully on the spot where her brother's retreating figure had disappeared; she felt grieved that all the lessons and truths of Christianity which she had endeavoured to instil into his mind, were unable to change the current of his Indian blood; she had hoped to see him become a civilized man and a convert, and through his amiable character, and the weight of his name, to win over many others of the Lenape tribe; in addition to this disappointment, she was alarmed at the purport of his parting words; he had hinted at some treachery on the part of their Osage allies, and that a trail of the Dahcotahs had been seen near the encampment. These subjects of anxiety, added to the excitement which her feelings had lately undergone, so completely engrossed the maiden's attention, that, although the corn-cakes were of the sweetest kind, and the venison of the most delicate flavour, the basket of provisions remained untouched on the table when Paul Müller entered the tent.

His brow was grave and thoughtful, but his countenance relaxed into its usual benevolent expression, as his affectionate pupil sprang forward to greet and welcome him.

"Dear father, I am so glad you are come!" she exclaimed; "I have been waiting for you most impatiently, and I have been in need of your aid."

"I heard, my child, as I walked through the village, that you had been tending the wounds of a boy much hurt by a horse; was the hurt beyond your skill?"

"Not exactly," she replied, hesitating. "It was needful that blood should flow from his arm, and, as you were not there, I was forced to ask the assistance of Netis—that is, of Reginald."

"Well," said the missionary, smiling, "I hope he proved a skilful leech!"

"He would not allow me to look on," she replied; "but, though it was his first trial, he drew the blood and staunched it as skilfully as you could have done it yourself, and then he walked with me to the tent."

"And you conversed much by the way," enquired the missionary.

"Oh yes; and he made me tell him a great deal about you, and I was ashamed of talking so much; but then he told me that it gave him pleasure to hear me talk. How can it please him to hear me talk, dear father? I know nothing, and he has seen and read so much."

* Every warrior belonging to the Lenape, Saukkee, and all the branches of the great Chippewyan tribe, believes himself to be under the mysterious guardianship of some spirit, usually represented under the form of an animal. This is called his "totem," and is held sacred by him; thus, a warrior whose totem is a tortoise, or a wolf, or even a snake, will cautiously abstain from injuring or killing one of those animals.

* *Anglic,* "the pipe"

Paul Müller averted his face for a moment to conceal from her the smile which he could scarcely repress, as he replied,

"My child, he has perhaps seen and read much, but the life and habits of the Indians are new to him, and of these you can tell him many things that he does not know."

"Tell me, dear father," she said, after a short silence, "are there others like him in my country? I mean, not exactly like him, but more like him than the traders whom I have seen; they are so rough, and they drink fire-water, and they never think of God or his mercies; but he is so noble, his countenance made me afraid at first, but now, when he speaks to me, his voice is as gentle as the fawn calling to its dam!"

Paul Müller saw very well how it fared with the heart of Prairie-bird; he remembered that Reginald was the son of a wealthy proprietor, who would probably have insuperable objections to his son's marrying a foundling of the wilderness, and he hesitated whether he should not give her some warning caution on a subject which he foresaw would so soon affect her peace of mind; on the other hand, he was convinced that Reginald was a man of generous and decided character, and, while he resolved carefully to observe the intercourse between them, he would not mar the unsuspecting purity of her nature, nor throw any obstacle in the way of an attachment which he believed might lead to the happiness of both parties. In coming to this conclusion, it must not be forgotten that he was a Moravian missionary, long resident in the Far-west, and, therefore, not likely to trouble his head with the nice distinctions of European aristocracy. In the country which was now his home, he might be justified in deeming a match equal, if the man were honest and brave and the bride young and virtuous, without reference to their birth, connexions, or worldly possessions. Under the impression of considerations like these, the missionary replied to the maiden's enquiry:

"My child, I will not say that among the cities and settlements of the white men, there are many who would gain by comparison with Reginald Brandon, for not only has he the accidental advantages of fine features, and a form singularly graceful and athletic, but he seems to me to possess the far higher and rarer qualities of a modest, generous mind, and an honest heart: nevertheless, my child, I will pray you even in respect to him, not to forget what I have told you regarding the general infirmity and waywardness of our nature, keep a watch on your eyes and on your heart, and Providence will rule all for the best:—we will speak no more on this subject now; let us take some food from the basket on your table." Prairie-bird spread the simple meal in thoughtful silence, and when the missionary had asked a blessing on it, they sat down together. After a pause of some minutes she communicated to him her anxiety on account of the hints dropped by Wingenund respecting the suspected treachery of some of their Osage allies, and the circumstance of a hostile trail having been discovered near the encampment. "It is too true," replied the missionary gravely; "there are signs of approaching strife; and even that boy, whom I

have so long endeavoured to instruct and lead aright, his blood is beginning to boil. I fear it is almost as hard for an Indian to change his nature as an Ethiopian his skin. He has told you the truth, and we must be prepared for approaching trouble."

After musing for a few moments, Paul Müller, fixing his eye on Prairie-bird, continued: "Do you know any cause of quarrel between the Osage and Lenape chiefs?"

"None," replied the maiden in unaffected surprise. "How should I know! I go not near their council-fire."

"True," said the missionary; "but your eyes are not often shut in broad day. Have you spoken to Mahega of late? have you observed him?"

"He has spoken to me more than once, and often meets me on my return from any far lodge in the village. I do not like him; he is fierce and bad, and he beats his young squaw, Wetopa."

"You are right, my child; avoid him; there is evil in that man; but if you meet him, do not show any dislike or suspicion of him; you would only kindle strife; you are among faithful and watchful friends, and if they were all to slumber and sleep, you have a Friend above, whose eye is never closed, and whose faithfulness is everlasting. Farewell, my child. I must converse awhile with Tamenund. Do you solace an hour with your guitar; it will put your unquiet thoughts to rest."

Prairie-bird was so accustomed to pay implicit obedience to the slightest wishes and suggestions of her beloved preceptor, that as he left the tent she mechanically took up the guitar, and passed her fingers through the strings. By degrees the soul of music within her was stirred, and ere long vented itself in the following hymn

The words were in the Delaware tongue, and composed by herself,—the melodies (for more than one were introduced into the irregular chaunt) were such as she had caught or mingled from Indian minstrelsy, and the whole owed its only attraction to the sweet and varied tones of her voice. The first measure was a low recitative which might be thus rendered in English:—

"The sun sinks behind the western hills,
Deep red are the curtains of his couch.
One by one the stars appear;
Many they are and lustrous.
The pale moon is among them!
They walk in their appointed path,
Singing on their way, 'God made us all!
Machlenda sutch Ktolwunsoacan,
or
Hallowed be thy name."

Here the measure changed, and sweeping the strings with a bolder hand, she continued her untutored hymn, blending her Christian creed with the figures and expressions of the people among whom she dwelt.

"The Great Spirit of the Lenape is God.
He has sent his word to gladden the heart of man,
But clouds still darken the minds of the ancient people
The Great Spirit knows that they are blind and deaf,
Yet His ear is open to hear,
His hand is ready to guide.

(*ut supra*)
Hallowed be thy name!"

Again the measure changed, as in the richest tones of her melodious voice she pursued her theme.

"*Ston and the everlasting mountains are thy footstool !
Lightnings are about thy throne.
Thunder is thy voice,
And the evil spirit trembles before thee !
The eagle cannot soar to thy habitation ;
His eye cannot look on thy brightness ;
Yet dost thou give life to the insect,
And breath to the merry wren !
Thou feedest the wild horse to the pasture,
And the thirsty fawn to the stream.
Hallowed be thy name."*

Here the measure resumed its low and plaintive melody as she thus concluded her song.

Who sings the praise of God ?
It is ' Prairie-bird,' the poor child of the wilderness.
But God spurns not her prayer ;
She is a stray-leaf, that knows not the tree
Whence the rude wind hath blown it ;
But God planted the parent stem,
And not a branch or leaf thereof is hid from his sight.
The young whip-poor-will flies to its mother's nest,
The calf bleats to the bison-cow :
No mother's voice says to Ollipa, ' Come here !'
The wide prairie is her home !
God is a Father to Ollipa !
Hallowed be thy name !"

In singing the last few words, the tones of her voice were "most musical, most melancholy," and though no human eye marked the teardrop that stole down her cheek, it would appear that her song had excited sympathy in some human bosom, for a deep sigh fell upon her ear ; startled at the sound, Prairie-bird looked round her tent, but no one could be seen ; she listened, but it was not repeated, and the maiden remained unconscious that at the very first touch of her guitar Reginald had crept out of the adjoining lodge, and, enveloped in a buffalo robe on the grass at the back of her tent, had heard from beginning to end her plaintive hymn, and had paid the unconscious tribute of a heavy sigh to the touching pathos of its closing strain.

CHAPTER XXIII.

Symptoms of a Rupture between the Delawares and Oagee.—Mahéga comes forward in the Character of a Lover.
—His Courtship receives an unexpected Interruption.

PAUL MULLER, having left the lodge of Prairie-bird, fulfilled his intention of entering that of Tamenund: he found the venerable chieftain seated upon a buffalo robe; his back leaned against a bale of cloth, a highly ornamented pipe-stem at his lips, while from its other extremity, a thin column of smoke rising in wavy folds, found its way out of the accidental rents and crevices in the skins which covered the lodge. War-Eagle was listening in an attitude of respectful attention to the words which fell from his father; but the subject of conversation was evidently of some importance, as the women and the youths were whispering together at a distance from the two principal persons. The entrance of the missionary was not unnoticed, for Tamenund made him a signal to draw near and sit down; several times the pipe was passed round in silence, when the old chief, addressing his guest in the Delaware tongue, said, "The Black Father knows that there are dark clouds in the sky!"

"He does," replied the missionary. A glance of intelligence passed between War-Eagle and Tamenund, as the latter proceeded.

"What says the Black-Father? Is the storm to break, or will the sun shine again?"

"The Great Spirit only knows," replied the

missionary; "if the sun shines, we will be thankful, if the storm falls, we will wrap round us the cloak of patience."

A fierce gleam shot from the young chief's eye, but he spoke not a word until Tamenund addressed him thus: "What says War-Eagle? let him speak."

"The snows of many winters are on my father's forehead; the Black-Father has learned wisdom from the Great Spirit; it is more fitting for War-Eagle to listen than to speak," replied the young man, curbing the angry thoughts that glowed in his breast.

"Nay, my son," said the missionary, "let War-Eagle speak, and his saying be afterwards weighed by the aged heads."

War-Eagle then proceeded to explain how Wingenund, in returning from the turkey-pen, had caught a glimpse of a distant figure, whom he knew at a glance to belong to another tribe. Hastily concealing himself among the bushes, he waited till the strange Indian passed, and then resolving to watch him, crept stealthily on his trail.

Having made his way to a hollow in the thickest part of the forest, he sat down on the stump of an alder-tree, where he made and twice repeated a low signal whistle, which was soon answered by another Indian, who approached in an opposite direction, and in whom, to his great surprise, Wingenund recognised Mahéga. He was not near enough to overhear their conversation, neither was he aware whether they spoke in the Delaware tongue, but after conversing in a low tone for some minutes, they separated, and Wingenund again put himself on the trail of the stranger; the latter frequently stopped in his course, looked round and listened, but the youth was too practised and sagacious to be baffled by these precautions, and finally succeeded in tracking the object of his pursuit to an encampment containing ten or a dozen armed Indians, whom he knew at once to form a war-party, but could not decide to what tribe they belonged; he succeeded, however, in securing a mocassin which one of them had dropped, and returned unperceived to the Delaware village.

Such was the outline of the occurrences now rapidly sketched by War-Eagle; and in concluding his narrative, he held up the mocassin above-mentioned, and presented it to the aged chief. The latter examined it for a moment in silence, and restoring it to the warrior, pronounced, in a low guttural tone, the word "Dahcotah."

"Yes," said the War-Eagle, in a deep whisper, indicative of the indignant passion that boiled within; "Yes, the Dahcotah is in the woods; he prowls like a prairie-wolf. The Great Spirit has made him a dog, and if he sets his foot on the hunting-ground of the Lenapé, let not his wife complain if she looks along his path in vain, and strikes her breast, saying, 'The wife of the Dahcotah is a widow!' but the Evil Spirit has crept into the heart of the Washashee, a snake is in the council-chamber of the Lenapé, and lies on the tongue of Mahéga! Is it enough, or must War-Eagle speak more?"

"The words of my son are hard," replied Tamenund, shaking his head sorrowfully; "the Dahcotah are dogs, they are on a deer-hunt; their heart is not big enough to make them dig up the hatchet to fight with the Lenapé. Tamenund cannot believe that the tongue of Mahéga is so forked, or his heart so black, for two suns

have not passed since he sat and smoked in this lodge, and spoke of Olltipa, the daughter of the Prairie. He said that her voice was music to him, that her form was in his dreams, and he asked Tamenund to give her to him as a wife."

At these words the suppressed rage of the youthful warrior had well nigh burst the iron bands of Indian self-control; he ground his teeth audibly together, his dilated form trembled through every nerve and muscle, but observing the keen eye of the missionary fixed upon his countenance, he subdued in a moment the rising tempest, and asked in a voice, the forced calmness of which was fearful, "What said my father?"

Tamenund replied that the maiden was great medicine in the tribe, that she was a gift of the Great Spirit, and that her dwelling could never be in the lodge of an Osage chief. "He went away without speaking," added the old man seriously; "but his eye spoke bad words enough!"

"My father said well," exclaimed the impetuous young man; "let Mahéga seek a wife among his dog-brothers the Dahcotahs! War-Eagle will smoke no more in his lodge."

After a brief pause, Tamenund continued,

"My son has told half his thoughts, let him speak on."

"Nay," returned the young warrior, "let my father consult the medicine, and the counsellors who have seen many winters: War-Eagle will whisper to his braves, and when the ancient men in council have spoken, he will be ready."

With this ambiguous answer, he folded his buffalo robe over his shoulder and left the lodge.

The missionary saw that mischief was brewing, yet knew not how to prevent it. He had gained extraordinary influence among the Delawares by never interfering in their councils, unless when he felt assured that the result would justify the advice which he offered, but on the present occasion it was evident that his Indian friends had sufficient grounds for suspecting their Osage allies of treachery; he resolved, therefore, to wait and observe, before making those attempts at reconciliation which became his character and his mission. Influenced by this determination, he spoke a few words to the aged chief on indifferent matters, and shortly afterwards retired to his own lodge.

During the preceding conversation Baptiste had been seated at a little distance, his whole attention apparently engaged in mending a rent in his moccasins, but scarcely a word had escaped his watchful ear, and while he heard with secret delight that there was every chance of a fight with the Sioux, towards whom he cherished, as we have before observed, an unextinguished hatred, he could not view, without much uneasiness, the dangerous position in which Reginald's party might be placed by a rupture between the Delawares and Osages, in a wild region where either party might soon obtain the ready aid of the Pawnees, or some other warlike and marauding tribe; he resolved, however, for the present to content himself with putting his young leader on his guard, reserving a fuller explanation until he should have been able to ascertain the intentions of his Delaware friends: in this last endeavour he did not anticipate much difficulty, for the experienced woodsman had proved his steadiness to them in many a fray, and his courage and skill were no less proverbial among them than was his mortal enmity to the Dahcotahs.

Nothing occurred during the ensuing night to

disturb the quiet of the encampment, if that may, be denominated quiet which was constantly interrupted by the chattering of wakeful squaws, the barking of dogs, the occasional chaunt of a warrior, and the distant howling of hungry wolves; our hero's dreams were, like his waking thoughts, full only of Prairie-bird; and when he rose at daybreak he expressed no wish to roam or hunt, but lingered within view of that small circular lodge, which contained the treasure that he valued most on earth. To the cautious warning of Baptiste he answered, smiling, "You confess yourself that you only suspect; you know our friends and their language, their wives, and their stratagems. I trust the safety of my party to your sagacity; if your suspicions are turned to certainty, tell me, and I am ready to act."

As the young man left the lodge without even taking his cutlass or his rifle, Baptiste looking after him, shrugged his shoulders, adding in a under tone, just loud enough to be heard by Monsieur Perrot, who sat at his side,

"'Suspicion,' 'certainty,' 'sagacity'—why surely he is mad! he talks as if plots and plans were measured out by rule among the Red-skins, as they may be 'mong lords and princes in Europe! this comes of his towering, as they call it, amongst the Dutch and other outlandish tribes. Surely he's lived enough in the territory to know that with these Ingians, and special near a Siouxs trail, the first suspicion a man is like to get is an arrow in his ribs or a tomahawk in his brain. Capote-bleu, Maitre Perrot, what do you think of your master, is he mad?"

"Very much mad," said the good-humoured valet, grinning, while he continued assiduously to pound some coffee-beans which he was preparing for breakfast; "very much mad, Monsieur Baptiste; he very mad to leave Paris to go to his fox-huntin' uncle in England; he more mad to leave dat for the back-woods by de Musingum; but he dam mad to leave Mooshanne to come here where dere is nothing but naked savages and naked prairies."

"Ah! Maitre Perrot," replied the guide, "my father was a Canada Frenchman, and although he was, mayhap, never further east than Montreal, he was as fond of talking of Paris as a bear is of climbing a bee-tree!"*

"He very right, Monsieur Baptiste; de world without Paris is no more dan a woman without a tongue; but as you know our language, I will speak it to you, for pronouncing English is no better dan breaking stones wid your teeth! And the merry valet forthwith inflicted upon his grayer companion a Parisian tirade, that very soon went beyond the latter's stock of Canadian French.

The morning dawned with unusual splendour, the sun gradually rose over the wooded hills that bounded the eastern horizon, and the light breeze shook the dewdrops from the flowers, as Prairie-bird, fresh and lovely as the scene around her, tripped lightly over the grass to the sequestered spot which we have before mentioned as being her favourite resort; there, seated at the root or

* An allusion to the fondness of bears for honey occurs more than once in this tale, and will be met with in some shape or other in most works which treat of that animal's habits and propensities: that such is the case in Europe as well as in North America, may be gathered from the fact that in the Russian tongue, a Bear is called, "Med-vede," which word is thus formed: med, honey, vede, who knows, "He who knows honey."

the aged tree where Reginald had first seen her, she opened the volume which was her constant companion, and poured forth the grateful feelings of her heart, in the words of the inspired Prophet-King; at her feet flowed the brawling stream which fed the valley below the encampment; the merry birds sang their matins among the leafy branches above her head, and around her sprang sweet-scented flowers and blossoms of a thousand varied hues. There are some spots, and some brief seasons on earth, so redolent of freshness, beauty, and repose, as almost to revive the Paradise lost by our first parents, but soon, too soon, the effects of primeval sin and its punishment are felt, and the atmosphere of heavenly peace is tainted by the miasma of human passion!

Prairie-bird had enjoyed for some time her study and her meditations undisturbed, when her attention was caught by the sound of approaching footsteps; the conscious blood rushed to her cheek as she expected to see the same visitor who had so suddenly presented himself on the preceding day, when to her surprise and annoyance, the gigantic figure of Mahéga stood before her on the opposite side of the streamlet by which she was seated; although simple, unsuspecting, and fearless by nature, there was something in the countenance and bearing of this formidable chief that had always inspired her with mingled dislike and awe; remembering on the present occasion the hint lately given to her by the Missionary, she returned the haughty greeting of the Indian by a gentle inclination of her head, and then summoned composure enough to continue her reading, as if desirous to avoid conversation; such, however, was not Mahéga's intention, who softening, as far as he was able, the rough tones of his voice, addressed to her, in the Delaware tongue, a string of the finest Indian compliments on her beauty and attractions. To these the maiden coldly replied, by telling him that she thanked him for his good words, but that as she was studying the commands of the Great Spirit, she wished not to be disturbed.

Mahéga, nothing checked by this reply, continued to ply her with protestations and promises, and concluded by telling her that she *must* be his wife; that he was a warrior, and would fill her wigwam with spoils and trophies. As he proceeded, his countenance became more excited, and the tones of his voice had already more of threat than of entreaty. Prairie-bird replied with forced calmness, that she knew he was a great warrior, but that she could not be his wife; their paths were different; his led to war, and spoils, and power in ruling his tribe; hers to tending the sick and fulfilling the commands of the Great Spirit given in the "Medicine Book." Irritated by the firm though gentle tone of her reply, the violent passion of the chief broke out in a torrent of harsh and menacing words; he called her a foundling and a slave; adding, that in spite of the Delaware squaws and their white allies, she should sleep in his lodge, although the honour was greater than she deserved.

Fired with indignation at this brutal menace, the spirited girl rose from her seat, and looking him full in the face, replied, "Prairie-bird is a foundling; if Mahéga knows his parents, he disgraces their name; she would rather be the slave of Tamenund than the wife of Mahéga."

A demoniac grin stole over the features of the

savage, as he replied: "The words of Olitipa are bitter. Mahéga laughs at her anger; she is alone and unprotected; will she walk to his lodge, or must the warrior carry her?"

So saying, he advanced to the very edge of the narrow stream! The maiden, although alarmed, retained sufficient presence of mind to know that to save herself by flight was impossible, but the courage of insulted virtue supported her, and she answered him in a tone that breathed more of indignation than of fear.

"Olitipa is not alone—is not unprotected! The Great Spirit is her protector, before whom the stature of Mahéga is as a blade of grass, and his strength like that of an infant. See," she continued, drawing from her girdle a small sharp-pointed dagger, "Olitipa is not unprotected; if Mahéga moves a foot to cross that stream this knife shall reach her heart; and the great Mahéga will go to the hunting fields of the dead, a coward, and a woman-slayer."

As she spoke these words she held the dagger pointed to her bosom now heaving with high emotion; her form seemed to dilate, and her dark eye kindled with a prouder lustre. The glow on her cheek, and the lofty dignity of her attitude, only heightened her beauty in the eyes of the savage, and confirmed him in carrying out his fell purpose, to ensure the success of which he saw that stratagem, not force, must be employed; assuming, therefore, a sarcastic tone of voice, he replied,

"Olitipa trusts to the edge of her knife; Mahéga laughs at her." Then he continued in a louder key, as if addressing an Indian behind her, "Let Wanemi seize her arm and hold it."

As the surprised maiden turned her head in the direction where she expected to see the Indian to whom Mahéga was speaking, that crafty chief cleared the brook at a bound, and seizing her waist, while a smile of triumph lit up his features, said, "The pretty one is Mahéga's prisoner; there is no one here but himself; a cunning tale tickled the ears of Olitipa."

The hapless girl saw how she had been unwitting by the savage. She struggled in vain to free herself from his grasp, and a faint scream of despair broke from her lips.

The spring of a famished tiger on a heifer is not more fiercely impetuous than was the bound with which Reginald Brandon rushed from the adjacent thicket upon Mahéga,—reckless of his opponent's huge bulk and strength, forgetful that he was himself unarmed. The cry of Prairie-bird had strung with tenfold power every sinew in his athletic frame; seizing with both hands the throat of Mahéga, he grasped it with such deadly force that the Indian was compelled to release his hold of the maiden,—but he still retained her knife, and in the struggle plunged it into the arm and shoulder of Reginald, who relaxed not, however, his iron grasp, but still bore his opponent backward, until the foot of the latter tripped over a projecting root, and he fell with tremendous force upon his head, the blood gushing in torrents from his nose and mouth. Reginald, who had been dragged down in his fall, seized the dagger, and, as he raised it above his head, felt a light touch upon his arm, and turning round saw Prairie-bird kneeling at his side, her face pale as monumental marble, and the sacred volume still clasped in her hand.

"Kill him not, Reginald," she said, in a low, impressive voice; "Vengeance is mine, saith the Lord!"

breathless, and flushed with the late severe struggle, the young man replied, "I will spare the villain, dear Prairie-bird, at your bidding; he is stunned and senseless now, but he will soon recover, and his fury and thirst for revenge will know no bounds; he shall know, however, that I *have* spared him." So saying he cut off the dyed and ornamented scalp lock from the top of Mahéga's head, and laying it beside the prostrate chieftain, arose, and retired with Prairie-bird from the spot.

They walked together some distance in silence, for her heart was overcharged with contending emotions, and as they went she unconsciously clung to his arm for support; at length she stopped, and looking up in his face, her eyes glistening with tears, she said,

"How am I ever to thank you? my first debt of gratitude is due to Heaven; but you have been its brave, its blessed instrument of my deliverance from worse than death!" and a shudder passed over her frame as the rude grasp of Mahéga recurred to her remembrance.

"Dear Prairie-bird," he replied; "as a man I would have done as much for the poorest and most indifferent of your sex—how then am I repaid a thousand, thousand fold by having been allowed to serve a being so precious!" The deep mellow tone in which he spoke these words, and the look by which they were accompanied, brought the tranquil colour again to the cheek of his companion, and as she cast her full dark eyes downward, they rested on the arm that supported her, and she saw that his sleeve was stained and dropping with blood!

"Oh! you are wounded, badly hurt, I fear. Tell me, tell me, Reginald," she continued, with an intensity of anxiety that her expressive countenance betrayed, "are you badly hurt?"

"Indeed, dear Prairie-bird, I cannot tell you; I felt the Indian strike me twice with the dagger before he fell; I do not think the wounds are serious, for you see I can walk and assist your steps too."

While he thus spoke he was, however, growing faint from loss of blood, and the wound in his shoulder, having become cold and stiff, gave him exquisite pain. Prairie-bird was not deceived by the cheerfulness of his manner; she saw the paleness that was gradually stealing over his countenance, and with ready presence of mind, insisted on his sitting down on the trunk of a fallen tree beside their path. The suffering condition of Reginald redoubled instead of paralyzing her energies; she filled his cap with fresh water from the brook, urged him to taste a few drops, and sprinkled more over his face and temples; then ripping up the sleeve of his hunting shirt, she found the blood still welling from two severe wounds between the elbow and shoulder in the left arm; these she bathed and carefully closed, applying to them a healing salve which she drew from the small bag that she wore at her girdle, after which she bandaged the arm firmly with her kerchief, then, kneeling beside him, strove to read in his face the success of her simple surgery.

In the course of a few minutes the dizzy sensation of faintness, that had been produced by loss of blood, passed away, and the delighted Prairie-bird, seeing on his countenance the beaming smile of returning consciousness and strength, murmured to herself, "Oh! God, I thank thee!" then hiding her face in her hands, wept with mingled emotion and gratitude. Re-

ginald heard the words, he marked the tear, and no longer able to suppress the feeling with which his heart overflowed, he drew her gently towards him with his yet unwounded arm, and whispered in her ear the outpourings of a first, fond, passionate love!

No reply came from her lips, her tears (tears of intense emotion) flowed yet faster; but a sensible pressure on the part of the little hand which he clasped within his own, gave him the blest assurance that his love was returned; and again and again did he repeat those sacred and impassioned vows by which the hopes, the fears, the fortunes, the affections, the very existence of two immortal beings, are inseparably blended together. Her unresisting hand remained clasped in his, and her head leaned upon his shoulder, that she might conceal the blushes that suffused her countenance; still he would not be satisfied without a verbal answer to his thrice urged prayer that he might call her his own; and when at length she raised her beaming eyes to his, and audibly whispered "For ever," he sealed upon those sweet lips the contract of unchanged affection.

Bright, transitory moments of bliss! lightning flashes that illumine the dark and stormy path of life, though momentary in your duration how mighty in your power, how lasting in your effects! Sometimes imparting a rapturous glow and kindling an unceasing heat that death itself cannot extinguish, and sometimes under a star of evil destiny searing and withering the heart rendered desolate by your scorching flame!

It is not necessary to inform the gentle reader how long the *l'le-à-l'le* on the fallen tree continued; suffice it to say that Prairie-bird forgot her fright, and Reginald his wounds; and when they returned to the village, each sought to enjoy in solitude those delicious reveries which deserve certainly the second place in love's catalogue of happiness.

CHAPTER XXIII.

Ethelston prepares to leave Mooshanne.—Mahéga appears as an Orator, in which Character he succeeds better than in that of a Lover.—A Storm succeeded by a Calm.

WHILE the events described in the last chapters were in progress, the hours sped smoothly onward at Mooshanne. Lucy and Ethelston thought themselves justly entitled to a liberal compensation for the trials of their long separation, and as the spring advanced, morning and evening generally found them strolling together, in the enjoyment of its opening beauties. Sometimes Aunt Mary encountered them during the busy round of her visits to the poultry, the piggery, or to the cottage of some neighbour, whither sorrow or sickness called her. The mate frequently came over from Marietta to see his captain, and to inquire whether there was no early prospect of another voyage, for he already began to find that Time travelled slowly ashore; and although he consoled himself, now and then with a pipe and social glass in David Muir's back parlour, he longed to be afloat again, and told the worthy merchant, that he would rather have made the fresh-water trip in the canoe, than be laid up in dock, while he felt his old hull still stout and seaworthy. His son Henry continued to advance in the good graces of Jessie Muir, but unfortunately for the youth his father

had discovered his attachment, and lost no opportunity of bantering him in the presence of the young lady, accompanying his jokes with sundry grins, and severe pokes in the ribs, which caused sometimes a disagreeable alternation of vexation and confusion; nevertheless David Muir remained habitually blind to the state of his daughter's affections, and Dame Christie was a great deal too much occupied with the cares of domestic government (including the occasional lectures and reproofs administered to David), to admit of her troubling her head with, what she would have termed, their childish fancies.

Such was the general state of affairs on the banks of the Muskingum, when Colonel Brandon received letters from St. Louis, informing him that, since the departure of his son, various disputes had arisen between the agents of the different companies, and that unless a speedy and amicable arrangement could be effected, a heavy loss must necessarily fall upon the fur proprietors and others interested in the speculation. By the same post, a letter, bearing a foreign postmark, was placed in the hands of Ethelston, during the perusal of which, an expression of sadness spread itself over his countenance, and he fell abstractedly into a reverie, the subject of which was evidently of a painful nature. Such indications were not likely to escape the anxious and observant eye of love, and Lucy, laying her hand lightly on his arm, said, in a tone half joking, half serious, "Am I not entitled to know all your secrets now, Edward?"

"I think not," he replied in the same tone, "and I am rather disposed to refuse gratifying your curiosity, until you consent to acquiring such a title as shall be indisputable." Lucy coloured, but as she still held out her hand and threatened him with her displeasure if he continued disobedient, he gave her the letter, saying, "I suppose I must submit; the contents are sad, but there is no reason why I should withhold them from yourself, or from your father." With these words he left the room; after a short pause, Lucy, at the Colonel's request, read him the letter, which proved to be from young Lieutenant L'Estrange, and which, being translated, ran as follows:—

"MY HONOURED FRIEND,

"I need not tell you of the grief that I experienced on revisiting my changed and desolate home. My father has told me all that passed during your stay in the island. He looks upon those days not in anger, but in sorrow; he is sensible that for a time he did you injustice, and fears that, in the first bitterness of his grief, he may have omitted to make you full reparation. These feelings he treats me to convey to you, and desires me to add, that, from the first day of your arrival to that of your final departure, your conduct was like yourself—noble, upright, and generous. The misfortune that we still bewail, we bow to, as being the infliction of a Providence whose ways are inscrutable. Accept the renewed assurance of the highest regard and esteem of your friend,

"EUGENE L'ESTRANGE."

As Lucy read this letter, her eyes filled with tears, though, perhaps, she could scarcely have explained whether she wept over the afflictions that had befallen the L'Estrange family, or the generous testimony which it bore to her lover's conduct. The Colonel, too, was much affected,

and gladly acquiesced in his daughter's proposal, that they should, for the future, abstain from renewing a subject which must cause such painful recollections to Ethelston.

Ere many hours had elapsed, the latter was summoned to attend the Colonel, who informed him that the intelligence lately received from St. Louis was of a nature so important to his affairs, that it required immediate attention. "There is no one," he continued, "to whom I can well entrust this investigation except yourself, for none has deserved or received so much of my confidence." There was an unusual embarrassment and hesitation, observable in Ethelston's countenance on hearing these words, which did not escape his guardian's quick eye, and the latter added, "I see, my dear fellow, that you are not disposed to leave Mooshanne again so soon; you are thinking about certain promises and a certain young lady—is it not so, Edward?"

"It is so, indeed, my best and kindest of friends," said Ethelston. "Can you think or wish that it should be otherwise?"

"Nay," said Colonel Brandon, smiling, "I will not deny that you are entitled to entertain such thoughts, but believe me, when I assure you seriously that this expedition is essential to your own interests and to mine. A great portion of the property left to you under my care by your father is invested in these fur companies; and ere you enter on the responsibilities of a married life, it is necessary that you put your affairs in such a posture, as to ensure some future provision for the lady of whom you are thinking. These arrangements will not detain you at St. Louis for more than six weeks or two months; by that time Reginald will have returned from his Indian excursion; you will come home together, and I will then listen patiently to whatever you may think fit to say regarding the young lady in question. Shall it be so, Edward?"

"How can I be grateful enough!" replied Ethelston, taking the Colonel's hand. "Give me only leave to explain to Lucy the cause and probable duration of my absence, then I am ready to receive your instructions and to set about it immediately."

We will not inquire too minutely how Lucy received this explanation from her lover's lip, nor what means he took to reconcile her to the proposed arrangement; it is sufficient to state, that she finally acquiesced with her habitual gentleness, and that, in a few days after the above conversation, Ethelston had completed his preparations for his journey to St. Louis.

We will again take leave of him and of Mooshanne for a season, and return to Mahéga, whom we left bleeding and senseless, at no great distance from the Osage and Delaware encampment. Indeed, we should, ere this, have accused ourselves of inhumanity towards that chief, for leaving him so long in such sorry plight, had he not merited severe punishment for his rough and brutal behaviour to "Prairie-bird."

When Mahéga recovered his senses, he was still so much confused from the stunning effect of the severe blow that he had received on the head, as well as from loss of blood, that he could not recall to mind the events immediately preceding his swoon; nor did they present themselves distinctly to his memory, until his eye rested upon his stained scalp lock, and beside it the knife that Reginald Brandon had driven firmly into the turf. Then he remembered

clearly enough the struggle, his fall, and the maiden's escape; and the rage engendered by this remembrance was rendered yet more violent, when he reflected on the insult that his scalp had sustained from an enemy who had scorned to take his life.

Fierce as were the passions that boiled within the breast of the Osage, his self-command was such that he was able to control all outward demonstration of them; and rising slowly, he first effaced in the stream all the sanguinary marks of the late contest, and then took his way towards the camp, revolving in his mind various projects for securing the two principal objects that he was determined to accomplish—the possession of Prairie-bird and the death of Reginald Brandon!

Although a wild, uninstructed savage, Mahéga was gifted with talents of no common order. Bold and inflexible in carrying out his purposes, he had cunning sufficient to make unimportant concessions to the opinions of other chiefs and braves in council. Unlike the great majority of his tribe and race, he was well aware of the power and strength resulting from union, and although all his ambition ultimately centred in himself, he had the art of persuading his countrymen that he sought only their interests and welfare; thus, while many hated and more feared Mahéga, he was the most influential chief in the tribe, on account of his daring courage, his success in war, and the reckless liberality with which he distributed among others his share of booty or of spoil. When the Delaware band had migrated to the banks of the Osage river, Mahéga's first impulse had been to attack and destroy them; but finding that the sew comers were better supplied with arms and ammunition, the issue of a conflict seemed doubtful. Moreover, as they were visited by many raders, he calculated that, by keeping on friendly terms with them, he should acquire for his tribe and for himself many advantages greater than they had before enjoyed.

Acting upon these motives he had not only encouraged peace with the Delawares, but had effected through his own influence the league that had for some time united the two bands in one encampment; nor had he been mistaken in his expectations, for since their union with the band of Delawares, the Osages had been enabled to beat off the Pawnees and other roving tribes, from whose inroads upon their hunting ground they had before been exposed to frequent and severe disasters; the objects of which he had contemplated, had thus been for the most part accomplished. The tribe was plentifully supplied with arms and ammunition by the traders; his own influence among them was higher than ever; but he could not brook a rival to his fame as a warrior in War-Eagle, nor bear to be checked and thwarted in his ambitious schemes, by the mild authority of Tamenund.

The mind of Mahéga being thus prepared for seizing the earliest opportunity of coming to a rupture with the Delawares, it may well be imagined how his most violent and rancorous passions were excited by the scornful rejection of his suit on the part of Prairie-bird, and the disgrace he had incurred in his encounter with her white protector. He resolved no longer to delay the meditated blow; he had already made a secret league with the warlike and powerful Dahcotahs; and the occasion seemed most favourable for wreaking his vengeance on the relatives

of Prairie-bird, and the white men now resident in the Delaware camp.

Having once formed his determination, he set about carrying it into effect with the sagacity and profound dissimulation which had already obtained for him such an ascendancy in the Osage council. No sooner had he reached his lodge, than he dressed himself in his Medicine robe,* adorned his face with corresponding streaks of paint, and concealing the loss of his scalplock by a Spanish kerchief which he folded round his head, somewhat after the fashion of a turban, he sallied forth to visit the chiefs and braves, on whose co-operation he felt that success must mainly depend.

Some of these were already prepared to adopt his views, by their previous participation in the league with the Dahcotahs; others he bent and moulded to his purpose by arguments, and inducements suited to their character or circumstances; and ere he returned to his lodge, he felt confident that his proposed plans would be supported by the most influential warriors in the tribe, and that he should easily bear down the opposition of the more cautious and scrupulous, who might be disposed to keep faith with their Delaware allies.

In the meanwhile War-Eagle was not idle, he visited the principal braves and warriors of his tribe, and found them unanimous in their resolution to break off all communication with the Osages, as soon as the latter should commit any overt act that should justify them in dissolving the league into which they had entered. He also resolved to watch closely the movements of Mahéga, of whose malice and influence he was fully aware; with this view he selected an intelligent Delaware boy, who knew the Osage language, and desired him to hover about the tent of the chief, and to bring a report of all that he should see or hear.

Towards the close of day, Mahéga sent runners about his village, after the usual Indian fashion, to summon the warriors and braves, most of whom were already prepared for the harangue which he was about to address to them; as soon as a sufficient number were collected, the wily chief came forth from his lodge, in the dress before described, and began by thanking them for so readily obeying his call.

"Why did Mahéga call together the warriors?" he continued; "was it to tell them that a broad bison-trail is near the camp? The Medicine-men have not yet smoked the hunting pipe to the Wahcondah.—Was it to tell them of the scalps taken by their fathers? The young men have not been called to the war-dance, their ears have not heard the Drum.—Was it to tickle their ears with words like dried grass? Mahéga's tongue is not spread with honey; he has called the Washashe to open their ears and eyes, to tell them that snakes have crept under their

* The Buffalo robes worn by the Osages, as well as by some other Missouri tribes, are variously ornamented and painted with devices. Some of these refer to war, some to marriage, some to medicine or mystery; these last are generally worn at councils, on which occasions a chief who has some important subject to propose, frequently adds to the paint on his face, some streaks corresponding to the devices on his Buffalo robe.

† In the performance of the war-dance among the Indians of the Missouri, the tread of the dancers is guided by a no-tonomous chaunt, sung by some of the Medicine-men, and accompanied by the beat of a small drum of the rudest construction, and most barren dismal tone. It is generally nothing more than a dried skin, stretched upon a wooden frame hollowed out with a knife by the squaws.

lodges, that the dogs in the village have become wolves!"

As he paused, the auditors looked each at the other; those who were not yet instructed in the speaker's project being at a loss to catch the meaning of his words. Seeing that he had arrested their attention, he proceeded, "When Mahéga was young, when our fathers were warriors, who was so strong as the Washashes? Our hunters killed the deer and the bison from the Neska to the Topeo-kà.* The Kongsas were our brothers, and we were afraid of none. But the Mahe-hunguh† came near, their tongues were smooth, their hands were full, and the Washashes listened to their talk;—is it not so?"

A deep murmur testified the attention of his auditors; but Mahéga knew that he was venturing on dangerous ground, and his present object was rather to incite them to vengeance against the band of Delawares and their guests, than against the white men in general. He resumed his harangue in a milder tone.

"The Long-knives smoked the pipe of peace with us, we gave them meat, and skins, and they gave us paint, and blankets, and fire-weapons with Medicine-powder and lead,—all that was well; but who came with the Long-knives,—the Lenapé!‡ He paused a moment, then looking fiercely round, he continued in a louder strain; "and who are these Lenapé? They were beggars when they came to us! Their skin is red, but their hearts are pale. Do we not know the tale of their fathers? Were they not slaves to the warriors of other nations? Were they not women? Did they not leave the war-path to plant maize, and drink the fire-water of the Long-knives? They gave up their hunting ground; they left the bones of their fathers; they crossed the Ne-o-hunge,§ and asked for the friendship of the Washashes. We lighted the pipe for them; we received them like brothers, and opened to them our hunting ground; but their hearts are bad to us, Washashes, Mahéga tells you that the Lenapé are snakes!"

Another deep guttural sound, indicative of increased excitement, gratified the speaker's ear, and he continued in a strain yet bolder. "Is Mahéga not a chief? Has he not struck the bodies of his enemies? Are there no scalps on his war-shirt? He was good to these Lenapé, he treated their warriors like brothers, he offered to make Olitipa his wife, they gave him bitter words and threw dirt upon his lodge. Shall the Washashes be called a Dog?¶ he exclaimed in a voice of thunder, "Shall he sit on the ground while a Lenapé spits in his face?"

A shout of anger and fury burst from the audience, as waving his hand impatiently for silence, he went on, "The Lenapé knew that their hearts were false, their arms weak, their tongues forked, and they have brought in a band of Long-

knives to defend them and to drive the Washashes from their hunting grounds. Shall it be so? Shall we hold our backs to be scoured like children? Shall we whine like starved wolves? See how the pale faces can insult your chief." As he spoke Mahéga tore the turban with one hand from his head, and holding up his severed scalp lock with the other, while every muscle of his countenance worked with fury, "See what the hand of a white-face boy has done. Mahéga slept under a tree, and he whom they call Netis, the stranger who has eaten our meat and smoked with our chiefs, stole upon Mahéga, struck him on the head, and cut off his hair." As he uttered this audacious falsehood, which was, of course, believed by all who heard him, a terrific shout burst from the assembled Osages, and the wily chief, striking while the iron was hot, went on,

"It is enough—the Washashes are not women; they will dig up the hatchet, and throw it into the council-lodge of these white-faced and pale-hearted dogs. The great chief of the Dahcotahs has spoken to Mahéga; he seeks the friendship of the Washashes; the Dahcotahs are men; the bisons on their hunting grounds are like the leaves in the forest. They wish to call the Washashes brothers, they wait for Mahéga's words.—What shall he say?"

A tremendous shout was raised in reply, a shout that could be heard throughout the whole encampment. Mahéga saw that his triumph was complete, and folding his medicine robe over his shoulder, he once more waved his hand for silence, and dismissed the assembly, saying, "Before the sun sinks again the chiefs and braves will meet in council. The Washashes will hear their words and they will be ready." As he spoke he cast his dark eye expressively downwards to the tomahawk suspended at his belt, and slowly re-entered his lodge.

Meanwhile the youth who had been sent by War-Eagle to observe what was passing in the Osage encampment, executed his commission with fidelity and address. Although not sufficiently familiar with the language to catch all that fell from Mahéga, he yet learned enough to satisfy his young chief that a rupture was at hand. It only remained now to be proved whether it would take place as the result of an open council, or whether the Osages would withdraw secretly to their new Dahcotah allies.

On the morning succeeding the events above related, War-Eagle left the encampment before daybreak, partly to see whether he could discover any unusual stir among the Osages, and partly to revolve in his mind the course of conduct that he should suggest if called upon to give his opinion before the Lenapé council. Many various emotions were struggling in his bosom, and in this respect the descendants of Adam, whether their skins be white or red, so far resemble each other, that on such occasions they seek to avoid the turmoil of their fellow-men, and to be for a season alone amid the works of inanimate nature.

It was with impressions and feelings far different that Reginald and Prairie-bird found themselves soon after sunrise together, as if by tacit appointment, by the great tree, under which he had first seen her. In order to guard against the treachery of which he believed Mahéga capable, he had communicated to Baptiste the events of the preceding morning, and had desired him to watch the movements of the latter, especiall

* The Indian names for the rivers now called "Kongsas" and "Osage," both of which fall into the Missouri.

† *Anglicè*, Long-knives, or Americans.

‡ Mahéga here alludes to that unfortunate era, in the history of the Lenapé, so pathetically described by Heckewelder, when they permitted themselves to be persuaded by the whites to abandon all their warlike weapons and pursuits, and following those of agriculture, to leave the affairs of war entirely to the northern tribes, who guaranteed their safety. The consequence was such as might have been expected, they were treated with contumely and injustice; and being compelled, at length, to resume those arms to which they had been for some time unaccustomed, they suffered repeated defeats and disasters from the "six nations" and adjoining tribes.

§ The Mississippi is so called by the Osages.

guarding Prairie-bird against any renewal of his violence. The trusty forester, who had grown extremely taciturn since he had observed his young master's attachment, shrugged his shoulders, and briefly promised to obey his instructions. He was too shrewd to oppose a torrent such as that by which Reginald was carried away; and, although it must be confessed that he had many misgivings as to the reception that the tidings would meet with at the hands of Colonel Brandon, the beauty and gentleness of Prairie-bird had so far won upon his rough nature that he was well disposed to protect her from the machinations of the Osage. With these intentions he followed her when she left her lodge, and as soon as she entered the thicket before described, he ensconced himself in a shady corner whence he could observe the approach of any party from the encampment.

We will now follow the steps of War-Eagle, who, having satisfied himself by a careful observation of the out piquette that no immediate movement was on foot among the Osages, turned towards the undulating prairies to the westward of the village.

He was in an uneasy and excited mood, both from the treachery of the Osages towards his tribe, and various occurrences which had of late wounded his feelings in the quarter where they were most sensitive.

The victory over self, is the greatest that can be achieved by man, it assumes, however, a different complexion in those who are guided by the light of nature, and in those who have been taught by revelation. In the heathen it is confined to the actions and to the outward man, whereas in the Christian it extends to the motives and feelings of the heart. The former may spare an enemy, the latter must learn to forgive and love him. But in both cases the struggle is severe in proportion to the strength of the passion which is to be combated. In War-Eagle were combined many of the noblest features of the Indian character; but his passions had all the fierce intensity common to his race, and although the instructions of Paul Müller, falling like good seed on a wild but fertile soil, had humanized and improved him; his views of Christianity were incipient and indistinct, while the courage, pride, and feelings of his race were in the full zenith of their power. He had long known that Prairie-bird was not his sister in blood, she had grown up from childhood under his eye, and unconsciously perhaps at first, he had loved her, and still loved her with all the impassioned fervour of his nature. It may be remembered in the earlier portion of this tale, when he first became acquainted with Reginald, that he had abstained from all mention of her name, and had avoided the subject whenever young Wingenund brought it forward. He had never yet asked Ollitpa to become his wife, but the sweet gentleness of her manner, and her open contempt for the addresses of the handsome and distinguished Osage, had led him to form expectations favourable to his own suit. At the same time there was something in the maiden's behaviour that had frequently caused him to doubt whether she loved him, and sharing in the awe with which she inspired all the Indians around her, he had hitherto hesitated and feared to make a distinct avowal. Of late he had been so much occupied in observing the suspicious movements of the Osages that his attention had been somewhat withdrawn from Ollitpa: he was

aware of her having become acquainted with Reginald, and the adventure of the preceding day, which had been communicated to him, filled him with an uneasiness that he could not conceal from himself, although he had succeeded in concealing it from others.

In this frame of mind, he was returning to the camp, along the course of the streamlet passing through the grove where the encounter of the preceding day had occurred. When he reached the opening before described, his eyes rested on a sight that transfixed him to the spot. Seated on one of the projecting roots of the ancient tree was Prairie-bird, her eye and cheek glowing with happiness, and her ear drinking in the whispered vows of her newly betrothed lover; her hand was clasped in his, and more than once he pressed it tenderly to his lips. For several minutes, the Indian stood silent and motionless as a statue; despair seemed to have checked the current of his blood, but by slow degrees consciousness returned; he saw her, the maiden whom he had served and loved for weary months and years, now interchanging with another tokens of affection not to be mistaken, and that other a stranger whom he had himself lately brought by his own invitation from a distant region.

The demon of jealousy took instant possession of his soul; every other thought, feeling, and passion, was for the time annihilated, the noblest impulses of his nature were forgotten, and he was, in a moment, transformed to a merciless savage, bent on swift and deadly vengeance. He only paused as in doubt, how he should kill his rival; perhaps, whether he should kill them both; his eye dwelt upon them with a stern ferocity, as he loosened the unerring tomahawk from his belt; another moment he paused, for his hand trembled convulsively, and a cold sweat stood like dew upon his brow. At this terrible crisis of his passion, a low voice whispered in his ear, in the Delaware tongue,

"Would the Lenapé chief stain his Medicine with a brother's blood?" War-Eagle, turning round, encountered the steady eye of Baptista; he gave no answer, but directed his fiery glance towards the spot where the unconscious lovers were seated, and the half raised weapon still vibrated under the impulse of the internal struggle that shook every muscle of the Indian's frame. Profiting by the momentary pause, Baptista continued, in the same tone, "Shall the tomahawk of the War-Eagle strike an adopted son of the Unami?*" The Bad Spirit has entered my brother's heart; let him hold a talk with himself, and remember that he is the son of Tamenund."

By an effort of self-control, such as none but an Indian can exercise, War-Eagle subdued, instantaneously, all outward indication of the tempest that had been aroused in his breast. Replacing the tomahawk in his belt, he drew himself proudly to his full height, and, fixing on the woodsman an eye calm and steady as his own, he replied,

"Grande-Hâche speaks truth; War-Eagle is a chief; the angry Spirit is strong; but he tramples it under his feet." He then added, in a

* After their first meeting, in which Reginald had saved the life of War-Eagle, the latter had adopted his new friend, not only as a brother, but as a member of that portion of his tribe who were called Unami, and of which the turtle was the Medicine, or sacred symbol; after the ratification of such a covenant of brotherhood, each party is, according to Indian custom, solemnly bound to defend the other, on all occasions, at the risk of his own life.

lower tone, "War-Eagle will speak to Netis; not now; if his white brother's tongue has been forked, the Medicine of the Unami shall not protect him. The sky is very black, and War-Eagle has no friend left." So saying, the Indian threw his light blanket over his shoulder and stalked gloomily from the spot.

Baptiste followed with his eye the retreating figure of the Delaware, until it was lost in the dense foliage of the wood.

"He is a noble fellow," said the rough hunter, half aloud, leaning on his long rifle, and pursuing the thread of his own reflections. "He is one of the old sort of Ingians, and there's but few of 'em left. I've been with him in several skirmishes, and I've seen him strike and scalp more than one Dahcotah; but I never saw the glare of his eye so wild and blood-thirsty before; if he had kept his purpose, my old sinews would have had some trouble to save Master Reginald from that tomahawk. It's well for him that I've lived long enough among the Delawares to know the ins and outs of their natur', as well as John Skellup at the ferry knows the sand-bars and channels in Bearcreek Shallows. I thought the Unami Medicine whispered in his ear might do something; but I scarcely hoped it could smother such a fire in a minute. I remember, when I was young, I was in a hot passion, now and then, myself. *Capote!* I'm sometimes in a passion still, when I think of those cut-throat Sioux, and if my bristles are up, it takes some time to smooth 'em down." Here the woodsman's hand unconsciously rested for a moment on the huge axe suspended at his belt; but his musings took another course, as he continued his muttered soliloquy.

"Well, I sometimes think the bears and the deer have more reason than human critturs, ay, and I believe that shot isn't overwide o' the mark. Look at them two youngsters, Master Reginald and War-Eagle, two brave, honest hearts as ever lived; one saves the other's life; they become brothers and swear friendship; of a sudden, I am obliged to step in between 'em, to prevent one from braining the other with a tomahawk. And what's the cause of all this hate and fury? Why, love—a pair of black eyes and red lips; a strange kind of love, indeed, that makes a man hate and kill his best friend; thank Heaven, I have nothing to do with such love; and I say, as I said before, that the dumb animals have more reason than human critturs. Well, I must do all I can to make 'em friends again, for a blind man might see they'll need each other's help, ere many days are past!"

So saying, the woodsman threw his rifle into the hollow of his arm, and moved towards Reginald Brandon, who, unconscious of the danger that he had so narrowly escaped, was still engaged with Prairie-bird in that loving dialogue which finds no satiety in endless reiteration.

Baptiste drew near, and, after the usual greetings, took an opportunity, as he thought unobserved by Prairie-bird, of making a sign to Reginald that he wished to speak with him in private; but the maiden, watchful of every movement directly or indirectly affecting her lover, and already aware of the intrigues and treachery of the Osages, said to him with her usual simplicity of manner, "Baptiste, if you have aught to say requiring my absence, I will go; but as there are dangers approaching that threaten us all alike, do not fear to speak before me. I know something of these people, and though only an

unskilled maiden, my thoughts might be of some avail."

The sturdy hunter, although possessed of a shrewd judgment, was somewhat confused by this direct appeal; but after smoothing down the hair of his fur cap for a few moments, as was his custom when engaged in reflection, he resolved to speak before her without concealment; and he proceeded accordingly, with the blunt honesty of his nature, to narrate to them all the particulars of his late interview with War-Eagle. During his recital, both the auditors changed colour more than once, with different yet sympathetic emotions; and when he concluded, Reginald suddenly arose, and, fixing his eye upon the maiden's countenance, as if he would read her soul, he said,

"Prairie-bird, I conjure you by all you love on earth, and by all your hopes of Heaven! tell me truly, if you have known and encouraged these feelings in War-Eagle?"

The dark eyes that had been cast to the ground with various painful emotions, were raised at this appeal, and met her lover's searching look with the modest courage of conscious truth as she replied,

"Reginald, is it possible that you can ask me such a question? Olitipa, the founding of the Delawares, loved War-Eagle as she loved Wingenund; she was brought up in the same lodge with both; she called both, brother; she thought of them only as such! Had War-Eagle ever asked for other love, she would have told him she had none other to give! She knew of none other, until—until—" The presence of a third person checked the words that struggled for utterance; her deep eyes filled with tears, and she hid them on Reginald's bosom.

"I were worse than an infidel, could I doubt thy purity and truth" he exclaimed with fervour; "Baptiste, I will speak with my Indian brother.—I pity him from my heart—I will strive all in my power to soothe his sorrow; for I, and I alone can know what he must suffer, who has, in secret and in vain, loved such a being as this! Let us return."

Slowly and sadly they wended their way to the encampment, the guide bringing up the rear. He was thoroughly convinced that Prairie-bird had spoken the truth: every look, every accent carried conviction with it; but he feared for the meeting between the young men, being fully aware of the impetuosity of Reginald's character, and of the intense excitement that now affected the Indian's mind. He determined, however, to leave them to themselves, for he had lived enough among men of stormy and ungoverned passions to know, that in a *l'le-a-l'le* between two high and generous spirits a concession will often be made, to which pride might, in the presence of others, never have submitted.

On reaching their quarters in the encampment, they found Paul Müller standing thoughtfully before Prairie-bird's tent, into which, after exchanging a brief but cordial greeting, he and the maiden withdrew, leaving Reginald and the guide to retire into the adjoining lodge of Tame-nund.

War-Eagle, who had posted himself in a spot whence, without being seen himself, he could observe their movements, now walked slowly forward to the entrance of the tent, into which he was immediately invited by the Missionary; his manner was grave and composed, nor could the most observant eye have traced, in the line

of his countenance, the slightest shade of excitement or agitation.

After the usual salutation, he said, "War-Eagle will speak to the Black-Father presently; he has now low words for the ear of Ollitipa."

Paul Müller, looking on him with a smile, benevolent though somewhat melancholy, said, "I shut my ears, my son, and go, for I know that War-Eagle will speak nothing that his sister should not hear;" and so saying, he retired into his adjacent compartment of the tent. Prairie-bird, conscious of the painful scene that awaited her, sat in embarrassed silence, and for upwards of a minute War-Eagle contemplated without speaking the sad but lovely expression of the maiden's countenance; that long and piercing look told him all that he dreaded to know; he saw that Baptiste had spoken to her; he saw that his hopes were blasted; and still his riveted gaze was fixed upon her, as the eyes of one banished for life dwell upon the last receding tints of the home that he is leaving for ever. Collecting, at length, all the stoic firmness of his nature, he spoke to her in the Delaware tongue; the words that he used were few and simple, but in them, and in the tone of his voice, there was so much delicacy mingled with such depth of feeling, that Prairie-bird could not refrain from tears.

Answering him in the same language, she blended her accustomed sincerity of expression with gentle words of soothing kindness; and, in concluding her reply, she took his hand in hers, saying, "Ollitipa has long loved her brothers, War-Eagle and Wingenund, let not a cloud come between them now; her heart is not changed to the great warrior of Lenape; his sister trusts to his protection; she is proud of his fame; she has no other love to give him; her race, her religion, her heart forbid it! but he is her dear brother; he will not be angry, nor leave her."

"Mahéga and the Osages are become enemies; the Dahcotah trail is near; Tamenund is old and weak; where shall Ollitipa find a brother's love, and a brother's aid, if War-Eagle turns away his face from her now?"

The noble heart to which she appealed had gone through its fiery ordeal of torture, and triumphed over it. After the manner of his tribe, the Delaware, before relinquishing her hand, pressed it for a moment to his chest, in token of affection, and said, "It is enough, my sister's words are good, they are not spilt upon the ground; let Mahéga or the Dahcotahs come near the lodge of Ollitipa, and they shall learn that War-Eagle is her brother!" The chief's hand rested lightly on his tomahawk, and his countenance, as he withdrew from the tent, was an expression of high and stern resolve.

How often in life is the observation forced upon us, that artlessness is the highest perfection of art! It is an axiom, the truth of which remains unchanged under whatever aspect we view it, and is indisputable even in its converse; thus, as in writing, the apparent ease and simplicity of style is the result of frequent correction and laborious study; so in corporeal exercises, the most assiduous practice must be combined with the highest physical qualifications, ere the dancer or the posture-master can emulate the unconscious grace displayed in the movements of a sportive kitten, or a playful child.

Had Prairie-bird been familiar with all the learned treatises on rhetoric that have appeared

from the time of Aristotle to the present day, she could not have selected topics better calculated to move and soften the heart of her Indian brother. And yet she had no other instructor in the art than the natural delicacy of her sex and character. While the tribute to his warlike fame gratified his pride, the unstudied sisterly affection of her tone and manner soothed his wounded feelings; and while her brief picture of her unprotected state aroused all his nobler and more generous sentiments, no breath of allusion to his successful rival's name kindled the embers of jealousy that slumbered beneath them.

As he walked from her tent, the young Indian's heart dilated within him; he trod the earth with a proud and lordly step; he had grappled with his passion; and though it had been riveted "to his soul with hooks of steel," he had plucked it forth with an unflinching hand, and he now met his deep-rooted grief with the same lofty brow and unconquerable will with which he would have braved the tortures of the Dahcotah stake.

CHAPTER XXV.

In which the Reader will find a moral Disquisition somewhat tedious, a true Story somewhat incredible, a Conference that ends in Peace, and a Council that betokens War.

It is not a feature in the character of Indians to do anything by halves; their love and their hate, their patience and impatience, their abstinence and self-indulgence, all are apt to run into extremes. Moderation is essentially a virtue of civilization; it is the result of forethought, reasoning, and a careful calculation of consequences, whereas the qualities of the Indian are rather the children of impulse, and are less modified by conflicting motives; hence, the lights and shades of character are broader and more distinct; and though it may be perhaps impossible that Indian villainy should assume a deeper dye than that which may unfortunately be met with among civilized nations, it is not asserting too much to say, that there are to be found among these savages instances of disinterested, self-devoted heroism, such as are rarely heard of beyond the world of chivalry and romance.

This assertion will be received by many readers with an incredulous smile, and still more will be disposed to believe that it can be true only in reference to such virtues or actions as are the immediate result of a generous impulse; but examples are not wanting to prove the argument to be defensible upon higher grounds. It will readily be admitted, that retributive justice, although consonant to the first principles of reason and natural law, cannot, when deliberately enforced, be considered in the light of a sudden impulse, much less can it be so considered when the party enforcing it is to be himself the sufferer by it; and those who are conversant with the history of the Indian nations can testify that parallel instances to that which follows have frequently occurred among them.

Some years ago, a young married Indian, residing on the western bank of the Mississippi, quarrelled with another of his tribe, and in the heat of passion killed him with a blow of his tomahawk. After a few moments' reflection he walked direct to the village, and presenting himself before the wigwam of the murdered man, called together his relations, and addressed them as follows:

"Your relative was my friend; we were together,—some angry words arose between us,—I killed him on the spot. My life is in your hands, and I have come to offer it to you; but the summer hunting season has now begun. I have a wife and some young children, they have done you no wrong; I wish to go out into the woods to kill a plentiful supply of meat, such as may feed them during the winter; when I have done that, I will return and give myself to you."

The stern assembly of mcurners gave their assent, and the young man retired: for many weeks he toiled indefatigably in the chase, his wife jerked and dried the meat as he daily brought it in, until he saw that the supply was ample for the ensuing winter; he then bid farewell to her and to his little ones, and once more presenting himself before the wigwam of his late friend, he said, "I am come: my squaw has meat for the winter, my life is now yours!" To these words the eldest male relative of the deceased replied, "It is well;" and rising from the ground, executed on the unresisting offender the summary justice of Indian retribution, by cleaving his skull with a tomahawk. Neither the self-devotion of the one, nor the unrelenting severity of the other, excited any peculiar sensation, each having acted according to the strict, though barbarous usage of the tribe.

Among a people accustomed to look with stolid composure on scenes such as that just described, War-Eagle had already won a distinguished name, and he supported it on this trying occasion by resigning what was dearer to him than life, and crushing, as under a weight of iron, that passion which had been for years the hope and nourishment of his heart; whether, albeit crushed and smothered, it still lingered there, is a secret which it is neither our wish nor our province to betray, but regarding which the reader may form his own opinion from the subsequent conduct of the chief.

His first step was to seek Reginald Brandon, whom he desired, by a silent signal, to leave the lodge and follow him. Our hero mechanically obeyed, in a painful state of excitement and agitation, feeling that he had been the unconscious means of blasting all the dearest hopes of his Indian friend; and although he had intended no injury, he was sensible that he had done one, such as man can rarely forgive, and can never repair; for even had the romantic generosity of friendship prompted him to resign all pretensions to Prairie-bird, he felt that such a resignation, while he was secure of her affections, would be mere mockery and insult. He knew also how prominent a feature is revenge in the Indian character, and thought it not improbable that he might be now following his conductor to some secluded spot, where their rivalry should be decided by mortal strife, and the survivor return to claim the lovely prize. This last thought, which would, under any other circumstances, have nerved his arm and made his heart exult within him, now overwhelmed him with sadness, for he loved both Wingenund and War-Eagle, they were endeared to him by reciprocal benefits, and he shrunk from a quarrel with the latter as from a fratricide.

Meanwhile the Indian strode rapidly forward; neither could Reginald detect the feelings that lurked beneath the dignified and unmoved composure of his countenance.

After walking in silence for some minutes, they reached a small hollow, where a few scat-

tered alder-bushes screened them from the observation of the stragglers round the skirts of the Delaware camp: here the chief suddenly halted, and turning towards Reginald, bent on him the full gaze of his dark and lustrous eyes; the latter observed with surprise that their expression, as well as that of his usually haughty features, was a deep composed melancholy.

At length the Delaware broke the long and painful silence, addressing his companion, after his imperfect notion of English, in the following words:

"The Great Spirit sent a cloud between Netis and War-Eagle—a very black cloud; the lightning came from it and blinded the eyes of the Lenapé chief, so that he looked on his brother and thought he saw an enemy. The Bad Spirit whispered in his ear that the tongue of Netis was forked; that the heart of Olitipa was false; that she had listened to a mocking-bird, and had mingled for War-Eagle a cup of poison."

The Delaware paused for a moment; his eye retained its steady but sad expression, his lips were firmly compressed, and not a muscle betrayed the intensity of his feeling; but Reginald appreciated rightly the self-control that had conquered, in so severe a struggle, and grasping his friend's hand he said,

"Noble and generous son of the Lenapé, the Bad Spirit has no power over a heart like yours? Are we not brothers? Have not the waters of the Muskipgum, and the treacherous knife of the Huron, tied our hearts together, so that no fear, no suspicion, no falsehood, can come between them? Netis believed that War-Eagle loved Olitipa only as a sister, or he would rather have given his scalp to Mahéga than have spoken soft words in the maiden's ear!"

"My brother's words are true," replied the Delaware, in the low and musical tone for which his voice was remarkable; "War-Eagle knows it; he has dreamed, and is now awake: Olitipa is his sister—the Great Spirit decrees that no child of an Indian warrior shall call her mother. It is enough." The countenance of the Delaware assumed a sterner expression as he continued:

"My brother must be ready; let his rifle be loaded and his eye open, for Tamenund has seen the snow of many winters; the Black Father is good and true, but his hand knows not the tomahawk: the Osage panther will crouch near the tent of Olitipa, and the feet of the Cutthroats* will not be far; before the sun goes down War-Eagle will see his brother again."

Thus saying, and waiting no reply, he returned with hearty strides towards the village. Reginald gazed long and earnestly after the retreating figure of the Indian, forgetting awhile, in admiration of his heroic self-control, the dangers that beset his beloved and his party.

"Could I," he asked himself, "could I, under the same circumstances, with all the light, and aid, and high motives of Christianity, have shown the forbearance, generosity, and self-command displayed by this noble heathen? Could I have seen all my long-cherished hopes, my warm and passionate love, blasted in a moment, and have so soon, so frankly, and so fully exculpated and forgiven the man to whom I owed my misery? I hope I might have done so, still I am afraid to ask my heart the question!"

Reginald's cheek glowed under the influence

* The Sioux, or Dahootahs, are so designated by the Missouri tribes.

of this self-scrutiny, and he gladly availed himself of the approach of Paul Müller, to whom he related what had passed, and expressed in the warmest terms his admiration of his Indian brother's conduct. The good Missionary felt inexpressibly relieved at hearing the amicable issue now announced to him, for although he had never been made a confidant of War-Eagle's feelings towards Olitipa, his own observation had shown him of late that they were not exactly fraternal, and he had viewed with dread a rivalry between the two high-spirited young men, at a crisis when the aid of both might be so necessary to protect his fair pupil from the perils by which she was surrounded.

Meanwhile the machinations of Mahéga, which had been conducted with his accustomed secrecy and cunning, were almost ripe for execution; several runners had interchanged communication between him and the Dahcotah chief, the latter of whom was delighted at the prospect thus unexpectedly offered, of taking vengeance on his ancient and hated Lenapé foes. A secret council of the Osages had been held, at which a treaty with the Sioux and a rupture with the Delawares were discussed, and almost unanimously carried, Mahéga appearing rather to have coincided in the general determination than to have caused it by his influence and intrigues. The result of this council was, that the Osage village immediately struck their lodges, the horses were driven in, skins, poultry, provisions, and all their utensils were packed upon them, and in a few hours the whole body moved in a northeasterly direction towards the upper fork of the river Konzas.

While they were departing, the Delaware council was summoned by a crier; Reginald and Baptiste were also invited to attend, the former in compliment to his station in the tribe as adopted brother of War-Eagle, the latter being recognised as a warrior of tried courage and experience. The chiefs and braves having seated themselves in a semicircle, the centre of which was occupied by Tamenund, the great medicine pipe was first passed round in silence and with the accustomed solemnities, after which Tamenund arose, and in a voice feeble from age, but distinctly audible, proceeded to explain to the assembly the affairs respecting which they had met to consult. While he was speaking, one of the Indians appointed to guard the entrance of the council-lodge came in, and announced a messenger from the Osage encampment. Tamenund paused, and desired the messenger to be introduced.

All eyes were bent sternly on the envoy, who advanced with a haughty and dignified step into the centre of the lodge, where he stood still, and resting on a long lance which he held in his right hand, awaited, according to Indian custom, a signal from the council-chief to deliver his errand. His dress, and the paint by which his body was adorned, had evidently been prepared with every attention to the niceties of Indian diplomacy, some portions of it being significant of peace or alliance, and others of hostile preparation: his right side was painted red, with streaks of black; on his left arm he wore a round shield of buffalo-hide, a quiver of arrows hung at his back, a tomahawk and-knife were in his girdle, and in his left hand he carried a large string of wampum,* adorned with sundry ribbons and thongs of parti-coloured deerskin.

* Wampum, a corruption of the word "wampumpes,"

The Delawares recognised in the messenger a young kinsman of Mahéga, one who had already distinguished himself by several feats of daring gallantry, and had been lately enrolled among the braves of his nation. He had hitherto been upon the most friendly terms with the Lenapé, was familiar with their language, and had volunteered on more than one occasion to follow War-Eagle on the war-path; but the lines of paint and his accoutrements were now, as has before been observed, so carefully selected, that their practised eyes were unable to decide whether peace or war was the object of his mission; neither was any inference to be drawn from his countenance or bearing, for, after the first cold salutation on entering, he leaned on his lance in an attitude of haughty indifference. Under these circumstances he was not invited to sit, neither was the pipe handed to him, but Tamenund briefly addressed him as follows:

"The messenger of the Osage may speak. The ears of the Lenapé are open."

"Flying-arrow," replied the young man, in a modest and quiet tone, "knows that many winters have passed over the head of the Lenapé chief; he is sorry to speak hard words to Tamenund."

"Let the young warrior speak freely; Tamenund knows that he is the mouth of the Osage council," was the grave reply.

"The Washashee say that the Lenapé have walked in a crooked path. The council have assembled, and the words delivered to Flying-arrow are these. The Washashee allowed the Lenapé to kill meat on their hunting-ground, they smoked the pipe together, and gave each other the wampum-belt of peace; but the Lenapé hearts are white, though their skin is red; their tongues are smooth with telling many lies: they have brought the pale-faces here to aid them in driving the Washashee from the hunting-fields of their fathers! Is it not true?" continued the fearless envoy, in a louder strain. "They have done all they can to throw dirt upon the lodges of those whom they call brothers. When Mahéga offered to take the daughter of Tamenund as his wife, what was said to him? Does not the pale face who crept upon him and defiled his medicine, still sit and smoke at the Lenapé fire? Mahéga says, let Tamenund give him Olitipa for a wife, and the pale-face, called Netis, as a prisoner, and let him send back the other white men to the Great river; then Mahéga will believe that the hearts of the Lenapé are true to the friendship pledged on this belt."

Thus saying, he shook the wampum before the assembled Delawares with an air of proud defiance. A brief pause followed this daring speech; the heart of War-Eagle boiled within him, but a scornful smile sat upon his haughty countenance, as he waited composedly for the reply of his father, who seemed engaged in deep and serious meditation.

Reginald had, of course, been unable to follow the envoy's discourse, but his quick ear had detected his own name; and a fierce look, which accompanied its pronunciation, told him that he was personally interested in the object of the Osage's message. Having gathered from Baptiste, in a whisper, the nature of Mahéga's charge and demand, a flush of indignation coloured his brow, but the examples of self-com-

small shells strung together, and used by the Indians farther among themselves; a belt of wampum is the emblem of peace, as the hatchet, or tomahawk, is that of war.

mand that he had so lately seen, and that he still witnessed in the iron features by which he was surrounded, taught him to place a like restraint upon his own feelings, and to await the reply of the aged chief.

The latter, fixing his eye sternly upon the envoy, thus addressed him: "Mahéga has filled the young brave's mouth with lies. The hearts of the Lenapé are true as the guiding-star.* They are faithful to their friends, they fear no enemies. Tamenund will not give Olitipa to Mahéga, nor his adopted son to be the Washashee's prisoner. Tamenund is old, but he is not blind; Mahéga wishes to become a friend of the Dahcotahs. It is well; he will find among them hearts as bad, and tongues as forked as his own! I have spoken."

A deep murmur of approbation followed the aged chief's brief but energetic harangue, and as soon as it was concluded, the fearless messenger drew a sharp knife from his girdle, and severing the wampum-belt, he cast the two halves on the ground, saying, "It is well. Thus is the league between the Washashee and the Lenapé divided!"

Baptiste, to whom Reginald had again addressed a few words in a whisper, now rose, and having requested permission of Tamenund, said to the Osage messenger: "Netis desires you to tell Mahéga that he is a liar—brave enough to frighten women, but nothing more. If he is a warrior, let him come to-morrow at sunrise to the open prairie, north of the camp; the friends of both shall stand back three arrowflights apart; Netis will meet him with a rifle and a hunting-knife; Olitipa will not be there to save his life again!"

Another murmur of approbation went round the assembly, many of whom had already heard of the rough treatment that the gigantic Osage had received at Reginald's hands, but hearing it now confirmed by the lips of a tried warrior, like Grande-Hâche, they looked with increased respect and esteem on the adopted brother of War-Eagle.

"Flying-arrow will tell Mahéga," was the brief reply; and the messenger, glancing his eye haughtily around the circle, left the lodge and returned to the encampment of his tribe. After his departure the council continued their deliberations for some time, and had not yet concluded them, when a distant and repeated shouting attracted their attention, and a Delaware youth, of about fifteen years of age, rushed into the lodge, breathless, and bleeding from a wound inflicted by an arrow, which had pierced his shoulder. A few hurried sentences explained to the chiefs the news of which he was the bearer. It appeared that he had been tending, in a bottom not far distant, a herd of horses, chiefly belonging to Tamenund, War-Eagle, and the party of white men, when a band of mounted Sioux came sweeping down the valley at full speed; two or three young Delawares, who formed the out-piquet on that side, had been taken completely by surprise, and paid with their lives the penalty of their carelessness.

The wounded youth who brought the intelligence had only escaped by his extreme swiftness of foot, and by the unwillingness of the enemy to approach too near the camp. Thus had the Dahcotahs succeeded in carrying off, by a bold stroke, upwards of one hundred of the best horses from the Delaware village; and Reginald

*The North star is often alluded to by the Indian tribes as *the star* and other similar denominations.

soon learned, to his inexpressible annoyance and regret, that Nekimi was among the number of the captives. A hurried consultation followed, in which War-Eagle, throwing off the modest reserve that he had practised during the council, assumed his place as leader of the Lenapé braves, of whom he selected forty of the most active and daring, to accompany him on the difficult and dangerous expedition that was to be instantly undertaken for the recovery of the stolen horses.

Reginald and Baptiste eagerly volunteered, and were instantly accepted by War-Eagle; but it was not without some persuasion on the part of the Guide, that the chief allowed Monsieur Perrot to be of the party; that faithful valet insisted, however, so obstinately upon his right to attend his master, that, on Baptiste enjoining that he should implicitly obey orders, he was permitted to form one of the selected band.

In less than half an hour, from the receipt of the above disastrous intelligence, the party left the camp well armed and equipped, each man carrying three pounds of dried buffalo meat; and Baptiste secured twice that quantity to his sturdy person, thinking it probable that Reginald's endurance of hunger might not prove proportionate to his active qualities. The latter had, indeed, forgotten the meat altogether, for he passed the last few minutes of his stay within the camp, in bidding farewell to "Prairie-bird," and in assuring her that he would not be long absent, but trusted soon to return with his favourite Nekimi. At his departure, Reginald left the strictest orders with Bearskin (who remained in charge of his party) to keep a faithful watch over the safety of Prairie-bird, and to follow the injunctions that he might receive from Tamenund and Paul Müller.

The small band who, at the instigation of Mahéga, had stolen the Delaware horses, were chosen warriors, well-mounted, thoroughly trained to the predatory warfare in which they were now engaged, and ready, either to defend their prize against an equal force, or to baffle the pursuit of a superior one. As War-Eagle had lost many of his best horses, he resolved to follow the enemy's trail on foot, but he desired two or three of his most active and enterprising followers, whose horses had not been stolen, to hover on the rear of the retreating party, to watch their movements, and bring back any intelligence that might aid him in the pursuit.

The select band of Delawares moved swiftly forward under the guidance of their young leader; close upon his steps followed Reginald, burning with impatience to recover his favourite steed; next to him came Baptiste, then Perrot, and the remainder of the Lenapé warriors.

The prairie-grass, trodden down by the hoofs of the galloping and affrighted steeds driven from their pasture, afforded a trail that could be traced without difficulty, and the trampled banks of several slow and lazy streams, which they passed in their course, marked the headlong course taken by their fugitive steeds and their fierce drivers.

We will leave the pursuers for a time, and follow the movements of Mahéga, who was now acting in concert with the Sioux, and who contrived by his superior address to direct their plans, as completely as if he had been himself the chief of their tribe. Having accompanied the Osage village, fourteen of fifteen miles on their route to the northward, he ordered a halt

by the side of a stream, in a valley adjacent to the encampment of their new allies, the two bands forming a body so superior in number to the Delawares, that they had no cause to fear an attack, especially as they learned from their scouts that War-Eagle and his followers had gone in an opposite direction in pursuit of the horse-stealing party.

The evening was dark, and favoured the execution of a plot which Mahéga had formed, and in furtherance of which all his preceding measures had been taken. As soon as the sun had set, he selected one hundred of the bravest and most experienced warriors in his tribe, whom he armed only with bow and arrows, knife, and tomahawk; strictly forbidding the use of any firearms; for he well knew that the latter were far from being effective weapons in the hands of his followers, especially in such an expedition as that in which he was engaged. Swiftly and silently they moved under their leader's guidance, who, directing his course towards the southeast, brought them, after a few hours' march, to the line of wood skirting the great Prairie. Aware that the warriors remaining in the Delaware encampment would be prepared against any surprise from the quarter in which the Sioux were posted, his present object was to make his attack from the opposite side, in order to effect which, undiscovered, the greatest skill and rapidity were necessary.

It was on occasions such as these that the qualities of the Osage chief were most conspicuously exhibited; with light and noiseless step, he led his party through the depths of the forest, and during a swift march of many hours not a word was spoken; now and then he paused as a startled deer rustled through the thicket, and once or twice, when a stray moonbeam, forcing its way through the foliage, silvered the bark of the osage, he cast his eye upwards, as if to learn from the leaves the direction of the wind, or to scan the heaven in search of one of those stars, which the imperfect, but sagacious astronomy of the Indians teaches them to recognise as guides.

Leave them to pursue their dark and circuitous path, and let us transport the reader to the interior of the Delaware encampment, where (as it may be remembered) Bearskin was left in command of that portion of the white men who had not accompanied their leader in pursuit of the Sioux.

Paul Müller sat late at night in the tent of the Prairie-bird; on the rude table lay the Bible from which he had been reading, and explaining some difficulties that had perplexed her strong, inquiring mind; afterwards they had turned the conversation to the scenes which had occurred within the last few days, and which were calculated to inspire serious anticipations of coming evil. Prairie-bird made no effort to conceal from her affectionate instructor how entirely her heart was given to Reginald; she knew his bold and fearless disposition; she knew, too, the wily cunning of the powerful tribe against whom his expedition was undertaken, and more than one heavy sigh escaped her when she thought of the risks that he must incur.

The good Missionary employed every possible argument to allay her fears, but none so effectively as that which referred to the protection of that Being who had been from childhood her hope, her trust, and her shield, and, bidding her good night, he had the pleasure of seeing her agitated spirit resume its usual composure. He

then wrapped his cloak round his shoulders, and went out to see what provision Bearskin had made for the security of the camp, during the absence of Reginald, War-Eagle, and their party. The rough old boatman was smoking his pipe over the embers of a fire in front of the lodge where he slept; beside him lay, half-asleep, the gigantic Mike Smith; and the other white men were within the lodge, each having his rifle within reach and his knife and pistols in his belt. Bearskin returned the greeting of the Missionary with blunt civility, and informed him that he had been to the lodge of Tamenund, where it had been agreed to throw forward an outpost of a dozen light, active young Indians, half a mile beyond the camp, in the direction of the Sioux; runners had also been sent round to desire the warriors to be ready, and all the usual precautions taken, such as are observed by Indians in the neighbourhood of a dangerous enemy.

Satisfied with these arrangements, Paul Müller returned to his tent, and throwing himself on the pile of buffalo skins that formed his bed, was soon fast asleep. He knew not how long he had slept, when he was aroused by a cry such as none who has once heard it can mistake or forget. Scarcely had that shrill and savage whoop pierced the dull silence of the night, when every creature within the encampment sprang to their feet—the braves and warriors, seizing their weapons, rushed to the quarter whence the cry proceeded, while the women and children, crowding round the aged and defenceless men, waited in suspense the result of the sudden and fierce attack. The noise and the tumult came from the northern quarter, that most remote from the lodges of Tamenund and Prairie-bird. Sixty of the chosen Osage warriors had fallen upon the small outpost placed to give the alarm, and, driving them easily before them and killing some, entered the camp almost simultaneously with the survivors. This band was led by that daring young warrior before introduced to the reader under the name of Flying-Arrow, who now burned with desire to render his name in the war-annals of his tribe famous as that of his kinsman Mahéga. Nor were the Delaware warriors slow to meet the invaders, with a courage equal to their own; the conflict was fierce and confused, for the moon was no longer up, and the pale stars were contending, in a cloudy sky, with the dim grey hue that precedes the dawn of day, so that the dusky figures of the combatants were scarcely visible, and by their voices alone could they distinguish friends from foes.

At the first alarm, Bearskin, with his habitual coolness, ordered Mike Smith, with three of his men, to retire into the rear, to assist in protecting the lodge of Tamenund and the tent of Prairie-bird, while he led the remainder to check the advance of the Osages from the northward. For some time the latter seemed to be gaining ground, but the Delawares, still superior in number and hastening to the spot, aided by Bearskin and his followers, recovered their lost advantage, and the combat raged with renewed fury.

At this crisis Mahéga, who had succeeded in gaining, unperceived, the valley to the southward of the Delaware camp, fell upon their rear with his reserve of forty men; overthrowing all who opposed him, he forced his way towards the white tent, which the advancing light of dawn rendered now easily distinguishable from the dark-coloured lodges around it; shouting his battle-cry with a voice like a trumpet, he rushed

onward, caring not, apparently, for the scalps or trophies, but determined on securing the prize for which he had already broken his faith, and imbrued his hands in the blood of allies who had done him no injury. A gallant band of Delawares surrounded their aged chief, whose trembling hand now grasped a tomahawk that had for twenty years reposed idly in his belt. Prairie-bird had sprung from her couch, and already joined in the brief, but earnest prayer, which Paul Müller breathed at her side; he recognised the Osage war-cry, and divining the chief object of their terrible leader, he whispered solemnly to her,

"My dear child, if I am soon taken from you, keep, nevertheless, your trust in God. I see that knife still in your girdle; I know what you have once dared; if it be the will of Heaven, you must be prepared patiently to endure pain, sorrow, confinement, or oppression; remember, it is only as the last resource against dishonour, that you may have recourse to it."

The maiden replied not, but a glance from her dark eye assured him that he was understood, and would be obeyed; many emotions contended in her bosom, but, for the moment, reverence and attachment to her affectionate instructor prevailed over all others, and, dropping on her knees before him, she covered his hand with kisses, saying,

"Dear Father, if we must be separated, bless, bless your grateful child."

The worthy Missionary, albeit accustomed to resign himself entirely to the will of Heaven, could scarcely command himself sufficiently to utter aloud the blessing that he implored upon her head; but he shouts and cries of the combatants were every moment approaching nearer, and seizing his staff, he went to the aperture in front of the lodge, in order to ascertain how the tide of conflict was turning.

The first object that met his view was the aged Tamenund, who had fallen in his hurried endeavour to rush to the combat, but was now partly supported and partly detained by his wailing wives and daughters, while the tomahawk that had dropped from his nerveless arm lay upon the ground beside him; as soon as he saw Paul Müller, he called him, and said, in a low voice,

"The breath of Tamenund is going; he has lived long enough; the voices of his fathers are calling to him from the far hunting-fields; he will go, and pray the Great Spirit to give the scalps of these snake-tongued Washashe to the knife of War-Eagle." After a moment's pause, the old man continued: "I know that the heart of the Black Father is good to the Lenapé; he has been a friend of many days to the lodge of Tamenund; he must be a father to Olitipa; she is a sweet-scented flower; the Great Spirit has given rain and sunshine to nourish its growth, and its roots are deep in Tamenund's heart; the Black Father will not allow it to be trodden under the feet of Mahéga." While saying these words he drew from under his blanket a small eathern bag, the neck of which was carefully closed with ligaments of deer-sinew that had been dipped in wax, or some similarly adhesive substance. "This," he added, "is the medicine-bag of Olitipa; the Black Father must keep it when Tamenund is gone, and, while it is safe, the steps of the Bad Spirit will not draw near."

The Missionary took the bag, and concealed

it immediately under his vest, but, before he had time to reply to his aged friend, a terrific cry announced that the Osages had succeeded in breaking through the Delaware ranks, and a fearful scene of confusion, plunder, and massacre ensued; the faithful Missionary hastened to the side of his trembling pupil, resolved to die in defending her from injury, while the air was rent by the shouts of the victors, and the yells and shrieks of those suffering under their relentless fury.

Mike Smith and his men plied their weapons with determined courage and resolution, and several of the Osages paid with their lives the forfeit of their daring attack; still the survivors pressed forward, bearing back the white men by force of numbers, and allowing not a moment for the reloading of the fire-arms. The voice of Mahéga rose high above the surrounding din, and all seemed to shrink from the terrible weapon which he wielded as if it had been a light cane or small-sword; it was a short bludgeon, headed with a solid ball of iron, from which protruded several sharp iron spikes, already red with human blood. Mike Smith came boldly forward to meet him, holding in his left hand a discharged horse-pistol, and in his right a heavy cutlass, with which last he made a furious cut at the advancing Osage. The wary chief neither received nor parried it, but, springing lightly aside, seized the same moment for driving his heavy mace full on the unguarded forehead of his opponent, and the unfortunate woodsman dropped like an ox felled at the shambles; the fierce Indian, leaping forward, passed his knife twice through the prostrate body, and tearing off the scalp, waved the bloody trophy over his head.

Disheartened by the fall of their brave and powerful companion, the remaining white men offered but a feeble resistance, and the Osage chief rushed onwards to the spot where only some wounded Delawares and a few devoted and half-armed youths were gathered around the aged Tamenund, determined to die at his side. It is not necessary to pursue the sickening details of the narrative.

The old man received his death-blow with a composed dignity worthy of his race, and his faithful followers met their fate with equal heroism, neither expecting nor receiving mercy.

The victory was now complete, and both the scattered Delawares and the remaining white men fled for shelter and safety to the nearest points in the dense line of forest; few, if any, would have reached it had not the war-pipe of Mahéga called his warriors around him. None dared to disobey the signal, and in a few minutes they stood before him in front of the tent within which the faithful Missionary still cheered and supported his beloved pupil. The fierce Osage, counting over his followers, found that fifteen were killed or mortally wounded; but the loss on the part of their opponents was much heavier, without reckoning upwards of a score of prisoners, whose hands and legs were tightly fastened with bands of withy and elm-bark.

Mahéga, putting his head into the aperture of the tent, ordered Paul Müller to come forth.

"Resistance is unavailing," whispered the Missionary to the weeping girl; "it will be harder with thee if I obey not this cruel man. Practice now, dear child, the lessons that we have so often read together, and leave the issue to Him who has promised never to leave nor forsake those who trust in him."

So saying, he kissed her forehead, and gently disengaging himself from the hand that still clung to his garment, he went forth from the tent, and stood before Mahéga.

That wily chief was well aware that both the Missionary and his fair pupil had many warm friends among his own tribe; there was, in fact, scarcely a family among them that had not experienced from one or both some act of charity or kindness; he had resolved, therefore, to treat them without severity, and, while he assured himself of the person of Olitipa, to send her instructor to some distant spot, where neither his advice nor his reprofs were to be feared. With this determination he addressed him briefly, as follows:

"The Black Father will travel with my young men towards the east; he is no longer wanted here; he may seek the lodges of the Lenape squaws beyond the Great River; he may advise them to remain where they are, to dig and grow corn, and not to come near the hunting-fields of the Washashe. My young men will travel three days with him; they may meet strangers; if he is silent, his life is safe; if he speaks, their tomahawk drinks his blood; when they have left him, his tongue and his feet are free. I have spoken."

Mahéga added a few words in a lower tone to the young warrior who was to execute his orders, and who, with two others, now stood by his prisoner; there was a lowering frown on the brow of the chief, and a deep meaning in his tone, showing plainly that there would be danger in disobeying the letter of those commands.

Paul Müller, advancing a few steps, addressed the chief in the Delaware tongue, with which he knew him to be familiar. "Mahéga is a great chief, and the Black Father is weak, and must obey him; before he goes he will speak some words which the chief must lock up in his heart. He loves Olitipa; he wishes to make her his wife; it may be, after a season, that she may look kindly upon him; but she is not like other maidens: she is under the care of the Great Spirit. Mahéga is strong, but her medicine is stronger. She can hide the moon behind a cloud, and gather the fire of the sun as the daughters of the Washashe gather the river-waters in a vessel; let the chief remember the Black Father's last words. If Mahéga protects Olitipa and what belongs to her in the tent, it may be better for him when the Great Spirit is angry; if he offers her harm or insult, he will die like a dog, and wolves will pick his bones."

The Missionary delivered this warning with dignity and solemnity so earnest, that the eye of the fierce but superstitious savage quailed before him; and, pleased to mark the effect of his words, Paul Müller turned and left the spot, muttering, in his own tongue, to himself, "God will doubtless forgive my endeavour to protect, through this artifice, a forlorn and friendless maiden, left in the hands of a man so cruel and unscrupulous."

In a few minutes the good Missionary had completed the slight preparation requisite for his journey, and, accompanied by his Indian escort, left the ruined and despoiled village with a heavy heart.

As soon as Mahéga was somewhat recovered from the startling effect of Paul Müller's parting address, he made his dispositions for the further movements of his band with his usual rapidity and decision; he was well aware that his posi-

tion was now one of great peril, that in a short time War-Eagle and his party would be informed of all that had passed, and would seek a bloody revenge; he knew also that some of the fugitive Whites or Delawares might speedily arm a body of the inhabitants of the frontier against him, and that he would be altogether unable to maintain himself in the region that he now occupied.

Under these circumstances he made up his own mind as to the course that he would pursue; and having first given all the necessary orders for the burial of the Osage dead and the care of the wounded, as well as for the security of the prisoners, he called together the heads of his party, and, having laid before them his plans, asked their advice, with a tone and manner probably resembling that with which, a few years later, Napoleon was in the habit of asking the counsel of his generals and captains: a tone indicating that his course being already determined, nothing was expected of them but compliance.

CHAPTER XXVI.

War-Eagle and Reginald, with their Party, pursue the Dahcotahs.

We left Reginald, and War-Eagle's party, in pursuit of the marauding band of Sioux horse-stealers. They continued their toilsome march with unabated speed until nightfall, when the trail was no longer distinguishable: they then halted, and while they ate a scanty supper, the mounted Delawares, who had been sent forward, returned, bringing with them two wearied horses which had escaped, in the hurried flight, from their captors.

War-Eagle, summoning Baptiste to his side, questioned the young man closely as to the appearance and direction of the trail. From their answers he learnt that its course was north ward, but that it bore gradually towards the east, especially after a brief halt, which the Sioux had made for refreshments; a gleam shot athwart the dusky features of the young chief at this intelligence, but he made no observation, and contented himself with asking the opinion of his more experienced companion.

The Guide, taking off his hunting-cap, allowed the evening breeze to play through the grisly hairs which were scattered, not too plentifully, on his weather-beaten forehead, as if his reflective powers might thence derive refreshment; but, apparently, the expedient was not, at least, on this occasion, rewarded with success, for, after meditating in silence for a few seconds, he shook his head and owned that he saw no clue to the intentions of the party whom they were pursuing. The young chief had his eye still bent upon the ground, seemingly employed in observing a large rent, which the day's march had made in his mocassin; but the woodsman read in the lines of his intelligent countenance that the mind was busily engaged in following a connected train of thought.

After allowing a few minutes to pass in silence, the Guide, addressing his companion, said, "Can War-Eagle see the Dahcotah path? It is hid from the eyes of Grand-Hache."

"The night is dark, and the eyes cannot see the trail; but the wolf finds his way to the

wounded bison, and the blue dove keeps her course to her nest in the mountain. The Great Spirit has not made the Lenape warrior more ignorant than the bird, or the brute; War-Eagle knows the path of the Dahcotah dogs." He then bent down towards the ear of Baptiste, and whispered to him long and earnestly in the Delaware tongue.

"Capote-blue! but the boy is right," exclaimed the Guide, in his own mixed dialect; "the dogs have only taken this northern start to mislead us; they are not making for the Missouri river, but intend to double back and join their village, now lying to the eastward of us. The boy is right; my brain must be getting as worn-out as my hunting shirt, or I should have understood their drift. I see his plan is to lie in cash* for them on their return. Well, if he can make sure of his game, I will say that he's fit to be a war-chief, for these Sioux have a long start, and the village must be many miles to the right."

As he made these reflections half aloud, Reginald caught their general bearing; and though he had great confidence in the sagacity of his Indian friends, still he felt a chill of disappointment at the idea that the pursuit was to be abandoned, for what appeared to him the hopeless chance of intercepting a small band of Sioux of whose course they were ignorant, in a boundless extent of prairie like that around him. He had, however, good sense enough to conceal all traces of his disappointment, knowing that on such an expedition there can be but one leader, and that, without unanimity and discipline, failure must ensue.

War-Eagle now called one of the young Lenape warriors to his side, and gave him brief instructions to the effect, that he was to choose three others of the best runners of the party, and accompanied by the mounted Indians, to start with the earliest dawn on the Dahcotah trail, which they were to follow as close as possible without discovering themselves. He then desired Reginald and Baptiste to divide the band into watches, and to sleep alternately, but not to move until he returned.

Having given these few directions, without allowing himself either food or rest after a march of so many hours, he drew his belt tighter around his loins, and started on his solitary excursion. Reginald watched the retreating figure of his friend until it was lost in the deepening gloom, and turning to the Guide he said,

"Baptiste, I cannot but envy War-Eagle the possession of sinews that seem unconscious of fatigue, and eyes that require no slumber! We have marched from daylight until this late hour without either rest or refreshment, and I confess I am very glad of this seat on my buffalo-robe, and this slice of dried venison, with a draught of water; War-Eagle, however, walks off into the prairie, as if he had just started fresh from repose, and Heaven only knows where, or for what purpose he is going."

"Master Reginald,"² replied the Guide, throwing himself lazily down by the side of his young leader; "I will not deny that War-Eagle's sinews are strung like the bow of a Pawnee, for I have been on a trail with him before, and

few could follow it so long or so true; but there has been a time," he added, casting his eyes down on his worn and soiled leggins, "when these limbs of mine would have kept me for a week at the heels of the fleetest Dahcotah that ever crossed the country of the Stone-eaters.* Those days are gone, but when the game's afoot, perhaps there may be younger men who might give out before old Baptiste, yet."

As he spoke the eye of the Guide rested with a comic grin on Monsieur Perrot, who, with a countenance somewhat rueful, was endeavouring to masticate a crude pomme de prairie† that one of the Delawares had given to him, with the assurance that it was "very good!"

"I believe you, Baptiste," said Reginald, humouring the old hunter's pardonable vanity; "I believe you, indeed, and if the Sioux offer us a long chase, as appears likely, the crack of your rifle will be heard before the foremost of our party has come to close quarters with them; but you have not answered my question relative to War-Eagle's excursion during this dark night."

"He is gone," replied the Guide, "to examine the ground carefully, perhaps even to approach the northern border of the Dahcotah encampment; he will then judge of the route by which these horse-stealing vagabonds are likely to return, and will choose a place for us to conceal ourselves for an attack."

"I understand it all, Baptiste; it seems to be a bold, well-devised plan, if War-Eagle is only correct in his guess at their intentions; meanwhile let us post our sentries, and get what sleep we can, for to-morrow may be a busy day."

They accordingly divided their party into watches, Baptiste and Perrot with one Indian taking the first, and Reginald undertaking the charge of the second. The night was gloomy, and few stars were visible through the thick clouds by which the heavens were overspread; the men were partially sheltered by some stunted alder-bushes which grew by the side of the stream, with whose waters they had cooled their thirst, and those who were not destined to the first watch soon fell asleep, lulled by the distant howling of a hungry pack of prairie wolves.

Towards the close of Reginald's watch, about an hour before daybreak, a dusky figure glided with noiseless step towards the encampment; the young man cocked his rifle, in order to be prepared against surprise, but in the next moment recognized the commanding form of his friend, and hailed him by name.

"Netis!" replied the chief, sitting down beside him, and wringing the water from his leggins, which had been saturated partly by the heavy dew on the long grass through which he had made his way, and partly by the streams which he had been obliged to ford.

* The country of the Stone-eaters, or, as they are called in their own language, the Assineboins. This is a branch of the Great Sioux tribe to the northward of the Missouri river; the region is peculiarly wild and broken, and the Indians inhabiting it are famous for their pedestrian activity and endurance.

† Pomes de prairie are small roots, somewhat resembling white radishes, that are found in great abundance in the Western Wilderness, being in some places the only esculent vegetable within a range of several hundred miles; when eaten raw they are tough, tasteless, and hard of digestion, but if boiled or stewed, are tolerably palatable and wholesome.

* An expression used by the Canadian hunters for an ambush; the "cache" is also familiar to all readers of western story, as the place of deposit for peltries, or stores.

"Has my brother found a path?" inquired Reginald in a whisper; "has he been near the Dabcotah village?"

"He has," replied the chief; "he has seen their lodges."

"Can my brother find the path by which the horse-stealers will return?"

"He can guess, he cannot be sure," replied the young Indian, modestly.

Here the conversation closed, and in a few minutes the little party were aroused and a-foot, their leader being resolved that not a moment should be lost, as soon as there was sufficient light for pursuing the trail.

When on the point of starting, Baptiste, taking War-Eagle aside, whispered in his ear a few words, on which the latter appeared to reflect seriously and somewhat in doubt; he nodded his head, however, and replied, "Well, it is good."

The Guide informed Reginald that at his own request he was to accompany the party on the trail.

"You see, Master Reginald," he continued, "I am a true-scented old hound, and if these young ones run too fast, I may perhaps help 'em at a pinch; then if we catch the scoundrels you will be in their front and we in their rear, and they will be as bad off as a Kentucky coon between two of old Dan Boone's cur-dogs. Remember the signals," he added impressively, touching the bugle slung across his shoulder. "We have not practised them of late, but I have forgot none of them; they may do us a good turn here; stick close to War-Eagle, you are sworn brothers, and, according to Indian fashion, if he falls you must die with him or revenge him."

"That will I, honest Baptiste," replied our hero; "the Lenape shall not say that their chief was deserted by his adopted brother, neither will I forget the signals—farewell!"

Here the two parties separated, that of Baptiste resuming their pursuit of the trail, and that of War-Eagle following in silence the rapid strides of their young chief across the prairie to the eastward. He marched for several hours in silence—his brow wore an expression of thoughtfulness, and he stopped several times as if to scan the bearing and the distance of every remarkable elevation or object in the undulating prairie which they were crossing. It was now about midday; they had walked since day-break without halt or food; the rays of the sun were fiercely hot, and it required all the determined energy of Reginald's character, to enable him to endure in silence the heat and thirst by which he was oppressed; as for Monsieur Perrot, he had contrived to secrete a small flask of brandy about his person, more than one mouthful of which, mingled with the muddy water of the pools which they passed had hitherto enabled him to keep pace with the rest of the party, but he was now beginning to lag behind, and some of the Indians were obliged to urge and assist him forward.

At this juncture War-Eagle suddenly stopped, and uttering a sound like a low hiss, crouched upon the ground, an attitude into which the whole party sunk in a moment. Laying a finger lightly on Reginald's arm, he pointed to the upper range of a distant hill, saying,

"There are men!" Our hero, shading his eyes with his hand, looked in the direction indicated, but after a careful survey, he could see nothing but the faint green reposing in the sunny haze of noon; he shook his head; but War-Eagle replied with a quiet smile,

"My brother saw the rifles behind the log near the Muskingum; his eyes are very true, but they have not looked much at the prairie; let him use his medicine glass-pipe."

When Reginald had adjusted his telescope, he looked again to the spot on which the bright clear eye of War-Eagle was still rivetted like the gaze of a Highland deer hound, who has caught sight of a hart browsing on the further side of some wide and rocky glen.

"By heaven, it is true!" he exclaimed. "I see them, one, two, three, mounted Indians; they are at speed—and buffalo are galloping before them."

"That is good," said War-Eagle; "keep the glass-pipe before them, and say if they go out of sight, or if more appear."

Reginald did so: and after a few minutes, reported that they had disappeared over a neighbouring height, and that no others had come in view.

Upon this, War-Eagle rose, saying, "My brother shall drink and rest—there are shade and water not far." As he had said, half an hour's march brought them to a clump of stunted alders, beside which flowed a stream, the waters of which were tolerably fresh and cool. Here they ate some dried buffalo meat, and satisfied their thirst, after which they followed with renewed spirits their gay leader, whose iron and sinewy frame seemed (like that of Antæus of old) to gather fresh strength every time that his foot fell upon the earth. The prairie through which they now passed was extremely hilly and broken, intersected by many steep and narrow ravines; threading his way amongst these, the chief frequently stopped to examine the footmarks which had been left by bison, or other animals, and often bent his searching glance along the sides of the hills around him. The only living creatures seen during the whole march were a few bulls, lazily cropping the prairie grass, as if conscious that their tough carcass, and burnt, soiled hides, rendered them at this season worthless to the hunters, who had driven from them the cows and the younger bulls of the herd. Emerging from these defiles, the party came to a broadest valley, the sides of which were very steep; along the bottom ran a stream of considerable magnitude, on the banks of which was a large tract of copsewood, consisting apparently of alder, poplar, and birch, and affording ample space for concealing a body of several hundred men.

Towards this wood, War-Eagle led the way; and when he reached a few bushes distant from it some hundred yards, he desired the rest of the party lie still, while he went forward alone to explore. During his absence, Reginald occupied himself with examining through his glass the sides of the valley, but could see neither man nor any other living creature; and when War-Eagle returned and conducted them into the wood, Reginald could read on his friend's countenance that he was in high spirits at having reached this point undiscovered.

When they came to the centre of the woodland, they found a broad trail, near which they were carefully posted by the chief, in such a manner that, themselves unseen, they could command a view of any one passing along it.

The party led by Baptiste was not less successful in carrying out the instructions given to them by War-Eagle. After a rapid and toilsome march of many hours upon the Dahcotah trail, they came at length in sight of their enemies; although at a distance of many miles, the prudence and caution of the experienced scout controlled the impetuous ardour of the young Delawares, who were burning to revenge the insult offered to their tribe. But Baptiste was aware that to attack with his present force would be hopeless, and he bent all his energies to creep as near to the Sioux as possible, so that he might be ready to dash in upon their rear, in case he should find that the ambuscade of War-Eagle was successfully laid; at the same time, the hardy woodsman was determined not to allow them, under any circumstances, to gain the village without making by day or by night one bold effort for recovery of the horses.

A habit of self-control was one of the distinguishing features of the Guide's character; and although his hatred of the Sioux was fierce and intense, as we have seen in the earlier part of this tale, he now conducted his operations with a cool deliberation that might almost have been mistaken for indifference; selecting the most intelligent warrior among the Lenape, he sent him forward to creep on the trail; he himself followed at a short distance; then the other runners at short intervals, and the mounted Indians were desired to keep entirely out of sight in the rear. In this order they continued the pursuit; and by the skilful selection of ground, and taking advantage of every trifling hill or ravine over which they passed, he contrived at length to approach as near as he deemed it prudent to venture until he should see the result of the stratagem devised by War-Eagle

CHAPTER XXVII

A deserted village in the West.—Mahéga carries off Prairie-bird, and endeavours to baffle pursuit.

We must now shift the scene to the spot where the Delaware village had been encamped. What a change had a few days produced! The lodges of the chiefs, with their triangular poles bearing their shields and trophies; the white tent of Prairie-bird, the busy crowds of women and children; the troops of horses, the songs and dances of the warriors—all were gone! and in their stead nothing was to be seen but a flock of buzzards, gorging themselves on a meal too revolting to be described, and a pack of wolves snarling and quarrelling over the remains of the unfortunate Lenape victims.

On the very spot where the tent of Olitipa had been pitched, and where the marks of the tent poles were still easily recognised, stood a solitary Indian, in an attitude of deep musing; his ornamented hunting shirt and leggins, proclaimed his chieftain rank; the rifle on which he leaned was of the newest and best workmanship, and his whole appearance was singularly striking; but the countenance was that which would have rivetted the attention of a spectator,

had any been there to look upon it, for it blended in its gentle, yet proud lineaments, a delicate beauty almost feminine, with a high heroic sternness, that one could scarcely have thought it possible to find in a youth only just emerging from boyhood: there was too a deep silent expression of grief, rendered yet more touching by the fortitude with which it was controlled and repressed. Drear and desolate as was the scene around, the desolation of that young heart was yet greater; father, brother, friend! the beloved sister, the affectionate instructor; worst of all, the tribe, the ancient people of whose chiefs he was the youngest and last surviving scion, all swept away at "one full swoop!" And yet no tear fell from his eyes, no murmur escaped his lip, and the energies of that heroic, though youthful spirit, rose above the tempest, whose fearful ravages he now contemplated with stern and gloomy resolution.

In this sketch the reader will recognize Wingendun, who had been absent, as was mentioned in a former chapter, on a course of watching and fasting, preparatory to his being enrolled among the band of warriors, according to the usages of his nation. Had he been in the camp when the attack of the Osages was made, there is little doubt that his last drop of blood would have there been shed before the lodge of Tamenund, but he had retired to a distance, whence the war cry and the tumult of the fight never reached his ear, and had concluded his self-denying probation with a dream of happy omen; a dream that promised future glory, dear to every ambitious Indian spirit, and in which the triumphs of war were wildly and confusedly blended with the sisterly tones of Olitipa's voice, and the sweet smile of the Lily of Mooshanne.

Inspired by his vision, the ardent boy returned in high hopes and spirits towards the encampment, but when he gained the summit of a hill which overlooked it, a single glance sufficed to show him the destruction that had been wrought during his absence; he saw that the lodges were overthrown, the horses driven off, and that the inhabitants of the moving village were either dispersed or destroyed. Rooted to the spot, he looked on the scene in speechless horror, when all at once his attention was caught by a body of men moving over a distant height in the western horizon, their figures being rendered visible by the deep red background afforded by the setting sun: swift as thought the youth darted off in pursuit.

After the shades of night had fallen, the retreating party halted, posted their sentries, lit their camp-fires, and knowing that nothing was to be feared from an enemy so lately and so totally overthrown, they cooked their meat and their maize, and smoked their pipes, with the lazy indifference habitual to Indian warriors when the excitement of the chase or the fight has subsided. In the centre of the camp rose a white tent, and beside it a kind of temporary arbour had been hastily constructed from reeds and alderboughs; beneath the latter reclined the gigantic form of Mahéga, stretched at his length and puffing out volumes of *kinmekenik**

* A mixture used for smoking by the Indians of the Missouri; it is usually composed of tobacco, dried sumach leaf, and the inner bark of the white willow, cut small and mixed in nearly equal proportions.

more, with the self-satisfied complacency of success.

Within the tent sat Prairie-bird, her eyes meekly raised to heaven, her hands crossed upon her bosom, and a small basket of corn-cakes being placed, untasted, upon the ground beside her; at a little distance, in the corner of the tent, sat her female Indian attendant, whom Mahéga had permitted, with a delicacy and consideration scarcely to be expected from him, to share her mistress's captivity. He had also given orders that all the lighter articles belonging to her toilet, and to the furniture of her tent, should be conveyed with the latter, so that as yet both her privacy and her comfort had been faithfully secured.

Guided by the fires, Wingenund, who had followed with unabated speed; had no difficulty in finding the Osage encampment; neither was his intelligent mind at a loss to apprehend what had occurred; he had long known the views and plans entertained by Mahéga respecting Prairie-bird, and when, from a distant eminence he caught a sight of her white tent pitched in the centre of a retreating Indian band, he understood in a moment her present situation, and the disastrous events that had preceded it; although he believed that both War-Eagle and Reginald must have fallen ere his sister had been made a captive, he resolved at all hazards to communicate with her, and either to rescue her or die in the attempt.

Having been so long encamped with the Osages, he was tolerably well versed in their language, and he also knew so well the general disposition of their outposts that he had no doubt of being able to steal into their camp. As soon as he had gained, undiscovered, the shelter of a clump of alders, only a few bowshots distant from the nearest fire, he stripped off and concealed his hunting shirt, cap, leggins, and other accoutrements, retaining only his belt, in which he hid a small pocket-pistol, lately given to him by Reginald, and his scalp-knife, sheathed in a case of bison-hide. Thus lightly armed, he threw himself upon the grass, and commenced creeping like a serpent towards the Osage encampment.

Unlike the sentries of civilized armies, those of the North American Indians frequently sit at their appointed station, and trust to their extraordinary quickness of sight and hearing to guard them against surprise. Ere he had crept many yards, Wingenund found himself near an Indian, seated with his back against the decayed stump of a tree, and whiling away his watch by humming a low and melancholy Osage air; fortunately, the night was dark, and the heavy dew had so softened the grass, that the boy's pliant and elastic form wound its onward way without the slightest noise being made to alarm the lazy sentinel. Having passed this outpost in safety, he continued his snaky progress, occasionally raising his head to glance his quick eye around and observe the nature of the obstacles that he had yet to encounter; these were less than he expected, and he contrived at length to trail himself to the back of Olitipa's tent, where he ensconced himself unperceived under cover of a large buffalo skin, which was loosely thrown over her saddle to protect it from the weather. His first object was to scoop out a few inches

of the turf below the edge of the tent, in order that he might conveniently hear or be heard by her without raising his voice above the lowest whisper.

After listening attentively for a few minutes, a gentle and regular breathing informed him that one sleeper was within; but Wingenund, whose sharp eyes had already observed that there were two saddles under the buffalo robe which covered him, conjectured that her attendant was now her companion in captivity, and that the grief and anxiety of Olitipa had probably banished slumber from her eyes. To resolve these doubts, and to effect the purpose of his dangerous attempt, he now applied his mouth to the small opening that he had made at the back of the tent, and gave a low and almost inaudible sound from his lips like the chirping of a cricket. Low as it was, the sound escaped not the quick ear of Olitipa, who turned and listened more intently,—again it was repeated, and the maiden felt a sudden tremour of anxiety pervade her whole frame, as from an instinctive consciousness that the sound was a signal intended for her ear.

Immediately in front of the lodge were stretched the bulky forms of two half slumbering Osages. She knew that the dreaded Mahéga was only a few paces distant, and that if some friend were indeed near, the least indiscretion on her part might draw down upon him certain destruction: but she was courageous by nature, and habit had given her presence of mind. Being aware that few, if any, of her captors spoke the English tongue, she said, in a low, but distinct voice, "If a friend is near, let me hear the signal again!"

Immediately the cricket-chirrup was repeated. Convinced now beyond a doubt that friendly succour was nigh, the maiden's heart throbbled with hope, fear, and many contending emotions, but she lost not her self-possession; and having now ascertained the spot whence the sound proceeded, she moved the skins which formed her couch to that part of the tent, and was thus enabled to rest her head within a few inches of the opening made by Wingenund below the canvass.

"Prairie-bird," whispered a soft voice close to her ear, a voice that she had a thousand times taught to pronounce her name, and every accent of which was familiar to her ear.

"My brother!" was the low-breathed reply.

"If the Washashe do not hear, let my sister tell all, in few words."

As Prairie-bird briefly described the events above-narrated, Wingenund found some comfort in the reflection that War-Eagle, Reginald, and their band had escaped the destruction which had overwhelmed the Lenapé village: when she concluded, he replied,

"It is enough, let my sister hope; let her speak fair words to Mahéga—Wingenund will find his brothers, they will follow the trail, my sister must not be afraid; many days and nights may pass, but the Lenapé will be near her, and Netis will be with them. Wingenund must go."

How fain was Prairie-bird to ask him a thousand questions, to give him a thousand cautions, and to send as many messages by him to her lover; but, trained in the severe school of In-

dian discipline, she knew that every word spoken or whispered increased the danger already incurred by Wingenund, and in obedience to his hint she contented herself with silently invoking the blessing of Heaven on the promised attempt to be made by himself and his beloved coadjutor for her rescue.

That pale-faced maiden speaks to herself all through the night," said one of the Osage warriors to his comrade stretched beside him before the tent.

"I heard a sort of murmuring sound," replied the other; "but I shut my ears. Mahéga says that her words are like the voices of spirits; it is not good to listen! Before this moon is older I will ask her to curse Páketshu, that Pawnee wolf who killed my two brothers near the Nebraska."*

Profiting by this brief dialogue, Wingenund crept from under the buffalo skin, and looking carefully around to see whether any new change had taken place since his concealment, he found that several of the Osage warriors, who had been probably eating together, were now stretched around the tent, and it was hopeless to attempt passing so many cunning and vigilant foes undiscovered. While he was meditating on the best course to be pursued, his attention was called to a noise immediately in front of the tent, which was caused by the horse ridden by Olitipa having broken from its tether and entangled its legs in the halter. Springing on his feet, Wingenund seized the leather thong, using at the same time the expressions common among the Osages for quieting a fractious horse.

"What is it?" exclaimed at once several of the Osage warriors, half raising themselves from their recumbent posture.

"Nothing," replied Wingenund, in their own tongue; "the pale-faced squaw's horse has got loose."

So saying he stooped leisurely down, and fastened the laryette again to the iron pin, from which it had been detached. Having secured the horse, he stood up again, and stepped coolly over several of the Osages stretched around the tent; and they, naturally mistaking him for one of their own party, composed themselves again to sleep. Thus he passed through the encampment, when he again threw himself upon the ground, and again succeeded in eluding the vigilance of the outposts, and in reaching safely the covert where he had left his rifle and his accoutrements.

The active spirit of Wingenund was not yet wearied of exertion. Seeing that the course taken by the Osages was westerly, he went forward in that direction, and having ascended an elevated height commanding a view of the adjoining valleys, he concealed himself with the intention of watching the enemy's march.

On the following morning the Osages started at daybreak, and marched until noon, when Mahéga halted them, and put in execution the

plan that he had formed for throwing off any pursuit that might be attempted. He had brought four horses from the Delaware encampment; of these he retained two for the use of Prairie-bird and her attendant, and ordered their hoofs to be covered with thick wrappers of bison hide;* he selected also ten of the warriors, on whose courage and fidelity he could best depend; the remainder of the band he dismissed, under the conduct of the Flying-arrow, with the remaining two horses laden with a portion of the Delaware spoils and trophies, desiring them to strike off to the northward, and making a trail as distinct as possible, to return by a circuitous march to the Osage village. These orders were punctually obeyed, and Mahéga, having seen the larger moiety of his band start on their appointed route, led off his own small party in a south-westerly direction, through the hardest and roughest surface that the prairie afforded, where he rightly judged that their trail could with difficulty be followed, even by the lynx-eyed chief of the Delawares.

From his concealment in the distance, Wingenund observed the whole manœuvre; and having carefully noted the very spot where the two trails separated, he ran back to the deserted Lenape village to carry out the plan that he had formed for the pursuit. On his way he gathered a score of pliant willow rods, and these lay at his feet when he stood in the attitude of deep meditation, described at the commencement of this chapter. He knew that if War-Eagle and his party returned in safety from their expedition, their steps would be directed at once to the spot on which he now stood, and his first care was to convey to them all the information necessary for their guidance. This he was enabled to do by marking with his knife on slips of elm bark various figures and designs, which War-Eagle would easily understand. To describe these at length would be tedious, in a narrative such as the present; all readers who know anything of the history of the North American Indians being aware of their sagacity in the use of these rude hieroglyphics; it is sufficient here to state, that Wingenund was able to express, in a manner intelligible to his kinsman, that he himself marked the elm-bark, that Olitipa was prisoner to Mahéga, that the Osage trail was to the west; that it divided, the broad trail to the north being the wrong one; and that he would hang on the right one and make more marks for War-Eagle to follow.

Having carefully noted these particulars, he stuck one of his rods into the ground and fastened to the top of it his roll of elm-bark; then giving one more melancholy glance at the desolate scene around him, he gathered up his willow twigs, and throwing himself again upon the Osage trail, never rested his weary limbs until the burnt grass, upon a spot where the party had cooked some bison-meat, assured him that he was on their track; then he laid himself under a neighbouring bush and slept soundly, trusting to his own sagacity for following the trail over the boundless prairie before him.

* The Indians believe that some persons have the power of injuring, or even of killing others at a distance of many hundred miles, by charms and spells: this belief in witchcraft is constantly noticed by Tanner and others, who have resided long among the Indians, and it seems to have been especially prevalent among the Ojibweyas and other northern tribes. In illustration of a similar notion in the eastern hemisphere, see Burrow's Zinecal, or the Gypsies of Spain, vol. 1. chap. ix. on the Evil Eye.

* This method of baffling pursuit is not unfrequently resorted to by Indian marauders. The reader of *Siak-speare* (and who that can read is not?) will remember Lear's—

"It were a delicate stratagem to shoo
A troop of horse with felt!"

While these events were passing on the Missouri Prairie, Paul Müller having been escorted to the settlements and set free by the Osages, pursued his way towards St. Louis, then the nucleus of Western trade, and the point whence all expeditions, whether of a warlike or commercial nature, were carried on in that region. He was walking slowly forward, revolving in his mind the melancholy changes that had taken place in the course of the last few weeks, the destruction of the Lesape band, and the captivity of his beloved pupil, when he was overtaken by a sturdy and weatherbeaten pedestrian, whose person and attire seemed to have been roughly handled of late, for his left arm was in a sling, various patches of plaster were on his face and forehead, his leggins were torn to rags, and the barrel of a rifle broken off from the stock was slung over his shoulder.

The Missionary, turning round to greet his fellow-traveller with his accustomed courtesy, encountered a countenance, which, notwithstanding its condition, he recognized as one that he had seen in the Delaware village.

"Bearskin, my good friend," said he, holding out his hand, and grasping heartily the horny fist of the voyageur, "I am right glad to see you, although it seems that you have received some severe hurts; I feared that you had fallen among the other victims of that terrible day."

"I can't deny that the day was rough enough," replied Bearskin, looking down upon his wounded arm; "and the redskin devils left only one other of my party beside myself alive; we contrived to beat off those who attacked our quarter, but when we found that Mahéga had broken in upon the rear, and had killed Mike Smith and his men, we made the best of our way to the woods, several were shot and scalped, two of us escaped; I received, as you see, a few ugly scratches, but my old carcass is accustomed to being battered, and a week will set it all to rights."

"You know," replied the Missionary, "that I have some skill in curing wounds. When we reach St. Louis we will take up our lodging in the same house, and I will do what I can to relieve your hurts. Moreover, there are many things on which I wish to speak with you at leisure, and I have friends there who will supply us with all that is needful for our comfort."

While they were thus conversing, the tall spires of the cathedral became visible over the forest, which then grew dense and unbroken to the very edge of the town, and in a few minutes Bearskin, conducted by the Missionary was snugly lodged in the dwelling of one of the wealthiest peltry-dealers in the famous frontier city of St. Louis.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

An ambushade.—Reginald Brandon finds his horse, and M. Ferron nearly loses his head.—While Indian Philocephaly is displayed in one quarter, Indian credulity is exhibited in another.

We left War-Eagle and his party posted in a taicket of considerable extent, in the centre of a valley through which he had calculated that the marauding band of Sioux would return with

the captured horses to their village; long and anxiously did he wait in expectation of their appearance; and both himself and Reginald began to fear that they must have taken some other route, when they saw at a distance an Indian, galloping down the valley towards them; as he drew near, the head-dress of eagle's feathers, the scalplocks on his leather hunting shirt, and the fringes by which his leggins were adorned, announced him to the practiced eye of the young Delaware chief, as a Dahcotah brave of some distinction; but what was the astonishment of Reginald, at recognizing in the fiery steed that bore him, his own lost Nekimi. By an unconscious movement he threw forward his rifle over the log which concealed him, and was preparing to secure a certain aim, when War-Eagle, touching his arm, whispered, "Netis not shoot, more Dahcotahs are coming,—noise of gun not good here, Netis have enough fight soon,—leave this man to War-Eagle, he give Netis back his horse."

Reginald, although disappointed at not being allowed to take vengeance on the approaching savage, saw the prudence of his friend's counsel, and suffering himself to be guided by it, waited patiently to see how the Delaware proposed to act. The latter, laying aside his rifle, and armed only with his scalp-knife and tomahawk, crept to a thick bush on the edge of the broad trail passing through the centre of the thicket; in his hand he took a worn-out moccasin, which he threw carelessly upon the track, and then ensconced himself in a hiding-place which he had selected for his purpose. The Dahcotah warrior, who had been sent forward by his chief to reconnoitre, and to whom Nekimi had been lent on account of the extraordinary speed which that animal had been found to possess, slackened his speed as he entered the thicket, and cast his wary eyes to the right and to the left, glancing occasionally at the sides of the hills which overhung the valley.

The Delawares were too well concealed to be seen from the path, and he rode slowly forward until he came to the spot where lay the moccasin thrown down by War-Eagle.

"Ha!" said the Sioux, uttering a hasty ejaculation, and leaping from his horse to examine its fashion. As he stooped to pick it up War-Eagle sprang like a tiger upon him, and with a single blow of his tomahawk laid the unfortunate warrior dead at his feet. Throwing Nekimi's bride over his arm, he drew the body into the adjacent thicket, and, having found in the waistband the small leathern bag in which the Indians of the Missouri usually carry the different coloured clays wherewith they paint themselves, he proceeded to transform himself into a Sioux. Putting on the Dahcotah head-dress and other apparel, aided by one of the most experienced of his band, he disguised himself in a few minutes so effectually that, unless upon a very close inspection, he might well be taken for the Indian whom he had just killed.

As soon as this operation was completed, he desired Reginald and the rest of the party to remain concealed, and if he succeeded in luring the enemy to the spot, on no account to fire until their main body had reached the bush from which he had sprung on the Sioux. Having given this instruction, he vaulted on Neki-

ni's back, and returned at speed to the upper part of the valley, from which direction he knew that the Dahcotahs must be approaching. He had not ridden many miles ere he saw them advancing at a leisurely rate, partly driving before them, and partly leading, the horses stolen from the Delawares. This was an occasion on which War-Eagle required all his sagacity and presence of mind, for should he betray himself by a false movement or gesture, not only would the enemy escape the snare laid for them, but his life would pay the forfeit of his temerity. Wheeling his horse about, he returned towards the thicket, and, after riding to and fro, as if making a careful investigation of its paths and foot-marks, he went back to the broad trail, and as soon as the foremost of the Dahcotahs were within a couple of hundred yards, he made the signal "All right,"* and rode gently forward through the wood. So well did his party observe the orders which he had given them, that, although he knew the exact spot where they were posted, and scanned it with the most searching glance of his keen eye, not a vestige of a human figure, nor of a weapon could he detect, and a smile of triumph curled his lip as he felt assured of the success of his plan. No sooner had he passed the bush where the Dahcotah had fallen, than he turned aside into the thicket, and, having fastened Nekimi securely to a tree, tore off his Sioux disguise, and resuming his own dress and rifle, concealed himself on the flank of his party.

The Dahcotahs, who had, as they thought, seen their scout make the sign of "All right," after a careful examination of the wood, entered it without either order or suspicion; neither did they discover their mistake until the foremost reached the fatal bush, when a volley from the ambuscade told among them with terrible effect. Several of the Sioux fell at this first discharge, and the confusion caused by this unexpected attack was increased by the panic among the horses, some of which being frightened, and others wounded, they reared and plunged with ungovernable fury.

Although taken by surprise, the Dahcotah warriors behaved with determined courage; throwing themselves from their horses, they dashed into the thicket to dislodge their unseen foes, and the fight became general, as well as desultory, each man using a log or a tree for his own defence, and shooting, either with rifle or bow, at any adversary whom he could see for a moment exposed. The Sioux, though more numerous, were unprovided with efficient firearms; and sensible of the advantages thence arising to their opponents, they made desperate, and not unsuccessful efforts to bring the fight to close quarters; Reginald and War-Eagle were side by side, each endeavouring to outdo

the other in feats of gallantry, and at the same time to watch over the safety of his friend.

Monsieur Perrot caught the general spirit of the affair, and, as he afterward said of himself "fought like a famished lion!" when, unluckily, his pistol snapped in the face of a Sioux warrior, who struck him a blow that felled him to the earth. Stepping lightly over the form of his prostrate foe, the savage, grasping a knife in his right hand, and seizing the luckless Frenchman's hair with his left, was about to scalp him, when the knife dropped from his hand, and he stood for a moment petrified with astonishment and horror. The whole head of hair was in his left hand, and the white man sat grinning before him with a smooth and shaven crown.

Letting fall what he believed to be the scalp of some devil in human shape, the affrighted Sioux fled from the spot, while Perrot, replacing his wig, muttered half aloud, "*Bravo! ma bonne perruque! je te dois mille remerciemens!*"

At this crisis, while the issue of the general combat was still doubtful, the sound of a bugle was heard in the distance, and the signal immediately answered by Reginald, who shouted aloud to War-Eagle, that Grande-Hache was at hand. Inspired by the knowledge of approaching reinforcement, the Delawares fought with renewed confidence, while the Dahcotahs, startled by the strange and unknown bugle calls, were proportionately confused and thrown into disorder. The panic among them was complete when the sharp crack of Baptiste's rifle was heard in the rear, and one of their principal braves fell dead at the root of the tree which sheltered him from the fire of War-Eagle's party. Hemmed in between the two hostile bands, the Sioux now gave up all hope of concealment, and fought with the courage of despair; but the resistance which they offered was neither effective nor of long duration. Baptiste, wielding his terrible axe, seemed resolved this day to wreak his fierce and long-delayed vengeance on the tribe at whose hands he had sustained such deadly injury; and regardless of several slight wounds which he received in the fray, continued to deal destruction among all who came within reach. Nor were Reginald and War-Eagle less active in the fight; the struggle was hand to hand; the Sioux seeming to expect no quarter, and being determined to fight while they could wield a knife or tomahawk.

Their chief, a man of stature almost as powerful as that of Mahéga, seemed gifted with a charmed life, for although he exposed himself freely to the boldest of his opponents, animating his men by shouting aloud the terrible war-cry of the Dahcotahs,* and rushing to their aid wherever he found them giving way, he was hitherto unhurt, and bent every effort to destroy War-Eagle, whom he easily recognised as the leader, and most formidable of the Delawares. An opportunity soon offered itself, as War-Eagle was engaged with another of the Dahcotahs. The chief aimed at his unguarded head a blow that must have proved fatal, had not Reginald warded it off with his breast; and the Indian turned

* One of the most extraordinary specimens of the ingenuity of the tribes who inhabit the Great Missouri wilderness, and who speak many languages, so different that they can have with each other no verbal communication, is the language of Signs, common to them all, by which Pawnees, Dahcotahs, Ojages, Black-feet, Upenobas, or the Crows and other Western nations, can understand each other quite sufficiently for the ordinary purposes of their simple life. The sign for "all right" is made by holding the hand with the palm downwards, in a horizontal position, and waving it slowly onwards.

* It is well known that every tribe has its separate war-cry; that of the Dahcotahs resembles the short angry bark of a dog, but they utter it with a piercing shrillness that renders it terrific in the extreme.

writhing upon him, and a fierce combat ensued, but it was not of long duration, for after they had exchanged a few strokes, a successful thrust stretched the Dahcotah chief upon the ground. An exulting cry burst from the Delawares, and the panic-struck Sioux fled in every direction. The pursuit was conducted with the merciless eagerness common to Indian warfare, and as Reginald felt no inclination to join in it, he returned his cutlass to its sheath, and busied himself in securing all the horses that came within his reach.

One by one the Delawares came back to the place of rendezvous, some bearing with them the scalps which they had taken, others leading recaptured horses, and all in the highest excitement of triumph.

War-Eagle set free Nekimi, and led it towards its master. As soon as it was near enough to hear his voice, Reginald called to the noble animal, which, shaking its flowing mane, came bounding and snorting towards him. He caressed it for a short time, then vaulted upon its back, and was delighted to find that its spirit and strength had suffered no diminution since its capture. Again he dismounted, and Nekimi followed him unled, playing round him like a favorite dog. While he thus amused himself with his recovered steed, Baptiste sat by the side of a small streamlet, cleaning his axe and his rifle, and listening with a grim smile to Monsieur Perrot's account of the danger from which he had been saved by his peruke. In the midst of his narrative seeing some blood on the sleeve of his companion's shirt, he said, "Baptiste, you are sorely wounded?"

"Yes," replied the other; "one of the redskins gave me a smartish stroke with a knife in that skirmish—however, I forgive him, as I paid him for it."

"But would it not be better to attend to your wound first, and to your weapons afterwards?"

"Why, no, Monsieur Perrot, that isn't our fashion in the woods; I like first to make the doctor ready for service, and then it will be time enough to put a little cold water and a bandage to the cut."

The good-humoured Frenchman insisted upon his proposal, but had some difficulty in persuading the rough Guide to let him dress the wound, which, though deep and painful, was not dangerous.

On the following day War-Eagle returned with his triumphant party, and with the rescued horses, towards the Delaware village, every bosom, save one, beating high with exultation. Reginald could scarcely control his impatience to relate to Prairie-bird the events of the successful expedition. The young warriors anticipated with joy the beaming smiles with which they would be welcomed by the Lenape maidens; while those of maturer age looked forward to the well-merited applause of their chiefs, and the fierce excitement of the war-dance with which their victory would be celebrated. Baptiste had satiated his long-cherished vengeance on the tribe which had destroyed his parents, and Monsieur Perrot prepared many jokes and gibes, which he proposed to inflict upon Mike Smith, and those who had not partaken in the glory which he and his party had gained.

War-Eagle alone shared not in the general

joy! Whether it was that he could not prevent his thoughts from reverting to Prairie-bird, or that he was oppressed by a vague and mysterious presentiment of calamity, his demeanour was grave, even to sadness, and the trophies of victory hung neglected from the fringes of his dress.

Having taken the shortest route, they arrived, a few hours before nightfall, at a point where a broad trail led direct to the encampment; and War-Eagle, whose penetrating eye had marked his friend's impatience, and who never lost an opportunity of proving to him the warmth of his attachment, said to him,

"Netis should go forward and tell Tamenund and the chiefs that the Lenape war-party are coming, and that the Dahcotah scalps are many. It will be a pleasant tale for the ancient chiefs, and it is good that they hear it from the mouth of the bravest warrior."

This compliment was paid to him aloud, and in the hearing of the whole band, who signified their approbation by the usual quick and repeated exclamation.*

Reginald replied, "No one is bravest here; where War-Eagle leads, none but brave men are worthy to follow."

The next minute Nekimi was in full speed towards the village; and the Delaware band, with Baptiste and Perrot, moved leisurely forward after him.

Scarcely two hours had elapsed when a single horseman was seen riding towards them, in whom, as he drew near, they had some difficulty in recognising Reginald, for his dress was soiled, his countenance haggard and horror-stricken, while the foaming sides and wide-dilated nostril of Nekimi showed that he had been riding with frantic and furious speed. All made way for him, and he spoke to none until he drew his bridle by the side of War-Eagle, and beckoned to him and to Baptiste to come aside. For a moment he looked at the former in silence with an eye so troubled, that the Guide feared that some dreadful accident had unsettled his young master's mind; but that fear was almost immediately relieved by Reginald, who, taking his friend's hand, said to him, in a voice almost inarticulate from suppressed emotion,

"I bring you, War-Eagle, dreadful—dreadful news."

"War-Eagle knows that the sun does not always shine," was the calm reply.

"But this is darkness," said Reginald, shuddering; "black darkness, where there is neither sun nor moon, not even a star!"

"My brother," said the Indian, drawing himself proudly to his full height; "my brother speaks without thinking. The sun shines still, and the stars are bright in their place. The Great Spirit dwells always among them; a thick cloud may hide them from our eyes, but my brother knows they are shining as brightly as ever."

The young man looked with wonder and awe

* This exclamation resembles the English word "How-how," repeated with a strong aspirate and great rapidity. It seems common to all Indian nations, for the author has heard it used by many different tribes, and it is mentioned by Charlevoix as being constantly uttered by the Natches, Illinois, and other Indian nations, then dwelling near the banks of the Mississippi.

upon the lofty countrances of this untaught philosopher of the wilderness; and he replied, "War-Eagle is right. The Great Spirit sees all, and whatever he does is good! But sometimes the cup of misfortune is so full and so bitter, that man can hardly drink it and live."

"Let Netis speak all and conceal nothing," said the chief: "what has he seen at the village?"

"There is no village," said the young man in an agony of grief. "The lodges are overthrown; Tamenund, the Black Father, Ollitpa, all are gone! wolves and vultures are quarrelling over the bones of unburied Lenap!"

As Reginald concluded his tragic narrative, an attentive observer might have seen that the muscles and nerves in the powerful frame of the Indian contracted for an instant, but no change was visible on his haughty and commanding brow, as he stood before the bearer of this dreadful news a living impersonation of the stern and stoic philosophy of his race.

"War-Eagle," said Reginald, "can you explain this calamity—do you see through it—how has it happened?"

"Mahéga," was the brief and emphatic reply.

"Do you believe that the monster has murdered all, men, women, and children?" said Reginald, whose thoughts were fixed on Prairie-bird, but whose lips refused to pronounce her name.

"No," replied the chief; "not all, the life of Ollitpa is safe, if she becomes the wife of that wolf; for the others, War-Eagle cannot tell. The Washashe love to take scalps, woman, child, or warrior, it is all one to them; it is enough. War-Eagle must speak to his people."

After a minute's interval, the chief accordingly summoned his faithful band around him, and in brief but pathetic language informed them of the disaster that had befallen their tribe. Reginald could not listen unmoved to the piercing cries and groans with which the Delawares rent the air on receiving this intelligence, although his own heart was racked with anxiety concerning the fate of his beloved Prairie-bird. While the surrounding warriors thus gave unrestrained vent to their lamentations, War-Eagle stood like some antique statue of bronze, in an attitude of haughty repose, his broad chest thrown forward and his erect front, bearing the impress of an unconquerable will, bidding defiance alike to the human weakness that might assail from within, and the storms of fate that might threaten from without. The stern and impressive silence of his grief produced, ere long, its effect upon his followers; by degrees the sounds of wailing died away, and as the short twilight of that climate was rapidly merging into darkness, the chief, taking Reginald's arm, moved forward, whispering to him in a tone, the deep and gloomy meaning of which haunted his memory long afterwards.

"The spirit of Tamenund calls to War-Eagle and asks 'Where is Mahéga?'"

On the following morning War-Eagle rose an hour before daybreak, and led his party to the spot where the lodges of their kindred had so lately stood, and where they had anticipated a reception of honour and triumph. The chief strode forward across the desolate scene, seemingly insensible to its horrors; faithful to his

determination, all the energies of his nature were concentrated in the burning thirst for revenge, which expelled, for the time, every other feeling from his breast. The Delaware warriors, observant of the stern demeanour of their leader, followed him in gloomy silence; and although each shuddered as he passed the well-known spot where, only a few days before, an anxious wife had prepared his food, and merry children had prattled round his knee, not a groan nor a complaint was uttered; but every bosom throbbled under the expectation of a vengeance so terrible, that should be remembered by the Osages to the latest hour of their existence as a tribe.

War-Eagle moved directly forward to the place where the lodge of Tamenund and the tent of the Prairie-bird had been pitched. As they approached it Reginald felt his heart faint within him, and the colour fled from his cheek and lip.

Baptiste, taking his master's hand, said to him, in a tone of voice the habitual roughness of which was softened by genuine sympathy, "Master Reginald, remember where you are; the eyes of the Lenapé are upon the adopted brother of their chief; they have lost fathers, brothers, wives, and children; see how they bear their loss, let them not think Netis less brave than themselves."

"Thank you, thank you, honest Baptiste," said the unhappy young man, wringing the woodman's horny hand; "I will neither disgrace my own, nor my adopted name; but who among them can compare his loss with mine! so young, so fair, so gentle, my own affianced bride, pledged to me under the eye of heaven, and now in the hands of that fierce and merciless villain."

At this moment a cry of exultation burst from the lips of War-Eagle, as his eye fell upon the wand and slips of bark left by Wingenund. One by one the chief examined them, and deciphering their meaning with rapid and unerring sagacity, communicated to his friend that the youth was still alive and free; that Ollitpa, though a prisoner, was well, and that a fine trail was open for them to follow.

"Let us start upon it this instant," cried Reginald, with the re-awakened impetuosity of his nature.

"War-Eagle must take much counsel with himself," replied the chief, gravely. "The ancient men of the Lenapé are asleep, their bones are uncovered; War-Eagle must not forget them; but," he added, while a terrible fire shone from his dark eye, "if the Great Spirit grants him life, he will bring Netis within reach of Mahéga before this young moon's horn becomes a circle."

Having thus spoken, he resumed his scrutiny of the ciphers and figures drawn upon the bark; nor did he cease it until he fully understood their purport; he then called together his band, and explained to them his further plans, which were briefly these:—

He selected ten of the youngest and most active, who were to accompany him, with Reginald, Baptiste, and Perrot, on the trail of Mahéga; the remainder of the party, under the guidance of an experienced brave, were to follow the more numerous body of the Osages, to hang on their trail, and never to leave it while

there remained a chance or a hope of an enemy's scalp. Two of the Delawares were at the same time despatched, one to seek the aid and sympathy of the Kanzas and other friendly, or neutral tribes, the other to prow! about the woods in the neighbourhood, to collect any fugitives who might have escaped, and guide any party that might be formed, to aid in the meditated pursuit. He also ordered the larger party to gather the bones and relics of their kindred and to perform the rites of sepulture, according to the custom of the tribe.

While the chief was giving these instructions to the several parties above designated, Reginald sat musing on the very grass over which the tent of his beloved had been spread; no blood had there been spilt; it had been spared the desecration of the vulture and the wolf; her spirit seemed to hover unseen over the spot; and shutting his eyes, the lover fancied he could still hear her sweet voice, attuned to the simple accompaniment of her Mexican guitar.

How long this waking dream possessed his senses he knew not, but he was awakened from it by War-Eagle, who whispered in his ear. "The trail of Mahéga waits for my brother." Ashamed of his temporary weakness, Reginald sprang to his feet, and thence upon the back of Nekimi. The chief having chosen four of the strongest and best from the recaptured horses, one for the use of Perrot, the others for such emergencies as might occur, left the remainder with the main body of the Delawares, and, accompanied by his small party thoroughly well armed and equipped, started on the trail in pursuit of the Osages.

While these events were passing near the site of the Lenapé village, Mahéga pursued his westward course with unremitting activity, for although he felt little apprehension from the broken and spirited band of Delawares, he knew that he was entering a region which was the hunting-ground of the Pawnees, Otoes, Ioways, and other tribes, all of whom would consider him a trespasser, and would be disposed to view his present expedition in the light of a hostile incursion; for this reason, although he was amply provided with presents for such Indians as he might fall in with, from the plunder of the Delaware lodges, he marched with the greatest rapidity and caution, and never relaxed his speed until he had passed that dangerous region, and had entered upon the higher, and, comparatively, less frequented plain, lying between the waters of the Nebraska, or Platte River, and the lower ridges, known by the name of the Spurs of the Rocky Mountains.

During the whole of this tedious march the attention paid to the comfort of Olitipa by her wild and wayward captor was constant and respectful; secure, as he thought, from pursuit, he had determined to gain her confidence and affection, and thus to share in that mysterious knowledge and power which he believed her to possess, and which he well knew that force or harshness would never induce her to impart. Thus she remained continually attended by her favourite Lita; when the band halted for refreshment, the choicest morsels were set apart for her use, and the young branches of the willow or poplar were gathered to shelter her from

the sun. Mahéga rarely addressed her, but when he did so it was in language calculated to dispel all apprehension of present injury or insult; and Prairie-bird, remembering the parting counsel of the Missionary, replied to the haughty chief's inquiries with courtesy and gentleness; although she could not help shuddering when she remembered his former violence, and the dreadful massacre at the Delaware village, she felt deeply grateful to Heaven for having softened the tiger's heart towards her, and for having led him, by means and motives unknown to herself, to consult her safety and her comfort.

On one occasion during the march, Mahéga availed himself of her mysterious acquirements, in a manner that reflected great credit upon his sagacity, at the same time that it increased, in a tenfold degree, the awe with which she had inspired him and his adherents. They had made their usual halt at noon, by the side of a small stream; Prairie-bird and her faithful Lita were sheltered from the burning rays of the sun by an arbour of alder-branches, which the Osages had hastily but not inconveniently, constructed; Mahéga and his warriors being occupied in eating the dainty morsels of meat afforded by a young buffalo cow killed on the preceding day, when a large band of Indians appeared on the brow of a neighbouring hill, and came down at full speed towards the Osage encampment. Mahéga, without manifesting any uneasiness, desired his men to pile a few of their most valuable packages within the arbour of Olitipa, and to form themselves in a semicircle around, for its protection, their bows and rifles being ready for immediate use. Having made these dispositions, he waited the approach of the strangers, quietly cutting his buffalo beef and eating it as if secure of their friendly intentions. Having come within a hundred yards, they drew in their bridles on a signal from their leader, who seemed disposed to take a more deliberate survey of the party. From their appearance Mahéga knew that they must belong to one of the wild roving tribes who hunt between the sources of the Platte and Arkansas rivers, but the name or designation of their tribe he was at first unable to make out. Their weapons were bows and arrows, short clubs, and knives; their dress, a hunting-shirt of half-dressed skin, a centre-cloth of the same material, and moccasins on their feet, leaving the legs entirely bare; the leader had long hair, clubbed at the back of his head, and fastened with sinew-strings round a wooden pin, to which were attached several stained feathers, which danced in the wind, and heightened the picturesque effect of his costume.

A rapid glance sufficed to show him that the new comers, although apparently busied about their meal without distrust, were not only well armed, but ready for immediate service; nor did his eye fail to note the martial bearing and gigantic proportions of Mahéga, who sat like a chief expecting the approach of an inferior.

Influenced by these observations, the leader of the roving band resolved that the first intercourse at least, should be of a peaceful nature, prudently reflecting, that as his own numbers were far superior, the nearer the quarters the greater would be their advantage. Having ut-

tered a few brief words to his followers, he advanced with a friendly gesture towards Mahéga, and the following dialogue took place, in the ingenious language of signs before referred to:—

Mahéga.—"What tribe are you!"

Leader.—"Ari-cará.* What are you, and whither going?"

M.—"Washashe, going to the mountains."

L.—"What seek you there?"

M.—"Beaver, otter, and grisly bear-skins."

L.—"Good. What is in the green-branch-wigwam."

M.—"Great Medicine—let the Aricará beware." To this the chief added the sign usually employed for their most solemn mysteries.

While this conversation was going on, the rovers of the wilderness had gradually drawn nearer, not, however, unperceived by Mahéga, who, throwing down a strip of blanket at a distance of twenty yards from the arbour of Prairie-bird, explained by a sign sufficiently intelligible, that if the main body of them crossed that line his party would shoot.

At a signal from their leader they again halted; and Mahéga observed that from time to time they threw basty glances over the hill whence they had come, from which he inferred that more of their tribe were in the immediate neighbourhood.

Meanwhile their leader, whose curiosity urged him to discover what Great Medicine was contained in the arbour, advanced fearlessly alone within the forbidden precincts, thus placing his own life at the mercy of the Osages.

Ordering his men to keep a strict watch on the movements of the Aricarás, and to shoot the first whom they might detect in fitting an arrow to his bowstring, Mahéga now lighted a pipe, and courteously invited their leader to smoke; between every successive whiff exhaled by the latter, he cast an inquisitive glance towards the arbour, but the packages and the leafy branches baffled his curiosity; meanwhile the preliminaries of peace having been thus amicably interchanged, the other Aricarás cast themselves from their horses, and having given them in charge to a few of the youngest of the party, the remainder sat in a semicircle, and gravely accepted the pipes handed to them by order of Mahéga.

That chief, aware of the mischievous propensities of his new friends, and equally averse to intimacy or hostility with such dangerous neighbours, had bethought himself of a scheme by which he might at once get rid of them by inspiring them with superstitious awe, and gratify himself with a sight of one of those wonders which the Missionary had referred to in his last warning respecting the Prairie-bird. It was not long before the curious Aricará again expressed his desire to know the Great Medicine contents of the arbour. To this Mahéga replied,

"A woman," adding again the sign of solemn mystery.

"A woman!" replied the leader, in his own

* *Aricaras.* This tribe is by descent a branch of the great Pawnee nation, to whose language their own still bears a close resemblance; they are usually known among western travellers by the name of Riccarees, and the French call them "Les Ris;" they are a very predatory, wild, and thievish race.

tongue, expressing in his countenance the scorn and disappointment that he felt.

"A woman," repeated Mahéga, gravely, "but a Medicine Spirit. We travel to the mountains; she will then go to the land of spirits."

The Aricará made here a gesture of impatient incredulity, with a sign that, if he could not see some medicine-feat, he would believe that the Osage spoke lies.

Mahéga, desiring him to sit still, and his own party to be watchful, now approached the arbour, and, addressing Prairie-bird in the Delaware tongue, explained to her their present situation, and the dangerous vicinity of a mischievous, if not a hostile tribe, adding, at the same time,

"Olitipa must show some wonder to frighten these bad men."

"What is it to Olitipa," replied the maiden, coldly, "whether she is a prisoner to the Osage, or to the Western Tribe? perhaps they would let her go."

"Whither?" answered the chief. "Does Olitipa think that these prairie wolves would shelter her fair skin from the sun, or serve and protect her as Mahéga does? if she were their prisoner they would take from her everything she has, even her Medicine Book, and make her bring water, and carry burdens, and bear children to the man who should take Mahéga's scalp."

Bad as was her present plight and her future prospect, the poor girl could not help shuddering at the picture of hopeless drudgery here presented to her eyes, and she replied,

"What does the Osage Chief wish? how should his prisoner frighten these wild men?"

"The Black Father said that Olitipa could gather the beams of the sun, as our daughters collect the waters of a stream in a vessel," said the Chief, in a low tone.

Instantly catching the hint here given by her beloved instructor, and believing that nothing done in obedience to his wishes could be in itself wrong, she resolved to avail herself of this opportunity of exciting the superstitious awe of the savages, and she replied,

"It is good. Let Mahéga sit by the strange men; Olitipa will come."

Hastily winding a party-coloured kerchief in the form of a turban, around the rich tresses of her dark hair, and throwing a scarf over her shoulder, she took her small bag, or reticule, in her hand, and stepped forth from the arbour. Such an apparition of youthful bloom, grace, and beauty, extracted even from the wild leader of the Aricarás, an exclamation of astonished admiration. Having seated herself upon a finely-painted bison robe, placed for her by Lita, she waited gravely until Mahéga should have prepared the stranger chief for what was to follow.

It was now scarcely an hour after noon, and the sun shone full upon them, with bright and excessive heat; Mahéga, pointing upward, explained to the Aricará that the Woman-Spirit would bring some fire down from that distant orb. He could not give any further information, being totally ignorant of the nature of the wonder to be wrought, and as anxious to witness it as the wild chief himself.

"Where will she place it?" inquired.

"In the chief's hand," replied the maiden

whose intelligent mind had long since, during her residence with the Delawares, become familiar with the language of signs.

The two leaders now explained to their followers, in their respective tongues, the great medicine which they were about to see; and the latter, forgetful alike of distrust and precaution, crowded with irresistible curiosity about the spot, Mahéga alone preserving his habitual self-command, and warning those nearest to him to be prepared against treachery or surprise. The only ornament worn by the Aricará leader was a collar, made of dark blue cloth, adorned with porcupine quills, and girt with the formidable claws of the grisly bear. This collar, being at once a trophy of his prowess, and a proof of its having been gained among the Rocky Mountain traders, (from whom alone the cloth could have been procured in that remote region.) was highly prized both by the owner and his followers, and was, therefore, as well as from its colour, selected by Prairie-bird as a fitting object on which to work her "medicine wonder." She desired him to take it from his neck and to place it on the grass, with his hands below it, that no fire might come near it. When he had complied with her request, she drew from her bag a burning-glass, and, carefully adjusting the focus, held it over the dark blue cloth, in which ere long a hole was burnt, and the astonished leader's hand below was scorched.

It is impossible to depict the wonder and awe of the attentive savages, they looked first at her, then at her glass, then at the sun; then they re-examined the cloth, and ascertained that it was indeed burnt through, and that the smell of fire still rested on the edge of the aperture. After this they withdrew several paces from the spot, the leader inquiring with submissive signs whether he might replace the collar? to which inquiry the maiden gravely bowing assent, retired again into the arbour. For some time a profound silence ensued, the Osages being as much awe-struck as the Aricaras; even Mahéga himself was not proof against the prevalent feeling of superstitious terror; and thus, while desiring Prairie-bird to terrify others, he had unconsciously furnished her with a mysterious and powerful check upon himself.

It was not long before the Aricaras rose to take leave,—their chief presenting Mahéga with a fine horse; and receiving in return sundry ornaments and trinkets, of no real value, but highly prized from their rarity in that wild and desolate region. As they withdrew, they cast many a furtive glance at the arbour and its mysterious tenant, seemingly glad when they found themselves at such a distance as rendered them safe from her supernatural influence. On their return to their own people, they related, with considerable exaggeration, the wonders which they had witnessed; and Prairie-bird was long afterwards spoken of in the tribe by a name equally impossible to print, or to pronounce, but which, if translated into English, would be, "The Great-Medicine-Daughter-of-the-burning-Sun!"

After this adventure, Mahéga pursued his uninterrupted way towards the spurs of the Rocky Mountains; his manner and bearing towards Prairie-bird being more deferential than ever, and the passion that he entertained

for her being checked and awed by the miraculous power that she had displayed; he still nourished strong hopes of being able ultimately to gain her affection, but in the meantime resolved to turn her supernatural skill to good account, by frightening such wild roving bands as they might fall in with, and extorting from their superstitious fears valuable presents in horses and peltry.

Meanwhile, the maiden's observant eye had marked the effect upon Mahéga produced by the burning-glass, in spite of his well-dissembled indifference, and she secretly determined that the chief use that she could make of such exhibitions as were calculated to excite superstitious awe among Indians, should be to maintain the command over Mahéga, which she was conscious she now possessed.

During the whole of this long and toilsome march, the faithful and indefatigable Wingenséd hovered over the trail at such a distance as never to be perceived by any of the party, and left at occasional intervals a willow-rod, or a slip of bark, so marked as to be a sure guide to an eye less keen and sagacious than that of War-Eagle. His only food was dried undressed buffalo meat; his drink, the stream where the Osages had slaked their thirst; his bed, the barren prairie; he made no fire to scare away the prowling wolves, that yelped and howled at night round his solitary couch, his only protection from their ravenous hunger being a tuft of damp grass, over which he rubbed some powder from his flask. Twice was he descried and pursued by roving bands of Indians, but on both occasions saved himself by his extraordinary fleetness of foot; and the moment that the immediate danger was over, renewed his weary and difficult task.

Cheered by his deep affection for his sister, encouraged by the approval which he knew that his exertions would meet from War-Eagle and Reginald, and, more than all, stimulated by the eager desire to distinguish himself as a Delaware chief on this his first war-path, the faithful youth hung over the long and circuitous trail of his enemies with the patience and unerring sagacity of a bloodhound—and though she saw him not, Prairie-bird felt a confident assurance that her beloved young brother would be true to his promise, and would never leave her desert her while the pulses of life continued to beat in his affectionate heart.

CHAPTER XXIX.

Ethelston visits St. Louis, where he unexpectedly meets an old acquaintance, and undertakes a longer journey than he had contemplated.

DURING the occurrence of the events related in the preceding chapters, the disputes and difficulties attending the distribution of peltries among the different fur companies at St. Louis had rather increased than diminished, and Ethelston had found himself compelled, however unwillingly, again to bid adieu to Lucy, and take a trip to the Mississippi for the arrangement of his guardian's affairs in that quarter; a considerable portion of the fortune that he inherited from his father was invested in the same spe-

elation, and he could not, without incurring the charge of culpable negligence, leave it in the hands of others at a great distance, many of whose interests might perhaps be at variance with those of Colonel Brandon and himself.

He had been only a short time in St. Louis, when one day on passing the cathedral, he met two men, whose appearance attracted his attention. The one was past the meridian of life, and the benevolent thoughtfulness of his countenance accorded well with the sober suit of black that indicated the profession to which he belonged; the other was a stout, square-built man, evidently cast in a coarser mould than his companion, but apparently conversing with him on terms of friendly familiarity. After looking steadily at this second, Ethelston felt convinced that he was not mistaken in addressing him, "Bearskin, my good friend, how come you to be in St. Louis? I thought you were busy, bear and buffalo hunting with my friend Reginald, among the Delawares of the Missouri?"

"Ha! Master Ethelston," replied the sturdy voyageur, "I am right glad to see your face here. We have been in some trouble of late, and instead of our hunting the bears, the bears as hunted us."

"I see you have been in some trouble," said Ethelston, noticing for the first time the boatman's scars and bruises; "but tell me," he added, hastily catching him by the arm, "has any evil befallen my friend, my brother Reginald?"

"No harm that I know of," replied the other; "but I must say that things weren't what a man might call altogether pleasant, where I left him."

"What!" exclaimed Ethelston, with an indignation that he made no attempt to conceal, "you left him in danger or in difficulties, and can give no account of him! Bearskin, I would not have believed this of you, unless I had it from your own lips!"

"Master Ethelston," answered the justly offended voyageur, "a man that goes full swing down the stream of his own notions, without heeding oar or helm, is sure to run athwart a snag; here's my worthy friend here, Paul Müller, and though he is a preacher, I'll hold him as honest a man as any in the Territory; he can tell you the whole story from one end to t'other; and when he's done so, perhaps you'll be sorry for what you've said to old Bearskin."

"I am already sorry," replied Ethelston, moved by the earnest simplicity of the scarred and weather-beaten boatman. "I am already sorry that I have done you wrong, but you will make allowance for my impatience and anxiety concerning my brother's fate!" (Ethelston always spoke of Reginald as his brother, for he had a secret and undefined pleasure in so doing, as it implied his union with the sister of his friend.) Paul Müller, easily guessing from the few words that had passed that the person now addressing Bearskin was the Edward Ethelston of whom Reginald had so often spoken to him, said,

"Sir, you certainly did an injustice to Bearskin, in thinking him capable of deserting a friend in need; but the apology you have offered is, I am sure, sufficient to satisfy him. The intelligence which I have to communicate res-

pecting Reginald Brandon and his party is in some respects exceedingly melancholy; if you will accompany me to our lodging, which is just at hand, I will explain it to you in full, meanwhile, rest satisfied with the assurance that, to the best of our belief, your friend is safe and well in health."

As soon as they had entered the house, Bearskin, forgetting the hasty words which had so much hurt his feelings, busied himself in preparing some refreshment for Ethelston, while the Missionary related to him all that had occurred since his friend joined the Delaware encampment. He did not even conceal from him the violent passion that the latter had conceived for Prairie-bird, and the despair with which, on his return to the village from the Sioux expedition, he would learn the destruction of her kindred, and her own captivity among the Osages.

"Indeed, my good sir," said Ethelston, "I must freely confess that this portion of your intelligence is the only one that brings with it any comfort; the fate of Mike Smith and his companions, and the destruction of the unoffending Delawares, are disasters deeply to be lamented, but surely, the fact of the Osage chief having carried off the Indian maiden whom you call Prairie-bird, and who seems to have exercised such a strange fascination over Reginald Brandon, can scarcely be regretted: for she will be more likely to find a congenial mate among the Red-skins, and a bitter disappointment will be spared to my excellent guardian, Colonel Brandon."

"I know not, my son," answered the Missionary mildly; "the ways of Providence are inscrutable, and it does frequently happen, as you say, that events which we lament at the moment, afford afterwards just grounds for rejoicing; nevertheless, I cannot view this matter exactly as you do, for I have known the maiden from her childhood, and she is a more fitting bride for a christian gentleman, than for a heathen warrior."

"I did, indeed, hear the Colonel, and the other members of the family at Mooshanne, say, that the Delaware youth who so bravely defended the life of Reginald at the risk of his own, had spoken in the highest terms of praise respecting his sister, the Prairie-bird, as if she were a being of a superior race; but you, my good father, are above the prejudices which darken the minds of these Indians, and you must therefore know, that whatever may be her beauty and amiable qualities, she is, after all, the daughter of a Delaware chief, and as such, could not be a welcome inmate of my guardian's house."

"Nay, my son," replied the Missionary, "she is but the adopted child of the venerable Delaware who lately fell in the massacre which I have related to you; she was not of his blood nor of his race; such qualities and nurture as she possesses have been in some measure the fruit of my own care and toil. Were it not that you might mistake my language for that of boasting, I would say, that although the prairie has been her dwelling, and a Lenapé tent her home, she does not in her education fall far short of your maidens in the settlements, who have had greater advantages of instruction."

The conversation was here interrupted by the entrance of a negro with refreshment, preceded by Bearskin, bearing in his hand a bottle of French brandy, of which he vaunted, not without reason, the excellent quality and flavour; but Ethelston continued to converse in an undertone with the Missionary, his countenance evincing every moment increased eagerness and interest in the subject of their discourse, which so absorbed his attention, that he never noticed the honest boatman's repeated attempts to call his attention to the refreshment which he had prepared. Even Paul Müller was unable to comprehend this sudden change in his manner, and his vehement desire to know all the most minute particulars respecting a person of whom he had spoken a few minutes before in terms of disparagement, but he attributed it to the interest which he took in his friend's selected bride, and satisfied his curiosity to the best of his ability.

When all his many and rapidly uttered questions were answered, Ethelston rose from his seat, and abruptly took his departure, saying, as he left the room, "Thanks, thanks, my good friends, you shall see me again ere long."

"Indeed, I care not much how long it may be before I see his face again," said Bearskin, sulkily. "Here have I been bothering myself to make Pompey bring up these cakes and fruits, and I have opened a bottle of Father Antin's best brandy, and he goes off without tasting with us, or so much as taking a drop to wash down the ill words which were in his mouth a while since!"

"Nay, my good friend," replied the Missionary, "be not hasty to censure Master Ethelston, for he is a true and zealous friend to Reginald Brandon, and the news from the west seems to have affected him with much anxiety and alarm."

"That's all very well for you learned folk," said the unpacified boatman, "but we don't do things after that fashion on the river-side; and for all he's the son of an old friend of the Colonel's, when he comes this way again he's like to hear something of my notion of his manners."

"What sort of character bears he at home?"

"Why, to tell the truth, his character's indifferently good; I never heard of his being rude or uncivil-like before."

"Well, then, Bearskin, if he comes here again, give him an opportunity for explaining his sudden departure, before you take or express any offence at conduct of which you may not rightly understand the motives—come, my good friend, clear your brow, and let us partake with gratitude of the excellent cheer that you have provided."

Thus saying, the Missionary placed himself with his companion at table, and the ill-temper of the latter was dispelled by the first glass of Father Antin's cogniac.

After this interview with Paul Müller, Ethelston pursued the business which had brought him to St. Louis with such vigour and energy, that at the close of a week's negotiation he was able to inform Colonel Brandon that by sacrificing a small portion of the disputed claim, he had adjusted the matter upon terms which he trusted his guardian would not consider disadvantageous; his letter concluded thus:

"Having now explained these transactions, and informed you in another letter of the melancholy fate of Mike Smith and some of his companions, I must announce to you my intention of setting off immediately in search of Reginald, with the best-appointed force that I can collect here, for I am seriously apprehensive for his safety, surrounded as he is by roving tribes of Indians, with some of whom he and his party are at open war, while the band of Delawares, upon whose friendship he might have relied, is almost destroyed. As it may be a work of some time and difficulty to find Reginald in a region of such boundless extent, I must entreat you not to feel uneasy on my account, should my absence be more protracted than I would wish it to be, for I shall be accompanied by Bearskin, and other experienced trappers; and I know that even Lucy would have no smile for me on my return, if I came back to Mooshanne, without making every exertion to extricate her brother from the difficulties in which these unexpected incidents have involved him."

By the same post Ethelston wrote also to inform Lucy of his resolution, and though she felt extremely vexed and anxious on account of the lengthened absence which it foretold, still she did him the justice in her heart to own that he was acting as she would have wished him to act.

Not a day passed that he did not consult with Paul Müller, and also with the most experienced agents of the fur companies, in order that he might provide the articles most requisite for his contemplated expedition, and secure the services of men thoroughly trained and accustomed to mountain and prairie life.

In this last respect he was fortunate enough to engage a man named Pierre, a half-breed from the Upper Missouri, whose life had been spent among the most remote trading-posts, where his skill as a hunter, as well as in interpreting Indian languages, was held in high estimation. Bearskin, who was almost recovered from his wound, and from his short fit of ill-humour with Ethelston, agreed to join the party, and the good Missionary resolved to brave all dangers and fatigues, in the hope of rejoining, and perhaps of being instrumental in rescuing, his beloved pupil.

With unwearied industry and exertion, Ethelston was able, in one week subsequent to the date of his letter, to leave St. Louis in search of his friend, attended by eight hardy and experienced men, all of whom, excepting the Missionary, were well armed, and furnished with excellent horses, mules, and every necessary for their long and arduous undertaking.

Guided by Bearskin, they reached, without accident or adventure, the site of the desolate Lenapé village, in the Osage country, and there fell in with one of the young Delawares detached by War-Eagle to observe what might be passing in the neighbourhood: from this youth they learnt that War-Eagle and Reginald, with a small party, had gone westward in pursuit of Mahégan, and that the larger body of the surviving Delawares were on the trail of the more numerous band of the treacherous Osages.

Ethelston wished to go on at once in search of his friend, but the youth insisted that he

should first assist his band in taking vengeance on their enemies. Promises and threats proved equally unavailing, and after the Missionary had exhausted all his eloquence in endeavouring to promote peace, he was himself compelled to assure Ethelston that his only chance of finding the trail of his friend in a spot so intersected by multitudinous paths, was to accede to the terms proposed by the Indian; he concluded in these words:

"Doubtless the conduct of these Osages was blood-thirsty and treacherous. I cannot deny that they deserve punishment, but I would fain have left them to the chastisement of a higher power. I know, however, that I cannot change the notion of retributive justice entertained by the Indians; and although I cannot prevent retaliation, my presence may soften the severities by which it is usually accompanied; at all events I will not shriek from the attempt, especially as it is the only means by which we can possibly hope to trace those in whose safety we are so deeply interested."

Ethelston could not press any further objection, and his party, under the guidance of the young Delaware, was soon in rapid motion upon the trail of the larger body of the Osages, who were, as it may be remembered, already pursued by a band of Lenapé warriors.

Towards the close of the second day's march, Ethelston and his party met the latter returning in triumph from a successful pursuit of their enemies, whom they had overtaken and surprised before they could reach the main body of the Osage village. The attack was made by night, and the Delawares had taken many scalps without the loss of a single man; but their number was not sufficient to justify their remaining in the neighbourhood of a force so much superior to their own, so they had retreated to the southward, and were now on the way to their former village, where they intended to perform more at leisure the funeral ceremonies due to their aged chief, and those who had been killed with him, and to appease their unquiet spirits by offering at their graves the trophies taken during their late expedition. A few of the most daring and adventurous entreated permission to join Ethelston's band in his search for War-Eagle, their favourite leader; nor was he by any means sorry to grant their request, justly considering the addition of ten well-armed Lenapé warriors as a most desirable reinforcement to his party.

As soon as the selection was made, they separated at once from the remaining body of Delawares, and, guided by the youth before mentioned, threw themselves upon the trail of Mahéga and his pursuers.

CHAPTER XXX.

The Osages encamp near the base of the Rocky Mountains.—An unexpected visitor arrives.

AFTER parting with the Aricará, Mahéga travelled westward for many days over that barren and desolate region lying between the sources of the Platte and Arkansas rivers, without falling in with any other Indians; his party was guided by a grim and scarred warrior, who

had been on several hunting excursions to the Rocky Mountains, in the course of which he had been more than once engaged with the Shiennes, Crows, and other tribes, whose names have of late years become familiar to the general reader, but who were then known only to the few adventurous spirits who had pushed their way into that wild and dangerous country.

Prairie-bird, attended by her faithful Lita, and mounted on her high-mettled and sure-footed pony, was placed near the centre of the line of march, and Mahéga himself always brought up the rear, that being the post usually occupied by an Indian chief on all occasions, excepting when engaged in attack or pursuit of a foe.

The maiden seemed to have resigned herself composedly to her captive condition; and if she still harboured thoughts or projects of escape, none could detect them in the quiet observant eye with which she noted the new and interesting objects presented to her view. They had already passed the chain of hills known as the Ozark range, and leaving the Black Hills to the northward, were crossing the sandy elevated plain which lies between them and the Rocky Mountains; the sand of this district is of a reddish hue, and in many places the hollows and small ravines are incrustated with salt, which gives them, at first, the appearance of being covered with snow; large masses of rock salt are also of frequent occurrence, and give to the waters of all the smaller tributaries of the Upper Arkansas a brackish and briny taste.

One evening, a little before sunset, Prairie-bird checked her horse, to enjoy at leisure the magnificent panorama before her; and even the suspicious Mahéga forbore to interrupt her enjoyment of its beauties, contenting himself with viewing them as reflected on her own lovely countenance. To the northward was an abrupt crag of sandstone rock, towering above the plain over which the party were now travelling; its rugged outline broken into a thousand fissures and rents, probably by the might of a rushing torrent in by-gone years, frowned like the turrets and battlements of an ancient feudal castle, and the maiden's fancy (recurring to some of the tales which had found their way into her slender library) peopled its lofty towers and spacious courts below with a splendid host of chivalry, fairest and foremost among whom was the proud and martial figure of Reginald Brandon!

Brushing a teardrop from her eye, she averted it from the castellated bluff, and turned it westward, where was spread a gradually ascending plain, covered with cedars, pines, and rich masses of various forest growth; far beyond which the Great Peak, highest of the Northern Andes, reared its majestic form, the setting sun shedding a flood of golden light upon the eternal snow reposing on its crest. With admiring wonder, Prairie-bird, to whom the dread magnificence of mountain scenery was new, gazed on the mighty landscape stretched out before her; she held her breath as the rays of the sinking sun changed the golden fleecy haze around the distant peak to a rosy hue, and soon again to a deeper saffron tint: and when, at last, it disappeared behind the rocky barrier in the west, Prairie-bird covered her

eyes with her hands, as if to enjoy over again in memory a scene of such surpassing beauty.

"Yes," she exclaimed half aloud; "many of the works of man are wonderful, and the fictions of his fancy yet more marvellous, even visions such as rose before my imagination, when contemplating yon rugged, craggy height, but what are they when compared to the living wonders of creation! Almighty Creator—merciful Father! Thou hast led the steps of thy feeble and helpless child to this wild and remote mountain solitude! it is filled with Thy presence! Thou art her protector and guide—her trust is in Thee!"

Mahéga gazed with awe on the maiden as, with parted lips, and eyes upturned to the glowing western heaven, she seemed to commune with some unseen mysterious being; and the other Indians, watchful of their leader's countenance, kept at a respectful distance until her short reverie was past, when the party resumed their march towards the spot chosen for the evening encampment.

The journey over the ascending sandy plain before mentioned occupied several days, at the end of which they reached the opening of a fertile valley, sheltered on three sides by steep ridges, well covered with wood, and watered by a clear stream; far as the eye could reach, the plain to the southward was studded with vast herds of buffaloes grazing in undisturbed security; the timid antelope bounded across the distant prairie; and as the travellers entered the valley the quick eye of Mahéga detected, on the velvet turf stretched beneath the northern ridge, numerous tracks of the mountain deer and of the argali, or big-horn, a species of goat, the chamois of the Rocky Mountains, found generally among the most rugged cliffs and precipices; to the scenery of which his long beard, bright eye, and enormous twisted horn give a wild and picturesque effect. Mahéga was so struck with the singular advantages offered by this valley, both as affording a sheltered camp, ample pasturage for the horses, and a plentiful supply of game, that he resolved to take up there his summer quarters, and in selecting the spot for his encampment displayed the sagacity and foresight peculiar to his character.

About a mile from the point where the valley opened upon the plain, there was, at the base of the northern ridge, a curved and secluded verdant basin of turf, the entrance to which was so narrow and so well shaded by overhanging trees that it was not visible from any distance, and could not be approached on any other side, owing to the precipitous height of the crags by which it was surrounded; on an elevated peak or promontory, immediately above the opening which led to this natural lawn, grew a number of thick massive dwarf cedars, from under the shade of which a clear sighted man could command a view of the whole valley, and give early notice to those encamped below, of the approach of danger. Having satisfied himself that by posting a watchman there he could secure himself against the unperceived attack of any foe, Mahéga left three of his most trustworthy men in charge of Olitipa, and having despatched the remainder of his party to kill buffalo, proceeded to make a careful scrutiny of the valley, in order to ascertain whether there were signs of

Indians in the neighbourhood, and whether, in the event of his being compelled to shift his quarters, he could find any defile through which it might be practicable to effect a retreat.

For three whole days he pursued his search with unremitting toil, during which time he ascertained that there were no visible traces of Indians being near, and that three miles higher up the valley there was a transverse opening in the northern ridge, which led to another and a larger valley, through which flowed a river of considerable magnitude. In the mean time the Osages had not been idle, and, although little pleased to perform menial services, such as are usually left to their women, they pitched the tent of Olitipa with much taste, at the foot of a huge rock, and between two lofty pines; next to it they constructed, at a distance of only a few yards, a lodge for their chief, by stretching double plies of buffalo hide over bent poles cut after their fashion; and again beyond that they raised a larger and ruder skin lodge for themselves; the guitar and the few moveables belonging to Prairie-bird were carefully piled in her tent, and, as a watch was stationed at the opening to the valley, she was free to wander as she pleased among the trees which bordered the edge of the lawn on which they were encamped.

"Surely" said the maiden, casting her eyes upward to the heaving crags above, and then letting them rest upon the green turf at her feet, "if it be God's pleasure that I should be a captive still, he has granted me, at least, the favour of a goodly prison wherein to dwell."

She observed, with gratitude, the change that had taken place in the demeanour of Mahéga towards herself; so far from being harsh or violent, he was respectful in the highest degree, and, whether the change was owing to his fears, or to more creditable motives on the part of the Osage, she followed the advice tendered by the missionary, by treating him with courteous gentleness. Whenever he addressed her it was in Delaware; and her perfect familiarity with that tongue rendered it easy for her to make such replies as the occasion might demand, sometimes ambiguous, sometimes mysterious, but always such as were not calculated to irritate or offend his pride.

Venison and buffalo meat abounded in the Osage camp, the choicest morsels being always set apart for the use of Prairie-bird; and Lita gathered for her various kinds of berries, which are plentiful in that region, some of them resembling the gooseberry, the serviceberry and others of excellent flavour; there was also found an esculent root, called by the Indians "*o-ka-no-mi*," of a farinaceous quality, which the Comanche girl had often seen on her native plains, and from which, when she had beaten and pulverized it between two flat stones, she baked a kind of cake, that was by no means unpalatable.

The Osages had now been encamped nearly a week on this pleasant and sheltered spot, dividing their time between their two favourite occupations of hunting and smoking; neither had any fresh Indian trail been discovered to arouse their suspicion or their watchfulness. Before retiring to rest, it was usual for Mahéga to come before the tent of Prairie-bird; and

abe, aware of the helplessness of her situation, came forth to meet him, receiving with guarded courtesy the fine compliments which he thought fit to pay her, and replying in a tone which, although not directly encouraging to his hopes, was calculated to soothe the irritation which her former treatment of him, and the recollection of his unsuccessful struggle with Reginald, had left upon his mind.

And here we may pause to observe how the strange contradictions that are found in the human character, frequently produce a line of conduct which would, at first sight, appear irreconcilable with all probability, and yet, which is in strict accordance with the secret workings of the wayward will by which it is directed. Thus Mahéga, when he first became smitten with the beauty of Prairie-bird in the Delaware camp, where she was surrounded by friends and protectors, wooed her with the rough impetuosity of his nature, and, finding his advances rejected, he resorted, as we have seen, to brutal violence, his passion being so much heightened by the obstacles which it encountered, that, in order to gratify it, he provoked that quarrel with the Delawares in which so much blood, both of his own people and of his allies, had been already shed. Now that he was triumphant, and felt secure of the person of his captive, a new and ardent desire had arisen within him, a desire to compel her to love him. In this pursuit, also, his proud and haughty spirit led him to anticipate success, and thus, for a time, the darker and more malignant feelings of his bosom slumbered undisturbed.

One evening, when he had held his customary talk with Prairie-bird, he retired to his lodge and the maiden to her tent, where she took up her long-neglected guitar, and ran her fingers carelessly through its strings. Lita sat by her side, braiding the front of a pair of moccasins with stained quills of the porcupine, and, although neither sigh nor tear betrayed her feelings, Prairie-bird, whose heart now led her intuitively to dive into that of her companion, saw that sad and busy thoughts were there; the Comanche girl, proud and reserved as she was with others, had been won by the gentleness of her mistress, to entertain for her an attachment, that was now strengthened and cemented by the trials and dangers which they had shared together; it might, indeed, be supposed that, as both were now captives of the chief of another tribe, the relation of mistress and servant had ceased, yet Lita seemed to think otherwise, and her attendance upon Prairie-bird was, if possible, more devoted than before.

"For whom are you ornamenting those moccasins, Lita?" inquired the latter, with a sad smile.

"For whom!" repeated Lita, casting up her dark eyes, and fixing them on her mistress as if she would read her soul. The tone in which the exclamation was uttered, and the look by which it was accompanied, assured Prairie-bird that her conjectures were well founded.

When the heart is full, one overflowing drop tells the contents of the golden chalice; and from the two words spoken by her companion Otitipa gathered her meaning as well as if she had replied, "Is there any other being on

earth but one, for whom I can be braiding them?"

The voice of Prairie-bird trembled with a conscious fellow-feeling, as she said, "Lita,—I ask not to know your secret, but I pray to the Great Spirit so to direct the steps of him for whom those moccasins are made, that he may receive them at your hands, and wear them for your sake!"

On hearing these words a deep blush came over the face and neck of the Comanche girl; a word of kindness had touched a spring, which in her wild and wayward nature would have been unmoved by fear or by violence, and she threw herself into the arms of Prairie-bird, giving vent to long-concealed emotions, in a flood of tears.

Scarcely had she regained her composure, and resumed her braiding, when the quick ear of Prairie-bird caught the sound of a low chirrup, like that of a grasshopper, close at the back of the tent; she remembered to have heard that signal before; the blood fled from her cheek, and she held her breath in agitated silence; again the sound was repeated, and Prairie-bird stole to the corner of the tent whence it proceeded, and stooping her head, said, in English, "If Wingenund is there, let him speak."

"My sister!" whispered the soft voice of the youth in reply.

"'Tis he! 'tis my dear young brother himself!"

"Is all quiet, Prairie-bird?"

"All is quiet."

"Then Wingenund will pull out one of these tent-pegs, and creep in below the canvass,—he has much to say to his sister."

In spite of the emotion caused by her brother's sudden appearance, and by the recollection that if discovered his life would certainly be forfeited, Prairie-bird retained sufficient presence of mind to continue passing her fingers through the chords of her guitar, in order to drown the noise made by Wingenund in removing the fastenings and effecting his entrance below the tent. At length he stood before her, and after gazing sadly, fondly on his countenance for a few moments, she fell upon his neck and wept! The figure was indeed that of her favourite brother, but oh, how changed since she had last seen him! Cold, wet, sleepless nights, fatigue and hunger, had all combined to wear and exhaust a frame which, although cast in Nature's fairest and most graceful mould, had not yet reached the enduring strength of manhood; his once gay attire was soiled and ragged, the moccasins on his feet were of undressed bison-hide, torn, and scarcely affording any protection against the stones and thorny plants with which that region abounds; his light bow, with a few arrows still hung at his back, and the hunting-knife at his girdle; this was all that remained of the gay accoutrements with which he had been adorned in the Osage village; yet, although the frame was emaciated, and the cheeks sunken, the proud lustre of his eye told of a spirit unquenched by suffering, and rising superior to the trials which had almost destroyed its earthly tenement. Prairie-bird longed to ask an hundred questions in a breath; how he had come? whether he had seen or learnt anything of War-Eagle and of Reginald! but affectionate

compassion for her young brother's sad condition overcoming every other feeling, she said to him, "Dear, dear Wingenund, you are wearied to death, sit by me and rest; you are starved, are you not?"

"Wingenund has not eaten for two days," replied the youth, seating himself gently at his sister's side.

Fortunately, more than half of the evening meal, apportioned to Prairie-bird and Lita, remained untouched in the tent, and the latter instantly set before the youth some well-cooked cakes and bison-meat, luxuries such as had not passed his lips for many a day; and having also placed a vessel of water within his reach, she went, with the intuitive delicacy and sagacity of her sex, towards the opening of the tent, so as to afford Prairie-bird an opportunity of speaking unrestrainedly to her brother, and at the same time to secure them as far as possible against interruption. Wingenund, with all his heroic patience and self-denial, was a young half-starved Indian, and the delicacies set before him vanished in a few minutes, as if they had been placed before a famished wolf. Prairie-bird offered him a draught of water, adding, with an affectionate smile, "My brother, 'tis well that there is no more meat, a full meal is dangerous after so long a fast!"

"It is enough," replied the youth; "Wingenund is well now."

"Tell me, then, how you have followed to this distant region, and whether you have seen anything of War-Eagle, and of—his friends?"

"Wingenund has seen none," he replied; "nothing, except the trail of Mahéga, and that he would have followed to the big salt lake, or to death."

"But how has it been possible for you to pursue the trail undiscovered, to find food, and to avoid strange Indians on the path?"

"Wingenund kept far behind the Washashe, their eyes could not reach him; he has left on every day's trail marks that War-Eagle will know; they will speak to him as plainly as my sister's medicine book tells her the Great Spirit's will. He will come soon and his friends with him."

"But my brother has not told me how he procured food on this toilsome journey?"

"When the Lenape's heart is full, he thinks little of food," replied the youth proudly. He added, in a more subdued tone: "It was not easy to find meat, for the Washashe had driven the bison from their path, and Wingenund could not leave their trail. Twice he has met bad Indians, who tried to kill him."

"And how did he escape them, being without a horse!" inquired Prairie-bird.

"They were too many for him to fight, and he ran from them, but being weak with hunger, one Aricará overtook him by the waters of the Arkansas. Wingenund shot him, and plunging into the river, dived; and the others never found him; but Wingenund lost his rifle; and since then he has eaten only roots and fruit."

The simple narrative of the hardships and sufferings which her young brother had undergone for her sake, and which his emaciated appearance attested but two well, brought fresh tears to the eyes of Prairie-bird, but she checked them as well as she was able, and said,

"Tell me yet one more thing; how have you been able to reach this spot unperceived by the Osage watchmen?"

"Wingenund saw from far the camp chosen by Mahéga; he saw that he could not approach it in front; but the rocks behind are rough and high; he made a rope of bark and grass, climbed up the height, and let himself down from a pine-tree above the tent; but in case he should be discovered and killed by the Osages, he has left an arrow where War-Eagle is sure to find it, and the arrow will show him where to come."

"Dear, dear Wingenund, you are indeed a brother," said the maiden, deeply moved by the mingled foresight, patience, and devotion that he had evinced. "You are, indeed, a worthy son of the ancient people."

Here she was interrupted by a shrill cry; Lita was at the same instant thrown rudely aside by Mahéga, who rushed into the tent, followed by two of his warriors. Wingenund sprang to his feet, but ere he could draw the knife from his girdle he was seized by the Osages, and his arms pinioned behind his back.

Dark and lowering was the frown which the angry chief cast upon his prisoner. The Delaware youth quailed not before it; the hour of trial had arrived, and the haughty spirit rising within him, triumphed over all that he had undergone; all that he knew he had yet to undergo. He drew himself to the full height of his graceful figure; and fixing his bright keen eye full upon Mahéga, awaited his fate in silence.

"Has the cunning antelope of the Delawares run so far to see the den of the Black Wolf?" demanded the chief, with a contemptuous sneer. "Has the buffalo bull sent the calf on a path that he was afraid to tread himself? Have the Lenape girls sent one of their number to carry wood and water for the Washashe warriors!"

Mahéga paused; and on finding that his cowardly and brutal jeers called forth no reply, nor changed a muscle on the haughty countenance before him, his anger grew more ungovernable, and he exclaimed in a voice of thunder, "If the cur-dog will not bark, the whip, and the knife, and the fire shall find him a tongue! If he wishes not to be torn in pieces on the spot, let him say what brought him to the Osage camp, and where he has left War-Eagle, and his pale-faced friends!" Neither to the threats nor the inquiries of Mahéga, did Wingenund deign to make any reply, and the enraged chief struck him across the face with a heavy bull-hide whip suspended from his wrist;* the blow was given with such force that it laid open the youth's cheek, and a stream of blood poured from the cut. At the sight of this unmanly outrage, the self-control of Prairie-bird almost gave way, but a look from her brother recalled her to herself, and checked the impulse which would have led to the utterance of entreaty mingled with indignant reproach.

"Speak not, my sister," said the hero boy in the Delaware tongue; "speak not to the cowardly Washashe wolf! Waste not your breath on one who has only courage to strike when his enemy's hands are tied!"

* The Indians in the Missouri constantly carry a short whip of bull, or cow-hide, suspended from their wrist, with which, when in pursuit of buffalo, or any other game, they lash their horses most unmercifully.

Mahéga fixed his eyes upon the maiden, and a sudden thought lighted up his countenance with a gleam of malignant triumph. Approaching close to her, he said in a stern low whisper, "To-morrow, before the sun goes down, Olitipa becomes the bride of Mahéga, or that boy is burned at a slow fire with such tortures as the Lenapé never thought of in dreams!" So saying, he ordered the prisoner to be carefully guarded and left the tent.

CHAPTER XXXI.

War-Eagle's Party follow the Trail.—A Skirmish, and its Results.—The Chief undertakes a perilous Journey alone, and his Companions find sufficient Occupation during his Absence.

NOTWITHSTANDING the pains that Wingenund had taken to leave on the trail such occasional indications as might assist War-Eagle in following it, the progress made by the latter was much slower than might have been expected by any one who knew the fierce desire of vengeance that burned within him. Several times did the impatience of Reginald Brandon vent itself in words, which he addressed in an undertone to Baptiste.

"I fear that my Delaware brother has lost some of his energies, in this great calamity which has befallen his tribe; when he followed the Dahcotah trail his foot was light and swift, now, when more than life and death may hang upon the events of an hour, his march is heavy and slow as that of a jaded ox."

"Master Reginald," replied the Guide; "you do the War-Eagle wrong. A trail on this hard barren region is not like one in the prairies of Illinois, or Missouri, where, in every little bottom, there are patches of long grass on which it is marked as plain as a high road. We have passed to-day several trails of strange Indians, probably Aricaras or Upsarokas;* had the War-Eagle made a mistake and followed one of these, we might have wandered several days before we recovered our right route; watch his eye, it is bent on the ground, not a blade of grass escapes it; he has not time for a word, even with you."

"I believe you are right, Baptiste; yet I have now studied my Delaware brother's countenance and character for some time. I have seen him under the influence of strong, ay of deadly passion, and I truly wondered at his self-control, but there seems now to be a dull, heavy load upon his spirit, as if it were overwhelmed."

"Look at your feet this moment," quoth the Guide; "and tell me if, on this hard spot, you can trace the trail on which we are moving."

"In truth I could not," said Reginald, looking down; "I grant our friend's sagacity in following it, but what has that to do with the state of his mind and temper, which we were discussing?"

"More, perhaps, than you think, Master Reginald. Along this very path the steps of Mahéga and his warriors have passed, the hoofs of the horse bearing Olitipa have trod it; it is now broad daylight, yet you can see nothing; do you wonder, then, that you cannot discern the trail of

the thoughts and purpose: that travel, in the dark, over the heart of the Delaware?"

"Baptiste," said Reginald, smiling, "I knew that you were a skilful hunter, and an experienced woodsman, but I never before knew that you were a philosopher!"

"Nor I either, Master Reginald; but perhaps I may not be one after all. What is a philosopher?"

This blunt question, from the sturdy Guide, seemed somewhat puzzling to his young master, and the former continued, laughing, "Well, I suppose it's some curious kind o' crittur or other that we never heard of in the woods, and you don't seem to have met it often yourself, or you'd not find it so hard to give a description of it!"

"You are right, Baptiste, it is a creature not very often met with, either in the woods or in civilized life, but as I have likened you to it, I am in duty bound to describe it to you as well as I can. A philosopher is a man whose desires are moderate, and his passions under due control; who can trace human actions to their real motives, and effects to their true causes; who can read the character of others without prejudice, and study his own without self-partiality; who can bear prosperity without pride, and adversity without repining;—such is my idea of a philosopher, the sketch is rough, but sufficient to give you some notion of the object in view."

The Guide was silent for a few moments; he took off his hairy cap and twirled it several times round in his bony hands, as was his frequent custom when perplexed. At length he replied, "Well, Master Reginald, if that be what you call a philosopher, I'm sure War-Eagle is more like one than I am, and perhaps, you'll not take offence if I say that he is more like one than you are yourself; it comes natural to an Indian to read his neighbour's heart and hide what passes in his own. And, as to governing his passions, I think you have seen enough to convince you that, although they were as hot and wild as was the horse which you bestride, they are now as obedient to the bridle as Nekimi."

"I grant it," said Reginald, reining in the proud steed alluded to in the Guide's illustration; "I grant it, and see how earnestly our Delaware friend is now bent upon his task; he has made a signal for the party to halt, and is stooping to examine a blade of grass, as if life itself depended upon his acute sagacity."

It was, indeed, as the young man said; the Delaware chief had stooped to examine a bunch of grass by the side of the trail, in which his quick glance had detected a small object which would have escaped a less practised eye; with a subdued exclamation of surprise he seized it, and concealed it for a moment in his hand, a ray of animation lighting up his fine countenance; it was but for a moment, his features almost immediately relapsed into their usual melancholy, grave expression; and drawing near to Reginald, he put into his hands a small golden clasp, saying,

"My brother, War-Eagle knows it well, it was given by the Black Father to Olitipa; the trail is clear as the great white pathway of heaven."*

Reginald took the clasp, and seizing the hand which held it, he pressed it in silence to his heart; he had marked the varying expression on War-Eagle's countenance, he saw how a mo-

* Upsarokas, the Indian name of the tribe usually designated, in Rocky Mountain Travels, as the "Crows," a fierce, roving nation, who were then, as they still are, at deadly enmity with their neighbours the Blackfeet, and agree with them only in the propensity to plunder or kill white men, whenever opportunity offers.

* By this name the milky way is known among some of the Indian tribes.

ment's recollection had changed the sanguine exaltation of the lover, to the sad, yet steady firmness of the friend; and his heart yearned towards his Indian brother with an affection that words could not express; but they were not needed; his moistened eye and glowing cheek spoke volumes to his friend, and War-Eagle bounced forward again upon the trail, his spirit excited by an incident which, though slight in itself, had called forth high and generous emotions.

A few minutes after the Delaware had resumed his post as guide, our hero purposely fell into the rear of the party, and throwing the rein loosely over the neck of his horse, turned the precious golden relic over and over between his fingers, and pressed it a thousand times to his lips; the ground over which they were travelling was a broken series of ravines or ridges, and thus he was enabled to indulge in the extravagant endearments which he bestowed upon the senseless trinket, without being exposed to the curious eyes of his fellow-travellers, now out of his sight.

He was aroused from his reverie by a terrific yell, accompanied by a sharp sensation of pain, and on raising his eyes perceived at once that he was cut off from his party by a mounted band of Indians, one of whom had shot an arrow through the fleshy part of his thigh, into the flap of the saddle, where it was still sticking. Instantly deciding that it was better to trust to the speed of Nekimi, than to the desperate chance of forcing his way through the Indians in front, he struck the steed with his heel, and turning his head towards the open prairie to the left of the trail, went off at full speed, followed by several mounted warriors; his first care was to secure the clasp within his hunting-shirt; his next to examine the priming of his rifle, and of the pistols at his saddle-bow; finding these all in order, he looked round at his pursuers, who, although urging their horses by yells and blows, did not gain upon Nekimi even when going at an easy gallop.

Reassured by finding the advantage which he had over his enemies in the speed of his horse, Reginald cut the arrow where it pinned his leg to the saddle, and then without much pain or difficulty drew the shaft from the flesh. Being now satisfied that he had nothing to fear from the wound, he turned the head of his horse in a direction parallel to the trail on which his party had been marching, as he felt that his ultimate safety must depend upon his not being separated from them.

A loud yell, followed by a succession of rifle-shots, announced to him that the attack on his friends had commenced; and although the broken nature of the ground still prevented him from seeing them, he could gather from the sound that they were at no great distance; rightly judging that they must be anxious respecting his own safety, he now applied his bugle to his lips, and blew a clear blast, which Baptiste immediately recognised as the concerted signal for "All's well," and cheerily responded to.

The Indians in pursuit of Reginald reined in their horses, and stood gazing at each other in astonishment, at sounds which had never before reached their ear, and all, excepting one, wheeled to rejoin the main body of their band; he who remained was evidently a chief, or principal brave, his dress was splendidly adorned with scalp-locks, eagle-feathers, and beads; and instead of the raven crown and single tuft of hair usually worn by the Pawnees, and other Indians

of the Platte and Missouri region, his long black hair streamed over his shoulders, and fell upon the haunches of the wild spirited courser on which he was mounted. When he found that the number of his enemies was reduced to a single one, Reginald was not of a temper to consider flight as any longer necessary, so he checked the speed of Nekimi, and trotting to the summit of a rising-ground in front of him, saw, at a little distance in the ravine below, the skirmish that was still continued between his friends and the attacking party.

But he was not long permitted to remain an idle spectator, for the Indian, having recovered from the surprise occasioned by the bugle-call, was again approaching him at full speed; Reginald turned his horse towards his assailant, and deliberately raising his rifle, waited until the latter should be near enough to afford him a certain aim; but the Indian observing his cool, determined bearing, and having some experience of the dangerous nature of the white man's weapon, suddenly wheeled his horse, and galloped to and fro in a zigzag direction, sometimes advancing, sometimes retreating, with a rapidity that left Reginald in doubt whether he were meditating an attack, or desirous only of exhibiting his wonderful powers of horsemanship.

These doubts were, however, soon resolved; for in one of these swift evolutions, when passing the spot where Reginald stood, at a distance of fifty yards, the Indian suddenly threw himself half off his horse, and hanging over its side, discharged from under the animal's neck an arrow, which whizzed close by Reginald's ear; then, when he was himself out of shot, resumed his seat in the saddle, and again wheeling his horse, prepared to repeat a manœuvre which had so nearly been attended with success.

On this second occasion Reginald was resolved to try his chance with the rifle, and when his enemy, emboldened by the quiet, and apparently surprised demeanour of the white man, threw himself again over the side of his horse, and came within a nearer range, our hero levelled his rifle at the animal, whose body shielded completely that of his opponent, and the ball taking effect behind the shoulder, both horse and man rolled upon the grass.

Reginald sprang from his saddle and hastened to the spot, hoping to secure the Indian while still encumbered by the fallen horse, but the active savage leaped upon his feet, and not having time to fit an arrow to the string, struck a furious, but unsuccessful blow at the young man's head with his bow, then uttering his war-cry, rushed upon him with a long sharp knife that he had drawn from his belt; but the Indian had mistaken both the skill and strength of the opponent with whom he thus rashly endeavoured to close, and in a moment Reginald's cutlass was buried in his chest. In vain he summoned all his remaining strength to strike a last blow, both hand and eye refused their aid, and he fell heavily forward upon the grass; Reginald, sheathing his cutlass, knelt by the side of the wounded man, and strove to staunch the blood; but his efforts were fruitless, the lungs were pierced, and it was evident that death was fast approaching.

The Indian, still conscious of what was passing around, and momentarily expecting the scalp-knife upon his forehead, the usual fate of the conquered among those of his race, gazed in surprise upon the countenance of the young man, who was now tending him with compas-

ionate anxiety; they could not interchange a word; the Indian feebly raised his hand to his head with an inquiring look, and then pointed to the knife; Reginald shook his head, as if to intimate that he need be under no apprehension of that indignity, and then continued his earnest, but ineffectual endeavours to staunch the flowing blood, while the sufferer's head rested upon his shoulder.

During this time not a groan escaped from the lips of the savage warrior; but feeling his end at hand, he gathered his dying energies, and taking from his neck the magnificent collar which he wore, made from the claws of a grizzly bear, bound together with skins of snow-white ermine, he gave it to Reginald, making him a sign that he should wear it, then supporting himself in a sitting posture by the end of his bow, which he had caught up from the ground, and with his eyes steadily fixed upon the snow-clad peak now visible in the western horizon, the prairie-warrior breathed his last.

As soon as Reginald was assured that life was extinct, he stretched the unconscious limbs, closed the eyes, gathered the massive hair over the rigid countenance, and arranged the arms and accoutrements decently beside the fallen chieftain, knowing well that it would not be long before the body was borne off by those of his own tribe. There was neither exultation nor triumph on the young man's countenance, as he looked from the lifeless form of his late adversary to that of the steed, which lay dead beside him, on which, not many minutes before, he was careering over his native plains in the pride and vigour of manhood; he felt that the strength, the activity, the courage of the savage warrior, were equal to his own; that it had depended upon a single successful thrust whether of the two should be now taking his last uncoffined sleep in the wilderness. Sad thoughts of his waiting mother and sister, musings on the fate of Prairie-bird stole upon his heart, and he continued gazing almost unconsciously on the body of the Indian, until he was aroused by a shrill blast from the bugle of Baptiste; the signal-blast was "Beware;" and casting his eyes around, he saw that the band of Indians who had been skirmishing with War-Eagle's party, were advancing at full speed to the spot where he stood. His spirit rekindled by this fresh excitement, he caught up his rifle, and vaulting on the back of Nekimi, gave him the rein. The pursuers soon found that their chance of overtaking him was hopeless, and while they gathered round the body of their fallen chief, Reginald rejoined his party, who received him with a shout of triumph that reached the ears of the mourners on the far prairie.

As Reginald dismounted and walked gravely through the group to salute War-Eagle, every eye was fixed upon the bear-claw collar around his neck, and he received the silent homage which Indian warriors pay to successful valour.

There was also a quiet dignified modesty in the young man's bearing and demeanour, which did not escape their observant and approving eyes. "My brother is welcome," said War-Eagle, extending his hand to greet his friend; "he has killed a great chief; when the warriors tell their deeds at the war-dance, the tongue of Netis will not be silent."

"The red-man of the prairie was brave," rejoined Reginald; "he died like a warrior. I trust his spirit is gone to the happy land."

"Master Reginald," said the guide, thrusting his large bony hand into that of our hero, "it did my heart good to see the Indian fall; he sprang upon you like a tiger, and I feared he might catch you unawares."

"No, Baptiste, no; he was a gallant fellow, and I am truly sorry that, in self-defence, I was obliged to kill him, but the advantages were all on my side. Nekimi was far swifter than his horse, and his knife was no match for my cutlass. Do you know to what tribe he and his party belonged?"

"Capote-bleu; Master Reginald, this is the first time you have seen *Les Corbeaux*—Upsaroka they call themselves; they are a wild race." And he added, in a lower tone, "We shall see more of them before we go much farther."

"In the skirmish which they had with you, were any wounded on either side?"

"Not many, for the rascals galloped about in such an unaccountable flurry, it wasn't easy to make sure work with the rifle; but the doctor scored the ribs of one, and I think War-Eagle struck another; they kept at a very unfamiliar distance, and their arrows were as harmless as snow-flakes."

"How fared it with Monsieur Perrot?" inquired Reginald, who saw the light-hearted valet grinning with satisfaction at his master's victory and safe return; "did he not try his skill upon any of these marauding Crows?"

"Well, I hardly know," said the guide. "Master Perrot is like the bear in the tree, he fights very well when he can't help it; but I conceive he's not over-fond of the redskins ever since that Dahcotah handled his wig so roughly! What say you, Monsieur Perrot?"

"Monsieur Baptiste is not altogether wrong," replied the good-humoured valet; "if one of those red Corbeaux came very near to peck me, I do my best to pluck his feathers out; but I much rather see a fat partridge or capon than one of them!"

The conversation between the Frenchman and the guide was interrupted by War-Eagle, who made a sign to the latter, as well as to Reginald, that he wished to speak with them apart.

"Brother," said the Chief, addressing our hero, "the Upsarokas are many; their warriors are like the bison-herds; they will soon return to our path; we must be ready for them. What is my brother's counsel?"

"Baptiste," said the young man, "you have more experience in these matters than I have; speak first."

The Guide did not reply immediately; he bent his eyes upon the ground, and his fingers rested on the head of the massive hatchet from whence he derived his Indian name. When he spoke it was with slow but decisive enunciation. "War-Eagle has spoken truly, the Crows will return in greater numbers; they will seek revenge for the death of their chief; they are brave, but their arms are bad—we are few, but our weapons can do service. My counsel is, that we choose a strong camp and await their coming; we will then handle them so that they shall not desire to interrupt us again, or perhaps they may offer to make a treaty upon our own terms."

"The words of Grande-Hâche are wise," rejoined the Chief; "he does not waste his breath in blowing against the wind. What says my brother Netis?"

"He says," replied Reginald, with his char-

acteristic impetuosity, "that the counsel of Grande-Hâche may be good for our own safety, but it will not bring us nearer to Mahega. Neus would follow the Osage trail in spite of all the Crows between the Platte and the Mountains."

"My brother speaks like a warrior without fear," said the Chief in reply; "yet we cannot follow the trail of the Washashe while fighting by day and by night with the Upsaroka. War-Eagle will join the counsel of Grande-Hâche to that of Netis. Let us choose a strong camp, bring in plenty of meat, and prepare to receive the Upsaroka. I will steal away alone in the night. I will follow the trail of Mahega, and return to tell my brother what I have seen. It is enough, I have spoken."

Both the Guide and Reginald approved the Chief's decision; and although our hero would rather have accompanied him on the trail, he felt that he would impede the progress of his Indian brother, whose fitness of foot was so much greater than his own; he therefore acquiesced with cheerfulness, and they set forward to select a camp that should unite the advantages of a defensible position to those of a plentiful supply of water.

For several hours War-Eagle pursued the Osage trail without halting, but his keen eye roved occasionally from side to side in search of a spot favourable for encampment, while Reginald and Baptiste brought up the rear of the party; the former mounted on Nekimi, prepared to gallop forward to the front and give the alarm; in case of the reappearance of the marauding Crows. About an hour before sunset they reached a valley watered by a small stream, the taste of which proved refreshing, and free from the salt with which that region abounds; near the centre of the valley was a thick copse of alder and willow, covering a space of fifty or sixty yards square. On forcing his way through the outer bushes, War-Eagle found an open plot of fine level turf, entirely surrounded by the copse which sheltered it from view on all sides.

The Delaware, having brought his party into this natural encampment, and picqueted the horses within the space above-mentioned, made a careful examination of the thicket, in which he was accompanied by Reginald and Baptiste; they then selected the points from which they could best command the approaches from different quarters; at these they piled logs and branches matted with grass and turf, from behind which secure, though slight breast-work, they could take deliberate aim at any hostile party approaching from the prairie. Before dusk their preparations were complete; the watch was set, and the remainder, after a frugal supper, forgot the fatigues of the day in sleep.

The night passed without the occurrence of any alarm; and an hour before daylight, War-Eagle arose and prepared himself for his perilous expedition, after the ancient fashion of his tribe; a fashion which the Delawares, in common with most of the semi-civilized Indians, have in these modern days neglected, if not forgotten.

Having smeared himself from head to foot with an ointment made from the fat and marrow of deer, he painted his face and chest with stripes of a dark colour, purposely making the form and device to resemble those of the Missonian nations. He wore upon his legs a light pair of deer-skin leggins, without ornament, sup-

ported at the waist by his belt; from the latter was suspended on one side his tomahawk, on the other his knife; he also stuck into it a brace of loaded pistols given to him by Reginald, and within the folds secured some bullets and charges of powder, as well as a few slices of dried buffalo-meat; his throat, chest, and arms were naked, with the exception of a small light blanket, which, when thrown across his shoulder, did not in the least impede the free exercise either of his hands or feet. As speed was now his chief object, he left both his rifle and his heavy war-club in the charge of Reginald, who looked on with mingled feelings of admiration and envy, while his friend was preparing for his solitary journey. Knowing that War-Eagle, if successful in his undertaking, would see the Prairie-bird, he longed to send by him a thousand messages of love, yet he remembered and respected the feelings of his friend, and, controlling his own, embraced him in silence.

As War-Eagle was about to depart, Reginald was surprised at seeing him attach to his belt a small bunch of feathers, carefully tied together, and he imagined that they might be in some measure connected with his Indian brother's totem, or heraldic designation, but the latter resolved his doubts by saying to him and to Baptiste,

"War-Eagle will follow the trail of Washashe as swiftly as his feet can run; whenever it is difficult to find, or divides in a fork, he will stick one of these small feathers in the grass; let *Autô* follow first on the trail; he has been often on the war-path, and his eyes are good; Grande-Hâche with his long rifle should come next—let my brother go last with Nekimi, and let him always have eyes in his back; the Upsarokas are cunning, and the wives of a dead chief are lamenting. If War-Eagle lives, he will return quick and meet his brothers on the trail; if he is killed, he will meet them afterwards in the fields where his fathers hunt. Farewell." So saying, the Delaware chief pointed impressively to the distant ridge of the mountains, and left the encampment.

After the departure of War-Eagle, Reginald busied himself, with the aid of Baptiste, in making further preparations against the expected attack. On inquiring of the latter, he learned, with much satisfaction, that *Autô* or *A-tô* (*Anglicè*, "The Deer,") who had been designated by the chief as leader on the trail in his absence, was a tried and experienced warrior. His appearance, indeed, was not much in his favour, for he was small and spare in stature, and his features, though not positively ugly, were stern, and rarely lighted up by expression; his eye was piercing rather than brilliant, and he scarcely ever spoke, excepting in reply to a question. His swiftness of foot, which was almost equal to that of War-Eagle himself, had procured for him the appellation by which he was known in the tribe. If should however, in justice to him, be mentioned, that he seldom ran from an enemy, for his courage was proverbial, and in a former expedition, against the Dahcotahs, he had made several escapes so extraordinary, that his comrades had given him a name consisting of sixteen or seventeen syllables, which we will not inflict upon civilized eyes or ears, but which signifies, "The-man-who-cannot-be-killed-by-an-arrow."

Reginald finding that *Autô* was familiar with the English tongue, and desirous to be on good terms with his new officer, addressed him as follows:

"Does Attó think that the Upsaroka will come to-day?"

"They will come."

"Will they attack us in this position?"

"Perhaps; the Upsarokas are fools—they do not know the Lenapé."

"Are you satisfied with the arrangements we have made for the defence?"

"Yes; but you should let the horses feed outside, with a guard, or they will soon eat up the grass within; it will be time enough to drive them in when the Upsaroka come."

"You are right," said Reginald, frankly, and he ordered it to be done immediately.

Savages are extremely like ourselves in all that concerns the internal workings of self-respect; and if Reginald already stood high in Attó's opinion for his courage and bodily advantages, the Indian was disposed to think more highly of him when he found, even in a matter so trifling, that the young man listened to and followed his counsel.

The forenoon passed without any tidings of the Crows, and Reginald, impatient of a state of inaction, resolved to sally forth upon Nekimi, and to make a sweep over the adjacent undulating prairie, to see whether he could discover any signs of them.

Armed with his knife, pistols, and cutlass, he slung his spy-glass over his shoulder, and vaulted on the back of his favourite, charging Baptistie and Attó, now left in joint command of the garrison, to keep a sharp look-out, and promising to return before dusk.

How did his blood dance with excitement as he found himself trotting briskly across the virgin turf of that wild, boundless, vegetable ocean; beneath him a steed bold, eager, joyous as himself; above him a blue immensity of unclouded sky; and around him breezes fresh from the snowy chambers of the Northern Andes! Nor were the sources of excitement from within wanting to complete its measure,—a consciousness of youth, and health, and strength; a mind capable of appreciating the wonders of Nature, and of following them up to their Almighty Framer; a heart filled to overflowing with the image of a kindred being whose love he doubted not, and whom, in spite of dangers and obstacles, his ardent and sanguine spirit whispered that he would soon rejoin!

Again and again did he draw from his bosom the precious clasp, which assured him that he was following her footsteps, and then replacing it, he would stoop over the neck of Nekimi, and caressing his playful ear, and gently pressing his flank, the noble creature caracoled, neighed, and bounded beneath him, like the "wild and wanton herd" described in one of the most exquisite scenes depicted by our immortal dramatist.*

Notwithstanding the excited flow of his spirits, Reginald did not forget the object of his excursion; he not only noted carefully the various remarkable features of the surrounding country, so as to secure, in case of need, his retreat to the encampment, but he scanned the side of every hill, and the bosom of every valley that he passed, to see whether any parties of the Upsaroka were yet within view.

He had ridden many miles without seeing anything alive, except a few straggling buffalos and antelopes, and was on the point of returning towards the camp, when he descried some moving body on the sky-line in the eastern horizon;

throwing himself from his horse, he adjusted his telescope, and fixing it on the object, ascertained at once that it was a large party of Indians on horseback. Although his glass was of excellent quality, they were so distant that he could not count them, but he was satisfied that they considerably exceeded a hundred. Observing that their course was directed westward, he was able, by descending an oblique ravine, to reach the edge of a copse which they were likely to pass at no great distance, whence, himself unseen, he might watch their movements, and form a more accurate estimate of their force.

He had not been long stationed at the post which he had selected for this purpose, when the band came full in view on the ridge of a neighbouring hill.

That it was a war-party of the Crows he could no longer doubt, as their dress and appearance were precisely the same, and they were following with the faultless sagacity of a pack of bloodhounds, the trail which he and his companions had trodden on the preceding day.

Being completely sheltered from their view by the copse, he was able to observe their movements, and to plan his own accordingly; he counted upwards of two hundred and fifty mounted warriors, and his impression was that their numbers amounted in all to nearly three hundred; they moved forward upon the trail at an even pace until they reached the brow of the hill, whence they could perceive, although at a considerable distance, the thicket in which the Delawares were encamped. Pausing here, they held a brief council; it was clear that they suspected that the above-named wood contained those of whom they were in pursuit, nor was it long before their lynx eyes detected a slight column of smoke curling up above the trees, on seeing which they shouted aloud, while their rapid and vehement gesticulations sufficiently explained to Reginald the discovery that they had made.

It was evidently not the present intention of the Crows to make an open attack, for they now divided their force into two bands, each of which pursued its course along the back of the ridges which crowned the valley wherein the encampment lay, and thus they would be enabled to reach a point not far distant from their enemy on opposite sides, before their approach could be perceived.

The position of Reginald himself was now critical, for in his eagerness to watch the motions of the Indians, he had allowed them to get between him and his own party; it only remained for him, therefore, to decide whether he should endeavour to reach the camp unperceived, or trusting to the speed of Nekimi, ride boldly towards it; he chose the latter, rightly judging the impossibility of escaping Indian eyes in so open a country, and he thought it also probable that if they meditated a night attack upon the encampment, they would permit him to enter it without showing themselves.

Having therefore examined the priming of his pistols, and loosened his cutlass in the sheath, he pushed his way through the thicket, and emerging on the opposite side, rode deliberately forward.

Choosing the most open ground, he pursued his homeward way down the valley, and though his eye glanced occasionally to the hills on each side, not an Indian was to be seen, and in less than an hour he found himself again within the precincts of the wooded camp.

* Merchant of Venice, Act v

The gravity of his demeanour as he joined his companions, led them to conjecture that he had seen some trace of their enemies, which impression was confirmed amongst them when he led Baptiste and Atô aside to hold with them a council of war.

Having briefly detailed what he had seen, he expressed his belief that the Crows had divided their force for the purpose of attacking the camp in the course of the ensuing night, and concluded by asking their opinion as to the most advisable means of defence. After a short deliberation, it was agreed that four men should watch at the opposite sides of the thicket, each of whom being well sheltered behind a log of wood already rolled to its edge, could detect the approach of an enemy from the prairie, and that each should be provided with two loaded rifles, so that in case of his being obliged to fire one to give the alarm, he might still have another ready for immediate use.

These preparations having been made, and the horses brought within the encampment, the little party sat down to their supper, and afterwards smoked their pipes as unconcernedly as if neither Crows nor danger were lurking in the neighbourhood. Night came on, and those whose turn it was to sleep, announced by their heavy breathing that the hour of rest was not unwelcome; Monsieur Perrot snored so loudly from beneath the pile of blankets in which he had enveloped himself, that he more than once received a slight admonition from the elbow of the half-awakened Guide, who lay beside him. Reginald, however, was in a mood which would have no fellowship with sleep, his thoughts were of Prairie-bird, still in Mahéga's power, of his Indian brother, now far on his solitary and dangerous journey, of the lurking foes whose attack he hourly expected, and of the familiar faces at Mooshanne, whom distance and absence now rendered doubly dear. The night was dark, for the young moon, after traversing her appointed section of the southern sky, had disappeared, and the twinkling stars threw but an uncertain light, rendered yet more doubtful by the leafy branches which waved gently to and fro under the light breath of the night breeze.

In order to give some employment to his unquiet spirit, Reginald resolved to visit the several stations where his sentries were posted, and throwing his rifle over his shoulder, arose and commenced his rounds. Moving with a slow and noiseless step, he went to each of the posts in succession, and finding all the watchmen on the alert, whispered to each a word of approbation. The last station that he visited was occupied by Atô, and Reginald, sitting down behind the log, conversed with him for a short time, in a low tone of voice, each pausing at intervals to listen and look out upon the valley. On a sudden, Atô, touching his arm, pointed to a spot near the summit of the neighbouring hill; and following the direction indicated, Reginald could plainly see a small light, as of a dry stick, which burned for a few seconds and was then extinguished.

"Let Netis watch," whispered the Indian; "Atô will return directly;" and with these words he disappeared in the thicket.

Not many minutes elapsed ere he came back, and in the same subdued tone, said, "All is well now, the Upsaroka are coming, Atô saw the same light on the other hill; it is a sign for both parties to attack from opposite sides at once."

"All is well, indeed," thought Reginald, within himself "This fellow must have a strange stomach for fighting, when he applies such a term to an expected conflict, where the odds are to be two or three hundred to ten."

These were Reginald's thoughts, for a moment; but his words were: "Baptiste, Perrot, and I, will remain at this post, you can spare us also one of your warriors; you will guard the opposite post with three others; there will remain one to move constantly round within the edge of the thicket, to summon us to any point where the Crows may threaten an attack. Is the plan good, what says my brother?"

"It is good," replied the Indian, and they set about it forthwith in earnest and in silence.

Reginald and Baptiste, having previously examined all the logs which were now to serve for their defence, lost no time in selecting their respective stations; the Indian warrior allotted to them was placed between them; Monsieur Perrot, safely ensconced behind the fallen trunk of an alder, was to load his master's rifle, and when discharged, to replace it by another; and the defenders of the camp were all instructed not to fire until their enemies were so near as to afford a certain aim.

The side on which Reginald was stationed was the most open to attack, from its being adjacent to the brook that flowed through the centre of the valley, the banks of which, being dotted here and there with alder-bushes, afforded an occasional covert to an approaching enemy. Nearly an hour had elapsed, and Reginald began to suspect that they had mistaken the intentions of the Upsaroka, when Baptiste pointed in silence towards the prairie, and on following with his eye the direction of his companion's finger, he saw a dusky object in motion. Looking steadily forward, each with his finger on the trigger of his rifle, Reginald and Baptiste could now distinguish the figures of several Indians, creeping along the ground towards the thicket. On a sudden the report of Atô's rifle in the opposite quarter was heard, and the creeping figures starting up, advanced with shouts and yells, vainly hoping that the spot, which they had selected for attack, was defenceless. When they were within a few paces, Reginald and Baptiste fired at once, and the two leading Indians fell; most of their companions retired in dismay, one only sprung forward with desperate courage, and his evil destiny bringing him close past the log, behind which the Guide was posted, the latter cleft the skull of the unfortunate savage with his tremendous hatchet.

Maddened by disappointment, and by the loss of several of their comrades, the Crows let fly a shower of arrows, at the edge of the thicket, and retreated on all sides, filling the air with their cries and yells. Reginald, having crossed over to visit Atô at his post, found that the Delaware had not fired in vain, for a reeking scalp already hung at his belt, and it appeared that the enemy had retired on this side also, as soon as they found themselves exposed to the murderous fire of unseen marksmen.

Not long after this unsuccessful attack on the part of the Upsarokas, day broke, and having mounted their horses, which had been left at some distance, they returned towards the encampment; and galloping to and fro, endeavoured, by every kind of insulting gesticulation, to induce their cautious enemies to come forth, or at least to exhaust their ammunition by firing

at random; but Reginald's party kept close within their covert, taking no notice whatever of these bravadoes, although several of the horse-men came within a distance which would have rendered them an easy mark for the Guide's snarling rifle; their insolence produced only a grim smile on his weather-beaten countenance, as he whispered to Reginald,

"They are somewhat out of their reckoning as to the 'Doctor's' range; poor devils, if they'll only keep off, I don't want to hurt any more of them! But if that long-haired fellow, capering on a brown horse, were a Dahcotah, I'd make a hole in his hunting-shirt before he was many minutes older."

"I am glad to find you in a merciful humour, Baptiste," replied the young man; "I too would willingly avoid farther slaughter of these Crows, and while fighting with them we are losing time more precious to me than gold."

As he was yet speaking, his attention was caught by the sound of a scuffle within the thicket, followed by a shout, and immediately afterwards Attó and another Delaware came forward, dragging with them a Crow, whom the quick eye of the former had detected lurking under the dense foliage of an alder-bush.

"Whom have you here?" exclaimed Reginald; "and where did you find him?"

"Upsaroka," replied Attó; "he must have crept like a snake under the grass, for the Delawares are not blind, yet he is here."

The prisoner was a tall, bold-looking youth, and he seemed resolutely prepared to meet the fate which a spy and an enemy must expect in that wild region.

"'Tis a fine lad," said Baptiste, dryly, "and he has given us a lesson to keep a better look out; 'tis clear that he has crept down the brook, while we have been watching those galloping thieves: tie the rogue's hands, my friend Attó, and let us scour the thicket from one end to the other. Two or three such as him within the camp, in the middle of the night, would be apt to interfere with our rest."

The prisoner having been bound, Attó proceeded with two of his warriors to search every corner of the thicket, while Baptiste, with the remainder, watched the various parties of horse-men who were still hovering at a distance.

Reginald was left for a few minutes alone with the youth, whom he looked at with mingled compassion and admiration, for it was clear that he had devoted his own life to obtain a triumph for his tribe, and although he had not the expressive intellectual beauty of Wingennand, nor the heroic stamp of form and feature by which War-Eagle was distinguished, yet there was a certain wild fierceness in his eye betokening a spirit, that awakened a feeling of sympathy in Reginald's breast. While looking steadfastly on the youth, under the influence of these feelings, he observed that the Delawares, in their hurried anxiety to secure the prisoner, had bound the thongs so tightly round his arms as to cause a stoppage of the blood, the veins around the ligature being already swollen to a painful extent.

With the unhesitating generosity of his nature, Reginald stepped forward, and loosening the thong, left the youth at liberty; at the same time he smiled, and pointing to the knife in his belt, made the sign of "No," intimating that he would not repay this benefit by using that weapon.

The quick-sighted savage understood him as plainly as if the hint had been given in his own language, for he instantly detached the knife from his belt and presented it to Reginald. There was so much natural dignity and sincerity in his manner while doing so, that our hero in receiving his weapon, gave him in exchange a spare knife that hung in his own belt, making at the same time the Indian sign for friendship.

The nerves which were strung to endure expected torture and a lingering death, were not prepared for this unlooked-for clemency; the youth spoke a few soft words in his own tongue, looking earnestly in Reginald's face, and had not yet recovered his self-possession, when Attó returned with his companions, to report that the prisoner must have come upon this dangerous war-path alone, as no other of his tribe was lurking in or near the thicket.

"Attó," said Reginald, addressing the Delaware, "this youth belongs by right to the hand that took him, he is yours; I ask you to give him to me, to do with him as I like."

"The hand and the heart of Attó are both open to Netis; he is brother to the war-chief of the Lenapé—Attó is glad to give him what he asks."

"Attó is a brave man," replied Reginald, "and worthy of his race; he can see that this youth is on his first war-path; he came to the camp to make himself a name; if the quick eye of Attó had not found him, there would have been a war-cry in the night—is it not so, brothers?"

The Delawares gave their usual exclamation of assent.

"Brothers," continued Reginald, "Attó has given this youth to me—I thank him: the hand of Netis is not shut, it holds a collar which hung upon the neck of a great warrior, it will not be ashamed to hang on the neck of Attó."

As he said this, he threw over the neck of the Delaware the magnificent bear-claw collar which adorned his own. This was perhaps the happiest moment of Attó's life, for such a collar could be worn only by braves of the highest rank in Indian Aristocracy, and the acclamation with which his comrades hailed the presentation of the gift, assured Reginald that it had been neither unwisely nor unworthily bestowed.

The latter then turned towards the prisoner, and made him a sign to follow towards the outer edge of the thicket, in the direction where Baptiste and he had shot the two Indians who led the attack; their bodies still lay where they fell; the youth gazed upon them with stern composure. Reginald inquired by a sign if he knew them; he replied in the affirmative; and he added, pointing to the nearest of the two, a sign which Reginald did not comprehend; he turned to Attó for an explanation.

"He says," replied the Delaware, "that was his father."

Reginald, much affected, placed the youth's hand against his own breast in token of regard, and made him understand that he was free to go himself, and to remove the bodies with an interruption.

The young Crow replied by a look of gratitude too expressive to require the interpretation of language, and moving towards the body of his father, bore it into the midst of his wondering companions, who received him with repeated wailings and cries; none, however, seemed disposed to believe in his assurance that they might

take away the other body likewise; he was obliged to return himself, and then one of his tribe, seeing that he stood uninjured beside it, came out from their ranks and assisted him to bear it off.

CHAPTER XXXII

An unexpected Meeting.—Reginald prepares to follow the Trail.

For two days the band of Crows hovered round the encampment, sometimes showing themselves on the adjacent heights, at others drawing off to a distance, in hopes of enticing some of Reginald's party to venture into the open country; but, although he himself chafed and fretted like an impatient steed, he was sensible of the risk that must attend any error or imprudence while in the neighbourhood of an enemy so crafty and so strong in numbers, and he never permitted the watchfulness of his little garrison to be relaxed for a moment; the horses were driven to feed under the guard of two armed Delawares, and were not sent to a distance whence their return could be intercepted, and the watches were regularly set and relieved during the whole night.

On the third day the Crows, finding that all their endeavours to draw their cautious enemy from the covert were vain, held a council of war, after which three or four of their principal chiefs approached the encampment, making, as they advanced, signs of amity and truce. Reginald went out to meet them, accompanied by Baptiste and Attô, leaving orders with the remainder of his party to hold themselves in readiness against any attempt at treachery. Halting at a spot not more than eighty yards from the wood, he awaited the Crow leaders, who came forward to meet him without any apparent suspicion or treacherous design.

They had taken the precaution to bring with them the youth to whom Reginald had already shown kindness, and whose presence they rightly conjectured would facilitate the amicable nature of their mission.

Reginald acknowledged with a smile the friendly greeting of his young protégé, and then, drawing himself up to his full height, awaited in silence the opening of the parley.

The Crow partisan* first glanced his keen eye over the persons of those whom he was about to address, as if scanning them for the purpose of ascertaining their qualities and character, and whether he should best succeed by endeavouring to circumvent or to overawe them. Keen as he was, his penetration was here at fault, for although no three persons could be more dissimilar than those before him, yet, whether taken collectively or severally they looked like men who would not be easily overreached; his eye first rested on the spare, sturdy frame and impenetrable countenance of Attô, thence it glanced to the muscular frame and shrewd hard features of the Guide, and turning from them, it found but little encouragement in the bright bold eye and commanding form of Reginald Brandon.

Perceiving, with the intuitive sagacity of an Indian, that the latter was the leader of his party, the partisan opened the parley by pointing his fore-finger at Reginald, and then pressing the

* In the travels of Major Long, and others, who have described the Indians of the far-western prairies, the "brave" who leads a war-party is usually designated a "partisan."

closed fingers against his own breast; he then pointed to himself with the same finger, and afterwards stretching both arms horizontally, moved them up and down with a vibrating motion, concluding his pantomime by again raising the fore-finger of his right hand vertically to the height of his forehead. Reginald, who could not understand these gestures, turned to Attô, saying, "Does my brother know what the stranger speaks? If so, let him explain."

"He says," replied the Delaware, "that he wishes to be friends with you; and he tells you, by the last signs, that he is an Upearoka and a chief."

"Tell him," said Reginald, "that if his heart is true, and his tongue not forked, we also wish to be friends with him and his people."

The Crow replied by making the conventional sign for "Good," adding to it that for "Truth."

On this being explained to Reginald, the latter desired Baptiste to bring from the camp some tobacco, a pipe, and a few trinkets for distribution among the Crows. On the return of the Guide, the whole party took their seats, Reginald placing the partisan on his right, and the young prisoner whom he had released on his left. After the pipe had been smoked with due gravity and decorum, he divided among his guests some beads and other fanciful ornaments, according to their rank, with which they seemed highly delighted; the chief in particular testified his satisfaction by repeated gesticulations of friendship and affection towards his white brother, whom he invited to go and feast with him and his braves. This invitation Reginald begged leave to decline, but he desired Attô to explain to his guest that he would visit him on some other occasion.

While these civilities were passing between the respective parties, a great commotion was observed among the Crows stationed on the neighbouring hill, some of whom were seen galloping to and fro, as if communicating some unexpected intelligence. The partisan arose and took his leave with courteous dignity, explaining by signs that he wished to ascertain what was passing among his people.

As he withdrew, the youth, whose life Reginald had spared, turned his head and gave the latter a look which he understood to convey a warning, but it was so rapid that he could not feel assured that he had rightly construed its meaning. Reginald remained for some time on the spot watching the motions of the Crows, who had now gathered in their scattered horsemen, and were evidently awaiting with some impatience the return of their chief. Reginald's eye was still fixed upon them, when Attô, pointing to the eastward, whispered, "Men are coming!"

Turning his head in the direction indicated, Reginald thought he perceived a moving object in the distance.

"I see something in that quarter, but not distinctly; are you sure it is a party of men?"

"Sure."

"Mounted, or on foot?"

* It has before been mentioned, that among the roving tribes of the great Missourian wilderness every one has his distinctive national sign; these are well known to each other, and to white men who are experienced in the life of the far-west; the sign mentioned in the text is that adopted by the Upearokas, as they intend by the motion of their extended arms to imitate that of the wings of a crow in flight. The Sioux, Blackfeet, Pawnees, Snaken, Aricaras, Comanches, &c., have all their distinctive national signs; but an enumeration of them would be tedious and out of place here.

"Both," replied the Delaware, without removing his bright keen eye from the object. "They are upon our trail," he added; "if they are not friends, we had better return to the camp."

Meanwhile Reginald unslung his telescope, and having at length brought it to bear upon the advancing party, he exclaimed,

"By Heaven! there are white men as well as Indians there, horses, and loaded mules!"

"How many?" inquired Baptiste.

"They seem to me to be fifteen or twenty strong. Should their intentions appear suspicious, we are near enough to retire into our camp: if they are friends, they will soon see us, and approach without fear or hesitation."

The Guide shook his head as if distrusting all new comers in that remote region; but they were within rifle-shot of the covert, and could, if necessary, retire thither under the protection of the fire of those within it.

The Crows still hovered upon the summit of the adjoining hill, and several minutes of breathless interest elapsed ere the approaching band emerged from a hollow upon a point of the valley, where they were now clearly distinguishable, and proved to be, as Reginald had said, a mixed party of Indians and white men.

He was not aware that among the latter was a telescope as good, and a horseman whose eye was more practised in the use of it than his own; that horseman galloped out in front of his band and advanced at full speed to the spot where Reginald stood, and almost before the latter could rightly use his faculties of sight or speech, that horseman flung himself from his horse, and Reginald was in the arms of Ethelston.

There is nothing that stirs the heart to its very depths, more than the meeting a friend after a long separation; not such a friend as is found in the ordinary intercourse of worldly society, but a friend whom we really esteem and love, a friend whom we have learned to cherish in our bosom's core—this must have been felt by all (alas! they are not very many), who have deserved and obtained such a blessing in life. How, then, must these stirrings of the heart be increased if such a friend comes to our aid and comfort when we thought him thousands of miles distant, when we are in anxiety and peril, when he brings us the latest tidings of our home! We will not attempt to describe the meeting of the two long-separated and loving friends under such circumstances, nor to relate one hundredth part of the inquiries which each had to make and to reply to.

The reader is already in possession of the information which they had to communicate to each other, and can easily understand how Ethelston and his party, guided by the young Delaware, had followed the trail on which they had been preceded by the bands of Mahéga and of Reginald: the latter greeted with cordial pleasure Paul Müller, who now advanced to offer him his friendly salutation, while Pierre, Baptiste, and Bearskin, who had weathered many a stormy day by flood and field together, interchanged the grasp of their horny hands with undisguised satisfaction.

In the meeting between the two bands of the Delawares, there was less demonstration, but it need not be doubted whether there was as less excitement, as the last comers narrated to their comrades the bloody vengeance which they had taken on some of their foes, and dilated upon that which they anticipated in pursuit of Mahéga.

Ethelston's party being provided with some

coffee, sugar, biscuits, and other luxuries, which had been long strange to Reginald's camp, the evening of their arrival was devoted to a great merry-making, Monsieur Perrot undertaking the office of chief cook, and master of the ceremonies, both of which he executed with so much skill and good-humour as to win the favour of all present. In the midst of the feasting, the security of the encampment was never endangered by the omission of due precautions, for the horses were driven in and the sentries posted, as on the preceding night, Reginald being well aware of the treacherous character of his Crow neighbours, and his suspicions aroused by the slight, but significant look given to him at parting by the youth whose life he had spared.

While they were seated round a blazing fire enjoying the good cheer which Perrot had provided, Pierre, fixing his eyes upon the bear-claw collar worn by Attó, uttered an exclamation of surprise, and, springing from his seat, went to examine it closer; having done so, he pronounced slowly and with emphasis a name as long as a Sanscrit patronymic.

"What does that mean, Pierre?" inquired Ethelston, who had found in the latter a guide of great shrewdness and experience.

"It is the name of the Upsaroka to whom that collar belonged, in our tongue, 'The man whose path is red.' I saw it upon his neck last year, when I was at the post near the Upper Forks. He came to trade with us for a few knives and blankets—he was a great war-chief, and had killed more Black-feet than any man in his tribe."

"Well, Pierre, his own turn is come now; he will kill no more Black-feet nor white men either," said Baptiste to his comrade.

"Did yonder Lenapé kill him, and in fair fight, man to man?"

"He was killed in fair fight, man to man; not by Attó, but by a young war-chief whom the Lenapé call Netis," replied the Guide.

Pierre fixed his quick grey eye upon the athletic figure of Reginald Brandon, who coloured slightly as he encountered at the same time the glance of Paul Müller.

"It is true," he said, "I had foolishly separated myself from the rest of my party, I was intercepted in attempting to return, and only escaped paying the penalty of my carelessness by the speed of my horse. The Crow chief was better mounted than the rest of his tribe, and as soon as I paused to breathe my horse, he attacked and slightly wounded me; in defending myself, I killed him."

"My son," observed the Missionary, "he died as he had lived, reckless and brave; it rejoices me to hear you speak of the deed as one of necessity and self-preservation."

"I know not," muttered Pierre, "what he calls necessity, but it's a fine feather in the youth's cap, and our Delawares shall know it too."

One of the most remarkable features in the character of this man, was the facility with which he acquired the habits and languages of the different tribes, among whom his roving life had thrown him; moreover, he had the faculty of remembering with unerring certainty, any face, or spot, or tree, or path that he had once seen, and that his services as guide and interpreter were highly valued; and as Pierre, though a good-humoured fellow, was shrewd enough in matters of business, he usually exacted, and had no difficulty in obtaining a liberal remuneration from

the rival leaders of the fur-trade companies; he was tolerably well versed in the language of the Crows and the Black-feet, the two great nations inhabiting the vast region between the upper waters of the rivers Platte and Missouri; and there were few of the roving tribes upon either bank of the latter, among whom he could not make himself understood. As an interpreter, he dealt fairly by his employer, although he hated the Black-feet, in consequence of a warrior of that tribe having carried off an Indian *belle* to whom Pierre was paying his addresses. This offence he had never forgiven, and it gave him in all subsequent transactions a natural leaning towards the Crows, the mortal and hereditary foes of his successful rival's tribe.

While Pierre related in an under tone, to those Delawares of his party who did not understand English, the victory obtained over the great war-chief of the Crows, by Reginald Brandon, the latter kept up a long and interesting conversation with Ethelston, whom he found already informed by the Missionary of his engagement to Prairie-bird.

On this subject Reginald, who knew the prudence of his friend's usual character, scarcely expected his sympathy or concurrence: he was, therefore, the more agreeably surprised, when he found him disposed to enter into all his plans for the recovery of his betrothed, with a zeal and enthusiasm almost equal to his own.

"The good Missionary," said Ethelston, "has told me much of the early life, as well as of the character and qualities of Prairie-bird. I cannot tell you how deeply she has engaged my interest, my own feelings towards your sister render me capable of appreciating yours, and I pledge you my faith, dear Reginald, that I will spare neither toil nor exertion, not life itself, to aid you in this precious search."

Reginald grasped his hand—there was no need of words of gratitude between them—and ere long both returned to consult with Paul Müller, as to their further proceedings. After due deliberation, they agreed that on the following morning they should pursue the trail, regardless of their Crow neighbours, whom they had now little cause to fear, and that previous to starting they would hold a council, at which Reginald should propose the distribution of their respective posts, on the line of march, in the event of their wishing to retain that of leader.

The night having passed without any alarm, Reginald summoned a general council of war before daybreak; as soon as they were assembled, he told them through Baptiste, who acted as interpreter, that they were now strong enough to pursue the trail, without fear of interruption from the Crows, and that if the latter were foolish enough to make an attack, they would soon have cause to repent it. He then added that War-Eagle, their chief, being absent on the war-path, it was necessary for some one to act as leader until his return, and, as his party had been joined by so many warriors of experience, he would gladly place himself under the advice and guidance of the man whom they might select.

When Baptiste had finished this speech, the oldest warrior of Ethelston's party arose and said, "Is it not true that War-Eagle, when he went, appointed Netis leader in his place?" A murmur of assent came from the lips of Attó and his party. "Is it not true," continued the Indian, "that Netis is a brave and skilful war-

rior?—one who need not be silent when the braves strike the war-post? His heart is true to the Lenapé, and he will tell them no lies."

"If the white men are content with Netis, the Lenapé wish no other leader. I have spoken."

As the scarred and weather-beaten warrior resumed his seat, another and a general murmur of approbation broke from the Delawares; and Ethelston having spoken a few words of similar import to the white men, Reginald found himself by universal acclamation chosen leader of the party.

After modestly thanking them for their good opinion, his first act was to appoint Attó as guide upon the trail, desiring him to select any two whom he might wish to assist him, in the event of its becoming forked, or otherwise difficult to follow. Monsieur Perrot, with the provisions, and loaded mules, occupied the centre of the line of march, in which comparatively secure post he was accompanied by Paul Müller, the main body of the hunters and the Delawares being distributed before and behind the baggage.

For himself Reginald reserved the rear-guard, where he retained Ethelston, Baptiste, and a young Delaware, whom he might despatch upon any emergency to communicate with the front. He also appointed four of the best mounted of his men, two on each side of his party, to protect the flanks against any sudden attack, Pierre being sent forward to render any assistance to Attó that he might require.

These arrangements being complete, and made known to the respective parties, they were about to set forth on their journey when Attó informed Reginald, that the Crow youth was coming swiftly across the valley towards the encampment, pursued at a distance by several horsemen of his tribe; the lad was riding one of the swiftest and most untamed of the wild horses with which that region abounds, yet he had neither bridle nor saddle, guiding the animal with a leather thong, which he had thrown round its nose, and urging it to its utmost speed with a bow which he held in his right hand. A few minutes brought the foaming little steed and its rider to the edge of the thicket, where the latter, still holding the leather thong, stood in silence before Reginald; his eyes were literally sparkling with indignant rage, and he did not even deign to look behind him to see whether his pursuers approached; the latter, however, did not choose to venture near the encampment, but as soon as they saw that he had gained its shelter, they gave a few loud and discordant yells, and disappeared behind the hill.

The services of Pierre were now put into requisition; and as soon as the youth found an ear that could understand his tale, he told it with a rapidity and vehemence, that showed the strong excitement of his feelings; the story, as interpreted by Pierre, was briefly thus:

"The youth was present on the preceding day at a war-council, where the Crows proposed a plan for inveigling the white men to a feast, and then attacking them unawares, at the same time desiring him to use the favour that he had found in their eyes, as an additional means for entrapping them; this he positively refused to do, and boldly told the assembled chiefs, that their counsels were wicked and treacherous, and that he would in no wise aid or abet them." Indignant at this remonstrance from a stripping, the partisan had ordered him to be whipped se-

verely with thongs, and to be tied hand and foot; the sentence was executed with the utmost cruelty, but he had contrived early in the morning to slip off his bands, and springing to his feet, he seized the fleetest horse belonging to the partisan, and leaping on its back, galloped off to warn his protector against the meditated treachery.

The truth of the tale required no confirmation, for the glow of resentment burned too fiercely in his eye to be dissembled, and the light covering of antelope skin which he had thrown across his shoulders, was saturated with his blood. Reginald's first natural impulse was to punish the perpetrators of this outrage, but he checked it when he remembered the magnitude of the stake that bound him to the trail: "Tell him, Pierre," said he, "that I thank him for his single tongue, and I love him for his honest brave heart. Ask him if there is anything that I can do for him."

"Nothing," replied the youth to this question; "tell him that I have warned him against the forked tongues of my tribe, because he gave me my life, and was good to me, but I must not forget that his hand is red with my father's blood. The day is very cloudy; the Great Spirit has given a hard task to the son of the fallen chief; his back is marked like the back of a slave; he has lived long enough."

The voice of the youth faltered as he pronounced the last words; the thong dropped from his feeble grasp, and as he fell to the ground, the wild horse broke away and galloped across the valley. "He is dying," said Reginald, bending over him; "see, here below his hunting shirt is the broken shaft of an arrow, which one of his pursuers has shot with too true an aim." While he spoke the young Crow breathed his last.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

Showing how Wingennud faced in the Osage Camp, and the issue of the Dilemma in which Prairie-bird was placed by Mahéga.

We trust that the compassionate reader is now desirous to learn something more of the fate of Prairie-bird and her unfortunate brother Wingennud, whom we left a prisoner in the hands of the merciless chief of the Osages. For a long time after the latter left her tent, his parting threat rung in her ears, that she must on the morrow give her consent to be his bride, or by her refusal consign Wingennud to a cruel and lingering death. Her busy imagination portrayed in vivid colours the scene of torture, and the heroic fortitude with which she knew he would endure it, and as she turned from that picture, the figure of Reginald Brandon rose to her view, as if upbraiding her with the violation of her plighted troth; torn by these contending struggles, the poor girl sobbed convulsively, and the tears forced their way through the fingers with which she in vain endeavoured, either to suppress or conceal them. Lita threw her arms round her mistress's neck, and strove by her affectionate, yet simple endearments, to soothe her grief; for a long time they proved unsuccessful, but when at last she whispered,

"The Great Spirit is very good; he is stronger than Mahéga, let Prairie-bird speak with him as she often did when the Black Father was with her."

"True, Lita," she replied, looking gratefully at the Comanche girl through her tears; "you remind me of what I ought not to have forgotten."

The next moment saw her prostrate upon her couch—the book of comfort in her hand, and her earnest prayers ascending toward Heaven.

She rose from her devotions with a calmed and strengthened spirit; the first result of which was a desire to converse with Wingennud, and to decide with him upon the morrow's fearful alternative.

Mahéga willingly consented to the interview, justly believing that it would rather forward than retard his plan for compelling her consent, compared with which the boy's life weighed not a feather in the balance, so he ordered him to be conveyed to her tent; and the guards who conducted him having informed her that if she unbound his hands, he would be instantly seized and removed, they retired to the aperture, awaiting the termination of the meeting with their habitual listless indifference.

Prairie-bird cared not whether they listened, as she spoke to her young brother in English, of which she knew that they understood little or nothing.

"Dear Wingennud," she said, "you heard the threat uttered by that savage, after he struck you?"

"I did."

"Is there no device or means by which we can contrive your escape; we may trust the Comanche girl?"

"I do not see any," replied the boy, calmly; "the eyes of the Osage chief are open, the hands of his warriors are many and ready. It does not matter; War-Eagle and Netis will be here soon, then all will go well."

"All well!" said Prairie-bird, shuddering. "Know you not that to-morrow I must consent to be the wife of the Osage, or be the cause and the witness of my brother's horrible death?"

Wingennud looked at her with unfeigned surprise.

"The daughter of Tamenund—the Prairie-bird sent by the Great Spirit, from an unknown land, to dwell among the lodges of the Lenapé—she who has learned all the wise words of the Black Father—she to become the wife of that wandering wolf! Can my sister's heart beat towards him?"

"Heaven knows how I loathe and dread him! worse than the most poisonous snake in the prairie."

"I thought so," he replied. "And how ought a wife to feel towards the man whom she marries?"

"To feel that he is the joy, the food, the treasure of her heart; the object of her secret thoughts by day, of her dreams by night; that when she prays to Heaven his name is on her lips; that she loves him as—as—"

"As Prairie-bird loves Netis," said Wingennud, smiling. The conscious girl blushed at the impassioned eagerness into which her feelings had betrayed her, but she did not attempt to deny her brother's conclusion, and he continued, more gravely, "Then my sister could not be the wife of the Osage without leading a life of misery and falsehood. No, no," he added, his bright eye kindling as he spoke; "let to-morrow come; Wingennud is ready; he will show that wolf how the Lenapé die. Let to-morrow come, and Mahéga shall learn that

Wingenund despises his hate as much as Prairie-bird scorns his love. My sister, I have spoken it. The deeds of my fathers are before my eyes; the blood of the ancient people is in my veins; words cannot change my mind. Farewell! and when you see War-Eagle and Netis, tell them that the Washashe fire drew neither complaint nor cry from the lips of Wingenund."

As he spoke, his agonized sister looked up in his face, and read but too plainly the high, unconquerable determination legibly stamped upon its proud, expressive features. She saw that the instinctive feelings of his race had triumphed over all the gentler impressions which she and the Missionary had endeavoured to implant; and, knowing that now she might as well attempt to bend a stubborn oak as to effect any change in his resolution, she embraced him in silence, and suffered the Osage guards to lead him from the tent.

Composing herself by a strong effort of self-command, Prairie-bird revolved in her mind various schemes for saving the life of her devoted brother; one after another she considered and rejected, until at length the idea occurred to her that perhaps she might contrive to work upon the superstitious fears of Mahéga. With this view she examined carefully all her slender stock of instruments and curiosities—the novelty of the burning-glass was past, the ticking of the watch given to her by Paul Müller, though it might surprise the Osage, could not be expected to alarm, or induce him to abandon his determination. Then she cast her despairing eyes upon the few volumes which formed her traveling library; among these her attention was accidentally directed to the almanac which the good Father had brought to her from the settlements, when he gave her the watch, and she sighed when she thought how often she had amused herself in the spring, comparing them together, calculating the lapse of time, and the changes of season which they severally announced. Her observation of the sabbaths had been most punctual, nor had it been interrupted by the toils and privations of the journey, so she had no difficulty in finding the week or the day then passing. "July," she exclaimed, reading to herself half aloud, "only two weeks of this sad month are yet past; methinks they seem more like fourteen months than fourteen days! See here, too, on the opposite leaf, prophecies regarding wind and weather. How often would the dear Father point these out to me, and strive to explain the wonderful terms in which they describe the movements of the stars; he was very patient, but they were too hard for me; I am sure he tried to make me understand these strange words, 'Apelion,' 'Apogee,' 'Perigee,' but, if he ever succeeded, I have forgotten it all. What is this notice in larger letters? To-morrow, to-morrow, it stands written, 'Total eclipse of the sun, visible at Philadelphia 9h. 42m.'—surely, surely it will be visible here too. I will trust to it, I will build my faith upon it, and Wingenund's life shall yet be saved." So saying, she clasped her hands together, and her lovely countenance beamed with re-awakened hope.

Lita, who had been watching her mistress with affectionate solicitude, and listening with childish wonder to her half-uttered soliloquy, was overcome with surprise at this sudden change in her demeanour; she thought that Prairie-bird had been conversing with some un-

seen being, under which impression she approached, and asked, timidly,

"Has Olitipa seen a Good Spirit, and have her ears drunk words of comfort?"

"Olitipa has received words of comfort," replied her mistress, kindly; "they seem to her words from Heaven; she trusts that she may not be deceived; she will address her evening prayer to the Great Merciful Spirit above, and retire to rest, at least to such rest as it may be His will to give her."

For many hours after Prairie-bird had been stretched upon her furred couch did her thoughts dwell upon the solar eclipse, now the foundation of her hopes; she remembered how the Missionary had explained to her that it was visible at one hour in one part of the earth, at a different hour in another part; then she wondered whether at the spot where she now was it would be seen sooner or later than at Philadelphia. This doubt her science could not resolve, and it held her long in anxious suspense; but overworn nature at length claimed her rights, and she sank into an unrefreshing dreamy slumber, in which the images of Wingenund, Mahéga, and Reginald Brandon were stalking confusedly over an eclipsed and darkened region of earth.

Early on the following morning, Mahéga, who had resolved not to lose this favourable opportunity for working upon the fears of Prairie-bird, caused a pile of dry branches of wood to be placed round a tree, which stood nearly opposite to her tent, to which he ordered Wingenund to be secured with thongs of bison-hide; after which he and his warriors seated themselves in a semicircle before their victim, passing the pipe deliberately from mouth to mouth, as if to enjoy his suspense and terror.

If such was their object, it met with little success, for the young Delaware, in the brightest day of his youth and freedom, had never worn so proud and lofty an air as that which now sat enthroned upon his brow.

"A thousand warriors of the Lenapé, whose blood is in my veins, have gone before me to the happy fields; they knew not fear, and I, the last of their children, will bring no shame upon their race. When I come they will say, 'Welcome, Wingenund!' and before many winters and summers are passed, War-Eagle and Netis, Prairie-bird and the Black Father, will join me, and the blue eyes of the Lily of Mooshaune will be there also, and we will dwell in a land of streams and flowers, of numberless deer and abundant corn, unvexed by cold, or want, or pain."

Such was the vision that rose before the mental eye of the youth, and so completely was he engrossed by it, that he took not the slightest notice of the group assembled to put him to a slow and agonizing death.

Meanwhile Prairie-bird having prayed earnestly to Heaven to support her, and pardon the deceit which she was about to practise, dressed herself with more than usual care, and coming forth from her tent, stood before Mahéga with a dignity of demeanour, to the effect of which even his fierce and intractable nature was not insensible. He rose not, however, at her approach, but contented himself with inquiring, "Has Olitipa come to save her brother's life, or to kill him?"

"Neither," replied the maiden firmly; "she is come to give good counsel to Mahéga; let him beware how he neglects it!"

"Let not Olitipa's speech travel in circles," said the angry chief. "Mahéga has said that this day she should consent to be his wife, or she must see that feeble boy burned before her eyes,—there are but two paths,—which does Olitipa choose?"

"The feet of foolish men often wander where there is no path at all," replied Prairie-bird; and she added, with solemnity, pointing upward to Heaven: "There is only *one* path and one Guide, the Great Spirit who dwells above!"

Those of the Osages who were familiar with the Delaware tongue in which she was speaking, looked at each other, as if wondering at her words, but Mahéga, whose passion was only increased by her exceeding beauty, answered vehemently,

"It is easy for Olitipa to talk and to make children believe that her words are those of the Great Spirit—Mahéga is not a child."

"If he compare his strength with that of the Great Spirit," said the maiden boldly, "Mahéga's is less than the least finger of a child. Who can tell the power of the Great Spirit? The strong wind is his breath,—the thunder is his voice, the sun is his smile. If He is angry, and withdraws the sun, day is turned into night—darkness and fear dwell in the hearts of men."

The energy of her language and manner were not altogether without their effect even upon the stern nature of Mahéga; nevertheless, he replied, "These are but the notes of singing-birds. Mahéga waits for the choice of Olitipa,—she becomes his wife, or the fire is kindled at the feet of Wingenund."

Prairie-bird cast an anxious glance athwart the blue vault above; not a cloud was in the sky, and the sun shone with the full brightness of an American July. She would not yet abandon hope, but, making a strong and successful effort to maintain her composure, she said in a firm, impressive tone, "Mahéga, let there be a bargain between us; you seek Olitipa for a wife; if it be the will of the Great Spirit, she will submit, and her brother's life will be spared; but if the Great Spirit is displeased, and shows his anger by drawing a cloak over the face of that bright sun in the heavens, Mahéga will obey his will, and let the brother of Olitipa go away unhurt. Is Mahéga content that it shall be so?"

"He is," replied the chief, "if the sign be such as he, and the Osage warriors may look upon with wonder; not a mist, or dark cloud."

"It will be such as *nil mair* Mahéga tremble," replied the maid with dignity. "Warriors of the Washashe you have heard the treaty. Before the sun has reached yon western peak, the answer of the Great Spirit will be known." Having thus spoken, she withdrew into the tent, leaving the Osages gazing upon each other with undisguised awe and amazement.

The maiden threw herself upon her couch in an agony of suspense, greater than can be described! It was terrible to think that her every hope of escaping from the dreadful alternative, was staked upon a sentence in an almanac, of the correctness of which she had not the slightest power to judge. Even the well-intentioned attempts at consolation made by her affectionate Lita, were of no avail; her unhappy mistress entreated her to remain at the door of the tent, and report whatever might occur; within and without a profound stillness reigned. The prisoner stood motionless by the sapling to which she was bound; Mahéga smoked his pipe in the

full confidence of anticipated triumph, surrounded by his warriors, who, less sceptical, or more superstitious than their chief, looked and listened, expecting some confirmation of the last words of Prairie-bird.

Although the sun could not be opposite the rock which she had pointed out for nearly three hours, of which not a fourth part had yet elapsed, the anxious girl began to imagine that hope was at an end. Visions of future degradation and misery shot through her brain; she tore from her hot brow the fillet that confined her hair, which floated in glossy luxuriance over her shoulders. The reproaches of Reginald Brandon rung in her ears. The loathed embrace of Mahéga crept over her shuddering frame! At this crisis her eye fell upon the handle of the sharp knife concealed in her bosom; she drew it forth; the triumph of the powers of Evil seemed at hand, when a cry of surprise and terror from Lita recalled her wandering senses. She sprang to the door; visible darkness was spreading over the scene, and the terrified Osages were looking upward to the partially obscured disk of the sun, over the centre of which an opaque circular body was spread; a brilliant ring being left around its outer ridge.*

Prairie-bird gazed upon the wondrous spectacle like one entranced; the late fearful struggle in her breast had given a supernatural lustre to her eye; her frame was still under high nervous excitement, and as, with long hair floating down her back, she pointed with one hand to the eclipsed sun, and with the other to Mahéga, well might the savage imagine that he saw before him a Prophetess whose will the Spirit of Fire must obey. Under the influence of awe and dread, which he strove in vain to conceal, he moved forward and said to her, "It is enough! let Olitipa speak to the Great Spirit that the light may come again."

The sound of his voice recalled the mind of Prairie-bird to a consciousness of what had passed. She answered not, but with a gesture of assent motioned to him to withdraw, and supporting herself against one of the trees that grew in front of her tent, she knelt beside it, and veiling her face in the redundant tresses of her hair, found relief in a flood of tears. Overwhelmed by a sense of the merciful interposition by which she and her brother had been saved, and by a feeling of deep contrition for the sudden impulse of self-destruction to which, in a moment of mental agony, she had yielded, she thought neither of the continuance nor the withdrawing of the dark phenomenon of external nature, but of the evil gloom which had for the time eclipsed the light of grace in her heart, and the tears which bedewed her cheek were tears of mingled penitence and gratitude.

Still, Nature held on her appointed course; after a few minutes the moon passed onward in her path, and the rays of the sun, no longer intercepted, again shed their brightness over earth and sky.

The Osages, attributing these effects to the communing of Prairie-bird with the Great Spirit,

* It is unnecessary to inform the reader that neither the date nor the description of this solar eclipse is intended to challenge scientific criticism. Merely the general features are preserved of that kind of solar eclipse, which is termed "annular," and which takes place when the eclipse, though central, is not total, on account of the moon not being near enough to hide the whole of the sun, in which case part of the latter is seen as a bright ring round the part hidden by the moon.

stood in silent awe as she arose to retire to her tent, and her secret humiliation became, in their eyes, her triumph.

Mahéga, finding that he had no pretext for refusing to release Wingenund, and that his warriors evidently expected him to fulfil his promise, ordered the youth to be unbound; and in the height of his generosity, desired that some food might be offered to him, which Wingenund scornfully rejected.

The Osage chief having called aside two of those most devoted to him, spoke to them a few words apart; and then addressing his liberated prisoner in the Delaware tongue, he said, "The Osage warriors will conduct Wingenund two hours on his journey; he will then be free to go where he likes, but if he is again found skulking round the Osage camp, nothing shall save his life."

Wingenund knew, that he was to be turned loose in a desolate region, unarmed and half-starved, but his proud spirit would not permit him to ask the slightest boon of his enemy; and without a word of reply, without even directing a look towards his sister's tent, he turned and followed his conductors.

For several miles they pursued the back-foot* of the trail by which they had come from the eastward, Wingenund being placed in the centre without weapon of any kind, and the two Osages marching one before, and the other behind him, being well armed with bow, knife, and tomahawk. The youth, unconscious that they had secret instructions from Mahéga to kill him as soon as they reached a convenient and sufficiently distant spot, made no attempt to escape, but walked quietly between them, considering within himself whether he should endeavour to rejoin his party, or persevere in hovering in the neighbourhood of the Osages; if a suspicion of Mahéga's treachery did cross his mind, he allowed it not to influence his bearing, for he moved steadily forward, not even turning his head to watch the Osage behind him.

About five or six miles from Mahéga's camp, the trail passed along the edge of a low wood which skirted the banks of the same stream that flowed through the upper valley. This was the place where they proposed to kill their prisoner, and hide his body in the bushes, the chief having commanded that the murder should be kept secret from the rest of his party. They had just passed a thicket on the side of the trail, when the terrible battle-cry of War-Eagle rose behind them, and his tomahawk clove the skull of the Osage in the rear. Quick as thought, Wingenund sprang upon the one in front, and pinioned his arms; the Osage tried in vain to disengage them from the grasp of his light and active opponent. Brief was the struggle, for the deadly weapon of the Delaware chief descended again, and the second Osage lay a corpse upon the trail.

The brothers, having exchanged an affectionate but hasty greeting, took the spoils from their enemies according to Indian fashion, War-Eagle contenting himself with their scalps, and his brother taking such weapons and articles of

* When a trail is made by a party on a march, the grass is, of course, trodden down in the same direction as that in which they are going. A party travelling along it from the opposite quarter, are said to take the back-foot of the trail. The author heard the expression used by an experienced Western hunter, but is not aware whether it is in common use; at all events it explains its own meaning significantly enough.

dress as his present condition rendered necessary for his comfort and defence; after which, they threw the two bodies into the thicket into which the Osages had intended to cast that of Wingenund, and continued their course at a rapid rate towards the eastward, War-Eagle relating as they went the events which had brought him so opportunely to the scene of action; they were briefly as follows:

When he left his party, he never halted nor slackened his speed until he saw the smoke of the Osage camp-fire; concealing himself in the adjoining wood, he had witnessed all the surprising occurrences of the day; and in the event of the Osages actually proceeding to set fire to the faggots around Wingenund, he was prepared to rush upon them alone, and either rescue his brother or perish with him; but, with the true self-command and foresight of an Indian, he kept this desperate and almost hopeless attempt for the last chance; and when to his surprise and joy he saw the prisoner sent upon the trail with a guard of only two Osages, he took advantage of a bank of rising ground, behind which he crept, and moving swiftly forward under its shelter, gained unperceived the thicket, where he had so successfully waylaid them.

Fearing a pursuit, the brothers never abated their speed throughout the evening, or the early portion of the night. A few hours before dawn, some scattered bushes near the path offering them a precarious shelter, they lay down to snatch a short repose; a mouthful of dried bison-meat, which remained in War-Eagle's belt, he gave to his exhausted brother; and one blanket covering them both, they slept soundly and undisturbed until the sun was high in heaven.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

Mahéga finds the Bodies of his two Followers slain by War Eagle.—Some Reflections on Indian Character.—War Eagle returns to his Friends, and the Osage Chief pushes his Way further into the Mountains.

MAHÉGA waited anxiously the return of the two men whom he had sent with Wingenund, being desirous to learn whether they had faithfully executed the treacherous commission with which he had entrusted them. When he found that the evening passed away, and that the successive hours of the night brought no intelligence of them, he became alarmed lest they should have fallen in with some hostile band of Indians, an occurrence which, in addition to the loss of two of his warriors, would threaten imminent danger to his whole party.

At the earliest peep of dawn he set out in search of them, accompanied by three of his followers, giving orders to the remainder to observe a strict watch during his absence. Traversing the little valley in front of his camp with hasty strides, he struck into the eastward trail, and followed it with unabated speed until he reached the spot where the deadly struggle of the preceding evening had arisen. Here the indications were too evident to leave a moment's doubt upon his mind; the grass on and beside the trail was stained with blood, and from the neighbouring thicket were heard the snarls and yells of a pack of wolves quarrelling over their horrible banquet; while high in air several buzzards were wheeling round and round, as if endeavouring to find courage to descend and dispute the prey with the quadruped spoilers.

Dashing into the thicket, and driving the snarling wolves before him, Mahéga found his worst fears realized, and his horror-struck warriors stood in silence beside the mangled remains of their comrades. The conduct of Indians under such circumstances is uncertain and various as their mood, their impulse, their tribe, and their age. Sometimes they indulge in fearful threats of vengeance; sometimes in the most woful howlings and lamentations; at others, they observe a silence as still as the death which they are contemplating.

The Osages, on this occasion, following the example of their leader, spoke not a word, although the sight before them (far too horrible for description) was sufficient to try the strongest nerves; it was chiefly by the immovable firmness of his character, that Mahéga had gained and maintained the despotic influence which he exercised over his followers; neither did it fail him on this occasion, for he proceeded to examine the mutilated remains of his deceased warriors with his usual coolness and sagacity, in order that he might discover by whom the deed had been perpetrated; on a close inspection of the skulls, he found that both had been fractured by a tomahawk blow, which had fallen in a direction almost vertical, but rather at a posterior angle of inclination, whence he immediately inferred that they had been killed by some enemy who had surprised and attacked them from behind, and not in an open fight; after a long and careful observation of the fractures he was of opinion that they were made by the same weapon. This inference, however, he kept to himself, and directing two of his followers to pay such offices to the dead, as were possible under the circumstances, and then to return to the camp, he went forward with the remaining Osage, to satisfy himself as to the manner in which the calamity had occurred; he remembered to have seen Wingenund starting on the trail, and although he knew him to be bold and active, he could not for an instant entertain the belief that a stripling, wearied with a sleepless night, stiff from being so many hours bound with thongs, and totally unprovided with arms, could have killed his two guards, who were strong, wary, and well-armed men!

For some distance Mahéga continued his course in moody silence, the beaten trail affording no indication sufficient to guide him in his conjecture, but at length he reached a place where it crossed a small rivulet, the flat banks of which were sprinkled with a kind of gravelly sand; here he paused and examined every inch of the ground with the eye of a lynx, nor was it long before he detected the foot-prints which he sought, a smaller and a greater, the latter shewing longer intervals and a deeper impression.

Rising from his stooping scrutiny, the eyes of the chief glared with fury, as he turned to his follower, and in a voice almost inarticulate with rage, groaned the hated name of War-Eagle.

"It is," he continued vehemently, "plain as the moon in the sky, the trail of the cursed Le-wape, and the light foot of his brother; see here, War-Eagle has walked through the water, and Wingenund has sprung over it, the dew has fallen since they passed, they are far before us—but Mahéga must not sleep till their scalps are in his belt. Is Toweno ready?" inquired the fierce chief, tightening his girdle while he loosened the tomahawk suspended from it.

"Toweno is ready," replied the Indian, "to

fight or run by the side of Mahéga, from morning until night; his hand is not weak nor are his feet slow; but the Great Chief must not let the angry spirit bring a cloud before his eyes."

"Let Toweno speak," said Mahéga controlling his fierce impatience, "his words will find a path to open ears."

"War-Eagle," pursued the Osage, "is swift of foot and cunning as a twice-trapped wolf. He is not come upon this far war-path alone. Wingenund has been prowling round the camp, and while Mahéga follows the trail of War-Eagle, the youth may guide the pale-face warrior called Netis, with his band, to the encampment of the Washashe. Toweno has need of no more words."

Mahéga saw in a moment the truth and force of his follower's suggestion, and smothering for the moment his passion for revenge, he resolved to return at once to his encampment.

"The counsel of Toweno is good," said he; "when a friend speaks, Mahéga is not deaf."

Among the features that distinguish the character of the North American Indian, there is none more remarkable, none more worthy the study and the imitation of civilized man, than the patience and impartial candour with which they listen to the advice or opinion of others; although so prone to be swayed by passion and governed by impulse, the Indian seems to have a wonderful power of laying aside these predispositions, when discussing a matter privately with a friend, or openly in council. The decorum with which all their public discussions are conducted, has been observed and recorded by every writer familiar with their habits, from the time of Charlevoix, and of the interesting "Lettres Edifiantes" to the present day. Colden, Tanner, Mackenzie, and many others who have described the Northern tribes, concur in bearing their testimony to the truth of this observation; Heckewelder, Loskiel, Smith, Jefferson, confirm it in the central region; and the Spanish writers bear frequent witness to it in their descriptions of the Southern tribes, whom they met with in their campaigns in Florida, and the adjacent country. In reading the account given of the numerous tribes inhabiting the vast region between the Mississippi and the Rocky Mountains, by Clarke, Lewis, Long, and others, the same observation forces itself upon us almost at every page, and it is the more remarkable when we reflect upon two facts—first, that we find this characteristic attributed to forty or fifty different nations inhabiting a continent larger than Europe, by the concurring testimony of travellers from different countries, and holding the most opposite opinions.

Secondly, we do not find a similar characteristic distinguishing other savages, or nomadic tribes in Asia, Africa, or the Pacific Islands.

There is not a public body in Europe, from the British Parliament down to the smallest burgh meeting, that might not study with advantage the proceedings of an Indian council, whether as described in the faithful pages of the German missionaries, or, as it may still be seen by any one who has leisure and inclination to visit those remote regions, where the Indian character is least changed and contaminated by intercourse with the whites. Such an observer would find his attention attracted to two remarkable facts; first, that no speaker is ever interrupted; and, secondly, that only those speak who from age, rank, and deeds, are entitled to be listened to.

It is a popular and plausible reply to say that missions concerning the complicated business of a great country, cannot be carried on like the unimportant "talks" of these savage tribes; this reasoning is shallow and full of sophistry, for many of the Indian councils above referred to have involved all the dearest interests of the nation; their soil, their pride, their ancestral traditions, all were at stake, perhaps all with little more than a nominal alternative, to be bartered for the grasping white man's beads, whiskey, and subsidies. In these councils, every listening Indian must have felt that his own home, the lodge built by his father, and the patch of maize cultivated by his family, were dependent on the issue of the negotiation, and yet it is not upon record that a chief, or elder-brave was ever interrupted in his speech, or that the decorum of the council was infringed by irregularity or tumult on the part of those who might have condescended themselves injured and aggrieved.

Even in regard to time, it is a great mistake to suppose that anything is gained by interruption, for an obstinate talker will carry his point in the end; and although the persevering exclamations, and groanings, and crowings of an impatient House of Commons, may succeed in drowning his voice, and forcing him to sit down, he will rise again on some other occasion and inflict upon his hearers a speech whose bulk and bitterness are both increased by the suppressed fermentation which it has undergone.

Leaving the moody and despirited Osage chief to find his way back to his encampment, we will now return to Reginald Brandon and his party, whom we left starting westward on the trail, marching in regular order, and prepared, without delaying their progress, to repel any hostile attempt on the part of the Crows. The latter band seemed, however, so impressed with the strength, discipline, and appointments of the white men's force, now that it had received a strong reinforcement, that they gave up all present intention of molesting it, and went off in an opposite direction in search of game, horses, or booty, where these might be acquired with less risk and danger.

Reginald and Ethelston went together on the line of march; and although the spirits of the former were damped by the recent and melancholy fate of the Crow youth, in whom he had felt much interest, the buoyant hilarity of his disposition did not long resist his friend's endeavours to banish that subject from his thoughts, and to turn the conversation to topics more immediately connected with the object of their present expedition.

Reginald having once confided to Ethelston his love for Prairie-bird, found a pleasure in describing to him her beauty, her natural grace, her simplicity, in short, all those charms and attractions which had carried by storm the fortress of his heart; and it seemed that his friend was no less willing to listen than he to talk upon the subject; repeating question after question, regarding her with an unwearied intensity of curiosity that excited at length the surprise of Reginald himself.

"Indeed, Edward," he said, laughing, "did I not know that you are devoted to a certain lady on the banks of the Muskingum, and that your attachments are reasonably steady, I could almost believe that the fidelity and eloquence with which I have described Prairie-bird had made you fall in love with her yourself."

"Perhaps you are claiming more merit for your own eloquence than is due to it," said Ethelston, in a similar tone; "you forget that before I joined you, Paul Müller and I had travelled many hundred miles together; and it is a topic upon which he speaks as warmly and partially as yourself."

"Well he may!" replied Reginald with energy, "for she owes everything to his affectionate care and instruction, in return for which she loves and venerates him as if he were her father."

In such conversation did the friends while away many weary hours on the march; and at the midday halt, and evening camp, they were joined by the worthy Missionary, who, justly proud of his pupil, and knowing that he was addressing those who would not soon be weary of hearing her praises, told them many anecdotes of her early youth, with an earnestness and feeling which often caused Reginald to avert his face, and Ethelston to shade his brow thoughtfully with his hand.

Nor was the march unenlivened by scenes of a merrier kind, for Pierre, Baptiste, and Monsieur Perrot kept up a constant round of fun and railery around their camp-kettle; the latter continuing to act as chief cook for all the white men and half-bred in the party, and leaving the Delawares to dress their food after their own fancy. Provisions were abundant in the camp, and Perrot contrived by his ingenuity to give a variety both in appearance and flavour to supplies, which in truth consisted of little more than parched maize, biscuit, coffee, and bison meat. He talked incessantly, and his lively sallies not only amused his two companions, but often drew a smile from Reginald, in spite of the anxiety occasioned by the object of the expedition.

"Master Baptiste," said the valet cook, (as nearly as his language may be rendered into English,) "methinks those great hands of yours are better skilled in chopping Sioux skulls, or felling bee-trees, than in the science of butchery; see, here, what unchristian lumps of meat you have brought me to dress!"

"Were it not for these great hands, as you call them," replied the sturdy Guide, "you, Master Perrot, with those fine-skinned fingers, would often ere this have seen little of either deer or bison-meat for your supper!"

"As for that, I deny not that you are tolerably successful in hunting, and your load of venison is sometimes brought decently home; but in the cutting up of a bison, your education has been much neglected."

"It may be so, Monsieur Perrot," answered Baptiste; "I do not pretend to much skill in the matter, and yet methinks I should understand as much of it as one who had never seen a bison a month since; and who could not now dress a cow's udder half so well as an Osage squaw." Pierre laughed outright at his comrade's depreciation of Perrot's culinary skill, and the latter, whose temper was not a whit ruffled by this disparagement of his talents, inquired with the utmost gravity,

"Pray, Baptiste, instruct me in this matter, for I doubt not, although you have so grievously mutilated the ox, that your method of dressing the cow's udder must be worth learning."

"Nay," replied Baptiste, "I will show you that when we come among cows and squaws; meanwhile, I recommend you to make yourself a spare peruke; as we may soon be running for

of those Osages, or some other roving Indians, who may chance to carry off that moveable scalp on the top of your head."

This allusion to Perrot's disaster and narrow escape among the Sioux, turned the laugh against him, but he quickly checked its current by placing before his companions some buffalo steaks, and cakes of maize flour, which practically contradicted all that they had been saying in disparagement of the good-humoured Frenchman's cookery.

Towards the close of the second day's march, one of the Delawares, who had been sent forward to reconnoitre, galloped to the rear and reported that he had seen one or two men at great distance a-head, nearly in the line of the trail which they were now following. Reginald immediately sprung upon Nekimi, who was walking like a pet dog at his side; and, accompanied by Ethelston, rode forward to examine the strangers with his telescope. The undulations of the intervening ground hid them for a considerable time from his view, and when they reappeared they were near enough to be clearly distinguished through his glass.

"War-Eagle," he exclaimed, "heaven be praised! it is my brave Indian brother returning with young Wingenund. Edward, I will now present to you the noblest creature that ever yet I encountered in human shape. My feelings would prompt me to rush forward and embrace him; but we must conform ourselves to Indian usage here, or we shall lose the good opinion of our Delaware friends."

Reginald had confided to his friend all that had passed between himself and War-Eagle, not even omitting his unfortunate and long-cherished passion for Prairie-bird, so that Ethelston awaited his approach with no ordinary interest.

As the Delaware chieftain advanced with erect front, his expanded chest thrown slightly forward, and the fine symmetry of his form developed in every movement as he stepped lightly over the prairie, Ethelston felt that he had never seen, either in nature or in the works of art, a finer specimen of manhood; and when he witnessed the grave simplicity which mingled with his cordial greeting of Reginald Brandon, he could not deny that features, form, and bearing stamped the Delaware chieftain at once as one of the lords of the creation. Neither did the gentle gracefulness of the slighter figure by whom he was accompanied escape Ethelston's notice, and he felt no difficulty in recognising in the interesting features of the youth, that Wingenund of whose high and amiable qualities he had heard so much from Reginald.

"These are, indeed," said Ethelston to himself, "worthy descendants of the Lenapé princes, whose sway in bygone days extended over many hundred leagues of fertile territory, from the Ohio to the Atlantic coast: whose broad lands are now tilled by the Saxon plough, on the site of whose ancient villages now stand the churches and the populous streets of Baltimore, and the city of brotherly love. With the loss of their dominion, most of these once-powerful tribes have lost the highest and best characteristics of their race; subdued by the rifle, corrupted by the silver, degraded by the ardent spirits of the white man, they present but too often a spectacle in which it is difficult to recognise any traces of the attributes with which the narratives of our early travellers and missionaries invest them. But these are indeed, features which a Titian

would not have scorned to delineate; these forms which the pencil of Michael Angelo and the chisel of Praxiteles would have rejoiced to immortalize."

While these thoughts were rapidly passing through the mind of Ethelston, the greeting between Reginald and War-Eagle was exchanged; and the former had given to his Indian brother a hasty sketch of the events which had occurred in his absence, and of those which had led to the reinforcement brought by Ethelston. A gleam of joy shot athwart the features of the Delaware, as he learned the vengeance which his warriors had taken of their enemies; and his quick eye glanced with gratified pride over the scalps which they displayed, and the magnificent bear-claw collar dependant from Ato's neck. The Lenapé braves saw too that the tomahawk of their leader had not slept in its belt on his solitary war-path, for the scalps of the two unfortunate Osages whom he had slain hung close to its handle; and though there was no shout of triumph, an audible murmur of satisfaction ran through the whole band.

When Reginald presented Ethelston to War-Eagle as his earliest and most faithful friend from childhood, the chief, taking him by the hand, said, "The friend of Nejis is the friend of War-Eagle,—their hearts are one; he is very welcome." Reginald then presented Wingenund to his friend, as the gallant youth who had saved his life on the banks of the Muskingum.

"I feel as if I had long known him," said Ethelston, shaking his hand cordially; "I have come lately from Mooshanne, where his name is not forgotten."

"Is the Lily of Mooshanne well?" inquired the youth, fixing his dark and earnest eyes full upon the countenance of the person whom he was addressing. Ethelston had been prepared by his friend's description of Wingenund for a demeanour and character highly interesting, but there was a melody, a pathos, a slight tremour in the tone in which he spoke those few words, there was also in his countenance a touching expression of melancholy that thrilled to the heart of Ethelston. How quick is the jealous eye of love! Ethelston knew that Wingenund had passed only one day in the society of Lucy, yet he saw in an instant the deep impression which that day had left on the young Indian's mind.

"The Lily of Mooshanne is well," he replied. "If she had known that I should visit her brother, and his Lenapé friends, she would have bid me speak many kind words to them from her."

Wingenund passed on, and War-Eagle related to the two friends the leading circumstances of his own expedition, omitting all mention of the fatigue, the hunger, the sleepless nights that he had undergone, before he discovered and reached the Osage camp.

As he described the scene of Wingenund being tied to the post, with the dried faggots at his feet, and the appearance of Prairie-bird when Mahéga called upon her to pronounce her own or her brother's fate, both of his auditors held their breath with anxious suspense, which gave place to astonishment, as he proceeded to relate with undisguised awe, the mystery of the solar eclipse, which led to the liberation of Wingenund.

When he had concluded his narrative, Reginald was speechless, and Ethelston cast his Delaware's arm, inquired in a low whisper,

“Will the Osage dare, or will he dare to make the Prairie-bird his wife by force?”

“He has not,” replied the Chief, “the words of Ollitipa, and the black sun, made him afraid.” He added, drawing himself proudly to his full height, “Had the wolf threatened to touch her with his paw, the tomahawk of War-Eagle would have pierced his heart, or the bones of the Lenapé chief and his brother would have been picked by the buzzards of the mountains.” So saying, War-Eagle joined his expectant warriors.

In the mean time Mahéga returned to his camp, in a vexed and gloomy state of mind; as he passed the tent of Prairie-bird a darker frown lowered upon his brow, and having entered his lodge, he seated himself, without speaking to any of those who had assembled there, in expectation of his return.

The youngest of the Osages present having handed him a lighted pipe, retired to a corner of the lodge, where he resumed his occupation of sharpening the head of a barbed arrow, leaving the chief to his own meditations. These dwelt mainly upon Prairie-bird, and were of a nature so mingled and vague, as to cause him the greatest perplexity; the effect of her beauty and attractions upon his passions had rather increased than diminished. He loved her as much as one so fierce and selfish could love another; yet, on the other hand, he felt that he ought to hate her, as being the sister of War-Eagle, and the betrothed of the man who had struck and disgraced him; with these contending feelings, there was blended a superstitious awe of her communion with the world of spirits, and a remote hope that some of these supernatural agencies might turn her heart in his favour, and induce her not only to become his bride, but zealously to employ all her mysterious powers in the furtherance of his ambitious schemes.

Such was the train of thought pursued by the Osage, as he leaned against the pile of furs that supported his back, and stretching his huge limbs at their ease, watched the eddying wreaths of fragrant smoke, which, gently puffed from his mouth and nostrils, wound their slow way to the fissures in the lodge-roof by which they escaped.*

The suggestion of Toweno had made a strong impression upon Mahéga's mind, and led him to expect at no distant period, an attack on the part of the Delawares, and, as he was uncertain of the force which his enemy might bring against him, he resolved to make a timely retreat to some spot, where a pursuit, if attempted by the Delawares, might enable him to take them at a disadvantage.

Calling to him an Osage, who was leaning against one of the outer posts that supported the lodge, he desired him to make, with a comrade, a careful search of the neighbourhood, and to report any trail or suspicious appearance that they might find, and when he had given these orders he summoned Toweno, and started with him towards the head of the little valley,

without informing him of the object which he had in view, but as the latter was the only person to whom the chief had entrusted the secret of the cache, where his most valuable spoils were deposited, and as they were now marching in that direction, he was not at a loss to divine Mahéga's intentions. After a brief silence, the chief said to his follower, “Do the thoughts of Toweno walk upon the same path with the thoughts of Mahéga?”

“They do,” he replied.

“Can Toweno speak them?”

“Mahéga intends to leave the camp before the Lenapé come, and taking some goods with him as presents to the mountain tribes, to find a safe place where the enemy cannot follow him.”

“Toweno says well,” answered the chief, with a grim smile, “but that is not enough, the Lenapé must be made a fool, he must be put upon a wrong trail.”

“That is good, if it can be done,” said Toweno gravely, “but it is not easy to put sand in the eyes of War-Eagle.”

“Mahéga will put sand into his eyes, and a knife into his heart before this moon becomes a circle,” replied the chief, clutching as he went the haft of his scalpknife, and unconsciously lengthening his stride under the excitement produced by the thoughts of a conflict with his hated foe. They had now reached the “cache,” which was a large dry hole in the side of a rocky bank, the entrance to which was closed by a stone, and admirably concealed by a dense thicket of brambles and wild raspberry bushes; having rolled away the stone, Mahéga withdrew from the cache a plentiful supply of beads, vermilion, powder, and cloths of various colour, being part of the plunder taken from the camp of the unfortunate Delawares, and wrapping in two blankets as much as he and his companion could carry, they replaced the stone, carefully concealing their footprints as they retreated, by strewing them with leaves and grass. At a spot very near the cache was the skeleton of a deer, which Mahéga had killed on a former occasion, and purposely dragged thither. As soon as they reached this point, they took no further precaution to conceal their trail, because even if it were found, the party discovering it would stop under the impression that it was made by the hunters who had killed the deer. On returning to the camp they met the two Osages who had been despatched to reconnoitre, and who reported that they had found one fresh Indian trail in the woods opposite the little valley, and that they had followed it as far as the stream, where, from its direction and appearance, they were assured it was the trail of War-Eagle; and Mahéga now first learned that his daring foe had been within eighty yards of the spot selected for the torture of Wingenund. His was not a nature to give way to idle regrets; equally a stranger to fear and to remorse, the future troubled him but little, the past not at all, excepting when it afforded him food wherewith to cherish his revenge; so the information now received did not interrupt him in carrying into execution his plans for retreat. Accordingly, he desired Toweno to summon his warriors to a council, and in a short time the band, now reduced to eight besides himself, assembled in front of his lodge. Here he harangued them with his usual cunning sagacity, pointing out to them the risk of remaining in their present position, and setting before them in the most

* The herbs mingled by the Indians with a small proportion of tobacco, are frequently of a light and fragrant flavour; sometimes, too, they have some narcotic properties. In order fully to enjoy their qualities after the Indian fashion, the smoker must inhale the smoke by the mouth and expel it through the nostril, in which operation the nerves and small vessels of the latter experience a pungent sensation which some consider highly agreeable, and is not unlike that which is caused by a pinch of mild, or perfumed snuff.

favourable light the advantages which might accrue from their falling in with some of the peaceable tribes among the mountains, and carrying back from them to the banks of the Osage and Kansas rivers a plentiful cargo of beaver and other valuable skins. Having concluded his harangue, he opened before them the largest (although the least precious) of the bales brought from the cache, which he divided equally among them, so that each warrior knowing what belonged to him, might use it as he thought fit; the remaining bale he ordered to be carefully secured in wrappers of hide, and to be reserved for negotiations for the benefit of the whole band; the Osages were loud in their approbation of the speech, and of the liberal distribution of presents by which it had been accompanied, and they retired from his lodge to make immediate preparations for departure.

While these were rapidly advancing, Mahéga, who had made himself thoroughly familiar with the neighbouring locality, considered and matured his plans for retreat, the chief object of which was to mislead the Delawares in the event of their attempting a pursuit. The result of his meditations he confined to his own breast, and his followers neither wished nor cared to know it, having full reliance upon his sagacity and judgment. Meanwhile Prairie-bird remained quietly in her tent, grateful for the deliverance of her young brothers, and indulging in a thousand dreamy visions of her own escape, contrived and effected by Reginald and War-Eagle. These were suddenly interrupted by the entrance of Lita, who, while engaged in carrying water from the brook, had gathered from one of the Osages some intelligence of what was going forward. If the truth must be told, this Indian, separated from the woman-kind of his own tribe, had begun to look on the expressive gipsy countenance of the Comanche girl with an eye of favour; and she not being slow to detect the influence which she had acquired, encouraged him just enough to render him communicative, and willing to offer her such attentions as were admissible in their relative situations. Yet in her heart she scorned him as a "dog of an Osage," and though he knew her to be only a slave, there was something in her manner that attracted him in spite of himself; it was not difficult for the quick girl to gather from her admirer the news of Wingennund's escape, and the death of the two Osages sent to guard him, but when she heard the latter attributed with an execration to the hand of War-Eagle, she was obliged to avert her face, that her informant might not observe the look of triumph that gleamed in her dark eyes.

Having ascertained at the same time, that Mahéga was about to strike his camp and resume his march, she rewarded the Osage by an arch smile, that sent him away contented, while she, taking up her water vessel, pursued her way to her mistress's tent.

To the latter, Lita lost no time in communicating what she had learned, and was disappointed to observe that Prairie-bird seemed rather vexed than gratified by the intelligence.

"Does Olitipa not rejoice?" inquired she eagerly, "that the scalps of the Washashe dogs who kept Wingennund prisoner are hanging at the belt of the Lenapé chief?"

"Olitipa is tired of blood," answered the maiden, mournfully, "and the loss of his warriors will make Mahéga more fierce and cruel to us. See, already he prepares to go on a distant path, where

the eyes of War-Eagle and Natis may not see us;" and the poor girl shuddered at the prospect of a journey to regions yet more wild and remote, and a captivity yet more hopeless of deliverance.

"Let him go where never Washashe foot stepped before," replied Lita, "where no trail is seen but that of the bighorn, and the black-tailed deer; War-Eagle will follow and will find him."

Prairie-bird smiled sadly at the eagerness of her companion, and then desired her aid in getting their wardrobe and few moveables ready for the expected journey. While they were thus employed Mahéga called Prairie-bird to the door of her tent, where she found the chief, with his arm wrapped round with a cloth; and believing him to be wounded, she acceded at once to his request that she would give him one of her kerchiefs for a bandage. During the remainder of the evening she saw nothing more of him or of his people, and she slept undisturbed until an hour before dawn, when she was awakened by the bustle of preparation for departure.

As soon as her light tent was struck and fastened to the poles which supported it, she observed that a kind of cradle had been constructed by the Osages, which was covered with skins, and was adapted to the purpose of carrying herself or her moveables, when slung to the tent poles, as well as to convey its contents dry over any river that might obstruct their passage.

The Osage party was now divided into two, of which one was reserved by Mahéga for his own guidance, the other being entrusted to that of Toweno; all the horses were placed under the charge of the latter, including those carrying the packages, and the palfrey usually ridden by Prairie-bird; this party beat their course to the northward, and Mahéga accompanied them a few hundred yards, repeating many instructions to Toweno, which seemed from his earnest gesticulation to be both minute and important.

The heart of Prairie-bird sank within her when she saw her favourite horse led away, and herself left with Lita on foot, attended by Mahéga and four of his men; knowing, however, the inutilty of any present attempt either at resistance or flight, she awaited in uncomplaining silence the further commands of her captor, although she easily saw through the mocking veil of courtesy with which he disguised his anticipated triumph over her baffled friends. To his inquiry whether she preferred travelling on foot to being carried in the wicker-frame by two of his men, she replied without hesitation, in the affirmative; upon which he presented her with a pair of moccasins, to be worn over her own, so ingeniously contrived that although they did not encumber her movements by their weight, they yet rendered it impossible that her foot-prints should be recognised, even by the practised eye of War-Eagle. A similar pair was also placed on the feet of Lita.

It may easily be imagined, that the Osages, during their residence at this encampment, made various excursions for hunting and other purposes; they had used on these occasions old trails made by native tribes or by the bison; one of these ran in a north-east direction, skirting the base of the high western hills, and offering the prospect of easy travelling, through an undulating and partially wooded country. Into this path Mahéga struck at once, leading the way himself, followed by Prairie-bird and Lita, the four Osages bringing up the rear. This line of march being adopted by the cunning chief, first

he might have frequent opportunity of seeing and speaking with the maiden, and finally, that his men might be the better enabled to fulfil his strict injunction, that they should carefully remove any trace which she might purposely, or accidentally, leave on the trail.

Such an idea did not, however, appear to have entered the thoughts of Prairie-bird, for she followed the Osage chief with a blithe and cheerful air, replying, good-humouredly to the observations, which he from time to time addressed to her, and pointing out to Lita the beauties of the scenery through which they were passing.

It was indeed a lovely region, abounding in rock, herbage, and magnificent timber; the latter affording an agreeable shelter from the rays of the sun, while the fresh breeze, blowing from the snow-capped mountains, which bounded the western prospect, rendered the exercise of walking pleasant in the highest degree.

They had followed the trail for some time without meeting with any game, when the quick eye of Mahéga detected a mountain-deer, browsing at no great distance, and in a moment an arrow from his bow pierced its flank; the wounded animal bounded onward into the glade, and the chief sprang forward in pursuit. The Osages fixed their keen and eager eyes on the chase, mastering half-aloud expressions of impatient discontent at being prevented from joining it. Swift as had been the arrow of Mahéga, it was not more so than the thought and hand of Prairie-bird, who contrived, while her guards were gazing intently on the deer and its pursuer, to let fall unperceived a small slip of paper upon the trail; so completely did she appear absorbed in watching the chase, that the movement was unnoticed even by Lita, and the party continued their way a few hundred steps, when a signal from Mahéga, now out of sight, soon brought one of his followers to assist him in cutting up the quarry.

Before leaving her tent, Prairie-bird had prepared and secreted about her person several small slips of paper, on each of which she had written the word "Follow," trusting to her own ingenuity to find an opportunity of dropping one now and then unobserved by the Osages.

Such an opportunity having now occurred, it had been successfully employed, and the maiden went forward with a lighter heart, in the confident hope that Providence would cause some friendly eye to rest upon the slight, yet guiding token left upon her path.

For two days Mahéga pursued his march securely, as if fearless of pursuit, halting frequently to afford rest and refreshment to Prairie-bird, and camping at night, on some sheltered spot, where his men constructed for her protection a hut, or bower of branches, over which was thrown a covering of skins; before setting out in the morning this bower was destroyed, and the branches dragged to some distance in several directions, and Mahéga, having carefully examined the spot, was the last to leave it, in order to ensure that no indication or trace of his fair prisoner might remain.

On the third day about noon they reached the banks of a broad stream, which two of the Osages crossed immediately, with instructions from their chief to make a visible trail in a N.E. direction for some distance, when they were to enter the river again at another place, and to wade or swim down it until they rejoined him; meanwhile Prairie-bird and Lita, with such arti-

cles as they wished to keep dry, were placed in the light coriole or wicker-boat covered with skins, and Mahéga guided its course down the stream, followed by the remainder of his men; they descended the bed of the river for several miles in this way, and although more than one trail appeared on the banks as a crossing place for Indians or bison, he passed them all unheeded, until he came to a broad track, which had very lately been trodden by so many feet that the trail of his own party could not be distinguished upon it; here he halted until he was rejoined by the men whom he had left behind, when they proceeded forward at a brisk pace, towards the spot which he had appointed as the rendezvous for his party in charge of the pack-ages and the horses.

Mahéga was now in high spirits, being confident that the precautions which he had taken would throw the pursuers off the scent, and enable him to follow out his plans, which were to trade, during the summer with the Shosonies and other tribes hovering about the spurs of the mountains, procuring from them beaver and other valuable furs in exchange for the fine cloths and goods which he had brought from the Delaware camp; after which he proposed to return to the northern portion of the Osage country, enriched by his traffic, and glorying in the possession of his mysterious and beautiful bride.

Such were the projects entertained by the Osage chief, and he brooded over them so abstractedly, that he afforded to the ever-watchful Prairie-bird an opportunity of dropping another of her small slips of paper unperceived; she did not neglect it, although almost hopeless of her friends ever discovering her path after the many precautions taken by Mahéga, and the long distance down the course of the river where no trail nor trace of the passage of his party could be left.

On reaching the rendezvous he found his detachment with the horses and baggage already arrived; they had come by a circuitous route, availing themselves of several Indian trails by the way, on one of which Toweno had, by direction of his chief, scattered some shreds of the kerchief that he obtained from Prairie-bird; after which he had returned upon the same trail, and diverged into a transverse one, which had enabled him to reach the rendezvous by the time appointed.

Prairie-bird being again mounted upon her favourite palfrey, the whole party set forward with increased speed, which they did not relax until towards evening, when they saw in the distance numerous fires, betokening the neighbourhood of a populous Indian village. Mahéga then ordered a halt, and having sent forward Toweno to reconnoitre, encamped in a sheltered valley for the night. When Prairie-bird found herself once more, after the fatigues of the two preceding days, under the cover of her own tent, she looked round its small circular limits, and felt as if she were at home! casting herself upon her couch of furs, she offered up her grateful thanks to the Almighty Being who had hitherto so mercifully protected her, and soon forgot her cares and weariness in sound and refreshing slumbers.

CHAPTER XXXV.

War Eagle and his Party reach the deserted Camp of the Osages.—The latter fall in with a strange Band of Indians, and Mahéga appears in the Character of a Diplomatist.

A BRIGHT sun shone upon the little valley, which, twenty-four hours before, had been deserted by the Osages, when a tall form glided cautiously to its entrance, half concealed by the bushes that fringed its edge. Glancing hastily around, War-Eagle, for he it was who was guiding his party in pursuit, returned to announce to them his belief that the enemy had decamped; nevertheless, the usual precautions were adopted against a surprise. A small body of Delawares were thrown forward to reconnoitre the neighbouring woods, under the command of Atto, while the chief, accompanied by Reginald, Ethelston, and the rest of the party, entered the deserted Osage encampment; every nook and cranny among the adjacent woods and rocks were diligently explored, and not till then were they convinced that their crafty foe had given them the slip. While the rest of the party were busied in this search, the eye of Reginald Brandon rested in absorbed attention upon the spot to which his steps had been first led, as if by the power of instinct; it was a small plot, completely sheltered by the rock which guarded the front of the recess; a few holes made in the turf showed where pegs had been driven in to secure a circular tent. "Here," said Reginald to Ethelston, "here is the spot trodden by her dear feet—here have her weary limbs reposed during the long watches of the night—here have her prayers been offered up at noon and eve for that rescue which we seem doomed, alas! never to accomplish!"

"Say not a word, my son," said Paul Müller, laying his hand kindly on the excited Reginald's shoulder; "say not a word, my son, which would seem to limit the power or the mercy of that Being to whom those prayers were addressed. Hope is the privilege, perseverance the duty of man; let us faithfully use these bounties, and leave the issue to His all-wise disposal."

"I am indeed ashamed of my hasty expression, worthy Father," said Reginald, frankly; "but I will draw encouragement from your suggestion, and banish every desponding thought, while there remains a chance of success, or even a glimmering of hope."

Wingenund, who had approached unobserved to the side of his friend, whispered to him, in a low voice, "Netis is right: here it was that Olitipa sat when Wingenund was a prisoner; she is not far, the Lenapé warriors never lose a trail."

While they were thus conversing, a messenger from War-Eagle summoned them to a consultation on the plan of pursuit which should be adopted.

It may not be unnecessary to inform those who have never been upon the prairies of the Far-West, that a trail is easily followed when the party pursued is in full retreat, because any indication of footsteps is a sure guide to its course; whereas, in a camping-place, where a party has remained for a considerable time, numberless paths are trodden in various directions during its stay, some for hunting excursions, some for bringing water, others for leading horses to and from their pasturage, so that the pursuer is at a loss to discover by which of these paths those of whom he is in pursuit have retreated.

War-Eagle being well aware that M was not less skilled than himself in all the agems and devices of Indian warfare, set to this difficult task with a deliberation that did not suit the eager temper of Reginald Brandon; nevertheless, he had so much confidence in the sagacity of his Indian brother, that he restrained all expression of his impatience, and agreed without objection to the method proposed by him at the council. Agreeably to this plan, Paul Müller, Perrot, and several of the hunters and Delawares, remained on guard at the camp, while the main body, divided into small parties of two or three in each, were to explore every trail that offered a probability of success, and to return before nightfall to report the result of their search. War-Eagle set out, accompanied by Atto; Reginald was joined by Ethelston and Baptiste; the other parties took the respective quarters assigned to them, and Wingenund, who remained some time after they had started, left the camp alone.

The trail followed by Reginald and his friends led towards the upper part of the valley, over broken and bushy ground, intersected here and there by streamlets, and small springs, which just afforded water enough to soften the herbage, in which they were soon lost. Had he been less absorbed by the object of the expedition, Reginald could not have failed to admire the tranquil beauty of this sheltered and secluded spot; but the rich foliage of the forest trees, the merry chirrup of the birds, the fragrance exhaled by the numberless shrubs and flowers, the tempting clusters of wild raspberries, scattered around their path, all these were passed unheeded by men whose senses and faculties were centered only on the trail. With equal modesty and goose sense, Reginald had desired Baptiste to take the lead, knowing that the sturdy forester's experience in such matters was far greater than his own.

After they had marched a considerable distance in silence, Reginald inquired the opinion of his guide.

"Why, you see," replied the latter, "the Osages have driven their horses several times this way to feed, and their marks are plain enough; but if a man may judge by the looks of the country forward, this is not likely to be the right trail. It seems to get smaller the further we go; and I'm inclined to think it's only been a hunting path into the woods."

After this unsatisfactory observation, Baptiste again went forward, until he stopped at the skeleton of a deer; the same, it may be remembered, as was mentioned in a former chapter. Here all traces of a further trail ceased, and the disappointed Reginald exclaimed,

"Baptiste, your suggestion was only too correct; we have lost our time; let us return, and search in some other direction."

"Not so fast, Master Reginald," replied the cautious Guide; "there's as many tricks in an Indian's brain as there are holes in a honeycomb. The animal has been dead some time, and, unless this grass deceives me, it has been trodden within these two days. Voyons vite, as they say up north. Stand quite still; and you, too, Master Ethelston, keep on that side of the deer's bones, while I have a bit of a hunt after the wood fashion."

So saying, the Guide, resting "The Doctor" upon the skeleton, and throwing himself upon his knees, began to turn over the leaves and to

mine minutely every blade of grass and fallen leaf, muttering, as he pursued his task, "If War-Eagle, or one of his double-sighted Delaware warriors were here, he would pick out this trail in no time. My eyes are not so good as they were some years back; but they will serve this purpose, however: This is only bungling work, after all: one—two; yes, I think there's been two of them. Capote! they've strewed sticks and leaves over the back-trail!" And the rough woodsman, as, creeping forward on his knees, he discovered each succeeding step on the trail, hummed snatches of an old Canadian song, the only words of which that the two friends could distinguish, being "Vogue, vogue, la bonne pirogue!"

"Has it not often been a matter of surprise to you," said Ethelston in a whisper to Reginald, "that the language, and even the dialect, of the Guide so constantly varies? Sometimes he speaks very intelligible English; at others, his phrases and exclamations are mostly French; and, on other occasions, he mingles the two most strangely together."

"I confess," replied Reginald, "the same thought has often occurred to me; yet it is not, perhaps, so strange as it would at first sight appear, when we remember the vicissitudes of his early life, the number of years that he spent in youth among the French boatmen and traders of the northern lakes, his excursions with them into the country of the Upper Sioux and the Chippewyan nations; while for the last fifteen years he has been much employed by my father, and, from his honesty and trustworthy qualities, has been thrown a great deal into constant intercourse with persons of respectability and education."

Meanwhile, Baptiste having ascertained the direction of the trail, cast his eyes forward, and, like a shrewd reasoner, jumped to his conclusion, in this instance, more correctly than is usually the case with the persons to whom he has been likened. Pushing aside the bushes which grew at the base of a rock, he soon observed a large aperture, closed by a stone of corresponding dimensions. This last was, with the aid of Reginald, soon displaced, and the "câche" of the Osages, together with the plundered treasure it contained, was exposed to view.

"So, so!" chuckled the Guide, "we have found the thief's fox's hole; an they do not cover their trail somewhat better from the eyes of War-Eagle, we shall have their skins before three nights are over; why, a town lawyer could have treed this coon!"

Reginald and Ethelston could not forbear laughing at the low estimation in which the woodsman held the ferreting powers of a town lawyer—an estimation so contrary to that entertained by those who have any experience in the capacity of a class so unjustly depreciated. They resolved to carry with them to the camp the whole contents of the cave, with a view to their being forthwith appropriated and disposed of by War-Eagle, now the chief of the tribe.

Three large blankets were easily tied into the form of so many sacks, of which each threw one over his shoulder, and they returned with their recovered spoil to the encampment.

Great was the surprise of the Delawares when they saw the three white men coming in, hot and weary with their load; greater still, when the blankets were opened, and their contents laid out upon the turf, among which were found

lead, powder, cloth, knives, beads, paints, medicine-bags, and a variety of small articles, plundered from the lodge of the unfortunate Tamenund, and those adjoining. Among these were a few books and instruments belonging to Prairie-bird and Paul Müller, all of which were immediately delivered over to the latter.

War-Eagle's party was already so well supplied with necessaries of every kind, that only a small portion of the goods was required for their use; and the chief, after permitting every man to claim anything which might have belonged to himself or his relatives, ordered the remainder to be packed in bales of a convenient size, so that they might be either carried with them or concealed, as circumstances might render advisable.

The council was opened by War-Eagle, who desired the several parties, who had been out in different directions, to state the result of the search. This was done with the brief simplicity usually observed by Indians on such occasions. But nothing of importance was elicited; for of the trails which they had examined, none seemed to be that pursued by the Osages in their retreat. During the speech of one of the Delaware warriors, Wingennund, who had not before made his appearance, noiselessly entered the circle, and, taking his place by the side of Reginald, leaned in silence upon his rifle.

Baptiste, whose age and experience entitled him to speak, and who suspected that the chief had not been altogether unsuccessful in his search, addressed him thus: "Has War-Eagle no word for his warriors? Grande-Hâche and Netis have found the stolen goods: has the path of the thief been dark to the eyes of the chief?"

"The foot of War-Eagle has been on the Washashe trail," was the calm reply.

A murmur of satisfaction ran through the assembly, and Reginald could scarcely restrain the open expression of his impatient joy.

"The trail is fresh," continued the chief; "not more than two dews have fallen on the prints of foot and hoof."

"Did my brother see the footmarks of Olitipa and the Comanche girl?" inquired Reginald, hastily.

"He did not, but he saw the trail of Olitipa's horse; iron is on two of its feet.*"

During this conversation, Wingennund more than once looked up in the face of his white brother, then cast his eyes again upon the ground without speaking. The expression of the youth's countenance did not escape the observation of War-Eagle, who thus addressed him: "Has the young warrior of the race of Tamenund seen nothing? He has been far over the Prairie; his step was the last to return to camp; his eyes are not shut; there are words in his breast; why are his lips silent?"

The youth modestly replied in a voice, the singularly musical tone of which charmed and surprised Ethelston, who had seldom heard him speak before, "Wingennund waited until warriors who have seen many summers, and travelled the warpath often, should have spoken. Wingennund has been on the Washashe trail."

At this announcement an exclamation of surprise was uttered by several of the bystanders, for all had seen that the direction whence the youth had returned to the camp was quite differ-

* It may well be supposed that the horses used by the Indians on the prairie are never shod. The palfrey of Olitipa had probably been procured from some Mexican trader.

ent from that which had been pursued by War-Eagle, and yet the latter had affirmed that he had been on the trail of the enemy. The chief himself was, indeed, surprised, but he knew the diffidence, as well as the acute sagacity of the young speaker; and although confident that he was not mistaken in his own judgment, he was not by any means disposed to overrule, without careful inquiry, that of his brother. The conversation between them was thus pursued:

"Were there horses on the trail found by Wingenund?"

"There were not."

"Were the men many in number?"

"Wingenund cannot surely say; the trail was old and beaten; buffalo had passed on it; of fresh marks he could not see many; more than four, not so many as ten."

"Let my brother point with his finger to the line of the trail."

The youth slowly turned, cast his eye upward at the sun, thence at the rocks overhanging the valley to the northward, and then pointed steadily in a north-easterly direction.

War-Eagle, well assured that his own observation had been correct, and that he had followed a trail leading towards the north-west, thus continued: "There are many nations and bands of Indians here; a false light may have shone on the path. How does my young brother know that the feet of the Washashe had trodden it?"

There was a natural dignity, without the slightest touch of vanity, in the manner of the youth, as he replied, "The Great Spirit has given eyes to Wingenund, and he has learned from War-Eagle to know the moccasin of a Washashe from that of a Dahcotah, a Pawnee, a Shawano, or a Maha."

After musing a moment, War-Eagle continued. "Did my brother find the foot of Olitipa and the Comanche girl on the path?"

"He could not find the mark of their feet, yet he believes they are on the path," was the unhesitating reply.

Reginald and Ethelston looked at the speaker with undisguised astonishment; and War-Eagle, although he could not believe but what the latter was mistaken, continued thus to question him: "My brother's speech is dark; if he could find no trail of the women, why does he think that they are on the path? Have the Washashe carried them?"

"Not so," replied Wingenund. "Twice the trail crossed a soft bank of sand, where water runs from the mountains in winter; there were the marks of two who had passed lately, their feet large as those of the warriors, the tread light as that of a woman or a young boy."

The chief was very reluctant to say or do aught that might give pain to his young brother, whose future success as war-leader of the Lenapé had ever been the object of his fondest hopes; but in the urgent business in which they were now engaged, he felt that all other considerations must be secondary to the recovery of Olitipa and revenge on Mahéga for the loss and disgrace inflicted on the Lenapé.

"My brother has eyes as sharp and feet as light as a panther," he said, in a kindly tone; "but a trail in this strange country may deceive a man who has been on the warpath for twenty summers. The trail followed by War-Eagle goes through that small valley between the hills," pointing to the north-west. "Attó was with him; they knew the iron hoof of Olitipa's horse; they

found this scrap, torn from her dress by a bramble stretching across the path. Is my brother satisfied?"

As the chief spoke, he held up before the council a shred of a silk kerchief, such as none, certainly, except she whom they sought was likely to have worn in that region. Again a murmur of approbation ran through the assembly; and Reginald, vexed that his young favourite should have been subjected to such a disappointment, looked towards him, in order to see whether he bore it with equanimity.

The countenance of Wingenund underwent not any change, save that a quiet smile lurked in the corner of his mouth, as he replied, "My brother and Attó are both known on the warpath; their feet are swift, and no lies are found on their lips; it must be true that they have seen the hoof-print of Olitipa's horse; it is true that the piece of dress torn off by the bramble belonged to her. Very cunning are the Washashe wolves; they have tried to blind the eyes of the Lenapé; they have made two paths; let my brother follow that which he has found, and Wingenund the other; perhaps they join beyond the mountain."

"There is sense in what the lad proposes," said Baptiste, who had listened attentively hitherto, without speaking, and who remembered the acuteness shown by Wingenund near the banks of the Ohio. "If he is sure that he has been on the Washashe trail, 'tis like enough they have divided to throw us off the scent; they will come together again further north."

Again War-Eagle mused in silence for a few minutes; then abruptly turning towards Reginald, he inquired, "What is the thought of Netis?"

"I think," replied the latter, "that Wingenund would never have spoken as he has spoken were it not that he felt assured of all that he said. I would venture my life, and what is now far dearer to me than my life, on the truth of his words."

The youth looked gratefully at the speaker and a smile of gratified pride stole over his eloquent countenance.

"It is enough," said War-Eagle with dignity: "let Wingenund go upon his path; he shall not go alone. Which path does my brother Netis choose? he has heard all that has been said?"

Reginald was sorely puzzled: on one side was the sagacious experience of the chief, added to the strong evidence afforded by the shred of silk; on the other, the confident assurance of a youth, of whose diffidence and acuteness he had seen so many proofs. While he was still hesitating, he saw the eyes of the latter fixed upon him with an earnest, imploring expression, that decided him at once.

"I will go with my young brother," he said firmly; "Grande-Hache, Ethelston, and six men shall go with us; War-Eagle, with the rest of the party, shall go on the large Washashe trail that he has struck. Let the chief say how we shall meet beyond the mountain if either of the trails prove false."

"It is good," said War-Eagle; "Attó shall lead the warriors who go with my white brother and before the third sun rises we will come together again and talk of what we have seen."

Having thus spoken, the chief waved his hand to intimate that the council was dissolved; and calling Wingenund and Attó aside, he gave them clear and rapid instructions as to the course to be pursued in case of the trails diver

ing to opposite quarters, and he established at the same time various signals, to be used in case of necessity.

Pierre and M. Perrot asked and obtained leave to join Reginald's party; most of the horses and all the spare baggage followed that of War-Eagle, who led them off through the defile in the mountains before alluded to, while Wingeneau led the way to the trail which he had discovered, with the light springy step of an antelope, and an expression of bright confidence on his countenance, which communicated a similar feeling to those who might otherwise have been disinclined to trust themselves to the guidance of a youth on his first war-path.

While these things were passing in the allied camp, the Osage named Toweno, who had, it may be remembered, been sent forward by Mahéga to reconnoitre, returned on the following morning to his chief, bringing him intelligence that the fires seen at a distance were those of a numerous band of Upsarokas; he had crept near enough to recognise them as such by their dress, the trappings of their horses, and other indications not to be mistaken. On receiving this information, Mahéga revolved in his mind various plans for gaining the good will of his dangerous neighbours, and of securing their alliance as a protection against any further hostilities that might yet be attempted by those in pursuit of his trail. As he had often before profited by the shrewd advice of his follower, so did he invite him now to give his opinion as to the best course to be adopted; and in order that the discussion might not be overheard, he walked slowly with Toweno down a glade which led towards the Crow camp.

They had not proceeded far, when they saw a fine bison-cow coming directly towards them; from her languid and crippled movement, it was evident that she was wounded; while from her struggles to get forward, it was equally clear that she was pursued. The Osages lost not a moment in crouching below the cover of a thick bush; and scarcely had they done so when a mounted Indian appeared, urging his tired horse up the glade after the wounded cow. It happened that she fell, unable to proceed further, not many yards from the spot where Mahéga was concealed; and her pursuer slackening his pace, approached leisurely; and having shot another arrow into her side, dispatched her with the long knife which hung at his side.

He was a tall, fine-looking man, in the prime of life, with remarkably high cheek bones, an aquiline nose, and a mass of long hair gathered or clabbed at the back of his head; his hunting-shirt and leggins denoted by their ornaments a warrior of rank in his tribe, and his whole appearance and bearing were indicative of habitual authority.

The little steed which had borne him, and which in truth would have been termed among white men a pony, stood panting beside its master, whose weight seemed entirely disproportioned to its size and strength; and the Crow sunter now stooped over the bison-cow, examining her condition and her fat with the attention of a practised Indian gourmand.

Meanwhile, half a minute sufficed for Mahéga to explain his intentions in a whisper to his follower, and less than half a minute sufficed to carry them into execution. Rushing together upon the Crow while he was stooping with his back towards them, they seized and pinioned

him before he had time to catch-up his knife or to offer the least resistance. Never was there an attack more unexpected, nor a victory more easily obtained; and the discomfited Crow looked upon his two captors with an astonishment that he could not conceal. Their dress and tribe were altogether strange to him; and the scouts around the camp having brought in no report of any suspicious appearance or trail having been discovered, it could not be wondered at if he imagined that they must have pounced upon him from the clouds.

As soon as Mahéga had assured himself that the hands of the prisoner were securely tied, he led him towards a spot more sheltered from observation, Toweno following with the horse; and if the Crow felt at first any uneasiness respecting their intentions towards him, it must have been soon dispelled, as the Osage chief assured him, in the language of signs, that no harm was intended to him, and that he would soon be at liberty.

After a short consultation with Toweno, the chief determined to conduct the prisoner to his camp, on reaching which his arms were unbound, and he was courteously invited to take a seat by his captors. The Crow obeyed without any apparent reluctance, having satisfied himself by a hasty glance around that he was watched by several well-armed men, and that any attempt at escape or resistance, must be for the present hopeless of success.

The pipe of peace having been smoked between the Osage and his prisoner, some meat and cakes were placed before the latter, of which he partook without hesitation; but he could not resist casting sundry curious glances at the white tent, wondering what it might contain; he observed; also, the numerous packs and bales scattered around, and thought within himself that, whatever might be his own fate, many of these would ere long, fall into the hands of his tribe.

As soon as he had finished his meal, Mahéga, resuming the conversation in the language of signs, explained to him that he wished to become friends with the Upsaroka; that he had come from very far with few followers, having fought with the Pale-Faces; that the tent was Great Medicine, and contained that which brought wealth and good things to friends, but terror and misfortunes to enemies.

It may be supposed that the Upsaroka did not, in his present circumstances, regret these peaceful overtures; on the contrary, he bound himself by the most solemn promises to do everything in his power towards establishing friendship between their respective tribes, and he gave Mahéga to understand, by his gestures, that he was not without authority among the Crows.*

* Among some of the North American tribes it is the custom for an Indian entering into a solemn obligation, to place his hand against the thigh of the party to whom he makes the promise; and this usage has in several instances been triumphantly quoted by those authors who have laboured to prove the descent of the North American Indians from the lost tribes of Israel. The origin and meaning of the custom, which is as ancient as the time of Abraham (Gen., xxiv., 2), are both involved in great obscurity; sundry explanations have been attempted by learned commentators of different ages and nations; the Jewish writings of the highest authority, such as the Targum of Jerusalem, and that of Jonathan Ben Uzziel, derive it from the covenant of Circumcision, to which they maintain its symbolic analogy by arguments which it is unnecessary here to produce. Adam Clarke, in his Commentary, leans to this view, but does not offer any conclusive reasoning in support of it. Bishop Patrick, following the learned Calmet, &c

Upon receiving this assurance, the Osage chief suffered his prisoner to depart, restoring to him his horse, and presenting him with several trinkets in token of friendship.

The first use which the latter made of his recovered liberty, was to invite Mahéga to return with him to the Upsaroka village, an invitation which, to the surprise of his followers, he accepted without hesitation.

With a parting caution to Toweno to keep his men watchful and ready against a surprise, he threw a battle-robe* over his broad shoulders, and, armed with his rifle, tomahawk, and knife, accompanied his new ally towards the Crow village.

On approaching it he found that it consisted of more than a hundred lodges, containing, probably, two hundred men, besides women and children.

Great was their surprise when they saw the gigantic stranger advancing with his conductor towards the lodge of the principal chief, to whom he was nearly related.

The mien and bearing of the Osage, as he entered the lodge, were alone sufficient to secure for him a courteous invitation to sit in the place of honour, while the Crow who had been his prisoner briefly narrated to the head chief the circumstances under which the stranger visited his camp.

The pipe of friendship having been smoked in due form, the Crow chief whispered a few words in the ear of a youth beside him, who disappeared immediately, and the party sat in silence until he returned, accompanied by an individual whose appearance was singular in the extreme; his head was of an enormous size, and covered with black shaggy hair; his features were coarse and forbidding, nor was their expression improved by a patch of leather plastered over the cavity which had once been occupied by his left eye; his shoulders were broad, and his arms of unusual length, his stature was scarcely five feet, and his legs were bandy, with clumsy knees like those of a buffalo-bull; this unsightly ogre rejoiced in the name of Besharokata, signifying in the Crow language, "the little bison," but he was commonly called "Besha," or the "Bison," the diminutive termination being omitted.

His origin was involved in a mystery that neither he nor any one else could satisfactorily explain, for he had been born in that wild region watered by the Arkansas, and his mother, a Comanche woman, was said to have divided her favours, previous to the birth of Besha, between a half-breed trader to Santa Fé, and a runaway negro from one of the southern slave-states; she died while he was yet an infant, and as he had never been owned or claimed by either of his reputed fathers, it was a miracle that he ever lived to manhood.

In his early years, he hovered about the hunting parties of Osages, Comanches, Panipicas, and other tribes, who frequented the region where he had been left to shift for himself, and at other seasons none knew whether he lived upon roots, berries, and honey, or wandered to tribes yet more remote from his birth-place.

scribes this usage as an ancient sign of subjection and homage prevalent throughout the East; and Locke mentions it as being "practised by some Indians to this day."

* It is a frequent custom among the Missouri Indians to sketch upon the interior of a bison-robe the various battles in which they have fought and conquered.

He was never known, either in summer or winter, to wear any other dress than a bison-skin with the hair outwards, in the centre of which he cut a hole, and passing his head through the aperture, wore this uncouth skin like the Poncha of the Mexicans. From these early rambling habits, he had picked up a smattering of many Indian dialects, and of these the Osage was one with which he was the most familiar; he enjoyed a high reputation among the Crows, not only from his being often useful as an interpreter, but because he was, without exception, the most skillful horse-stealer in the whole region between the Arkansas and the mountains. He was also deeply versed in the knowledge of all the properties of plants, roots, and herbs, so much so that, unless fame wronged him, more than one of his enemies had died by the agency of subtle-poison. Such was the personage, who fixing his single cunning eye upon Mahéga, inquired, on the part of the Crows, his object in paying them a visit. The conversation, rendered into English, was in substance as follows:

Besha. "Has the Washashe come to hunt and trap among the Stony Mountains?"

Mahéga. "He has not; he has come towards the setting sun because the enemies on his path were too many for him—he wished for peace."

B. "Has the Washashe a name in his tribe?"

M. "He has a name; when the war-post is struck, Mahéga is not silent," said the chief, haughtily.

B. "Mahéga!" repeated the horse-stealer, to whom the name was evidently not unknown. "Mahéga, the Red-hand!—does he wander so far from his village?"

M. "He wanders, but there is Great Medicine in his lodge; blood has been on his path, and his enemies do not laugh."

B. "Who are the men with whom Mahéga has dug up the hatchet?"

M. "Pale-faces, and cowardly Red-skins, who are their friends."

When this reply was translated, a great sensation was visible among the Crows, several of whom whispered together. After receiving a few instructions from the Chief, Besha proceeded with his inquiry.

"Are the Pale-faces on the trail of Mahéga?"

M. "They are."

B. "How many?"

M. "Mahéga does not know."

B. "Is there a pale-faced warrior with them, young, and tall, riding a dark horse, very swift and strong?"

M. "There is," said the Osage, astonished in his turn at hearing Reginald thus accurately described by the interpreter.

Again there was a murmur and consultation among the Crows, after which Besha thus proceeded:

"What is the wish of Mahéga? the Upsaroka ears are open."

M. "He wishes to make friends with them, to join his strength to theirs, to drive these Pale-face thieves out of the Crow country. Mahéga's warriors are few, but they are not squaws; his hands are not empty; he has presents for the chiefs, and he will not forget the interpreter." He added, sinking his voice almost to a whisper: "He has many things, enough to make the tribe rich, hid in a cave far to the south; if the Crow will be his brother, he shall find that Mahéga has an open hand."

The cunning chief was aware of the thieving propensities of the Upsaroka, and he purposely drew out this last hint that they might be induced to spare his baggage, in the hope of ultimately possessing themselves of the more important treasure in his "câche." Nor was his stratagem without effect, for the discovery and possession of the contents of that câche became forthwith the principal object of the Crow chief; and the readiest mode of attaining it was to make friends with the party who could alone guide him to it.

Fortune had in this instance been more propitious to Mahéga than he deserved, for, as the reader has probably conjectured, he had fallen in with that very Upsaroka band, a detachment of which had been so roughly handled a few days before by Reginald Brandon and the Delawares under his command.

The high contracting parties being thus united by the strong ties of avarice, and revenge against a common enemy, an offensive and defensive alliance was entered into immediately. Mahéga soon discovered the motive which impelled his new friends so strongly to espouse his cause, and was thereby satisfied that, for the present at least, he might trust them. Before nightfall, the white tent of Prairie-bird was pitched at the edge of the Upsaroka camp, and the Osages took up their quarters around it, so that none could leave or enter it unperceived by them.

Early on the following morning Mahgaé received a visit from the Crow chief, who, accompanied by Besha, came ostensibly to show him courtesy, but in reality to inspect his packages, horses, men, and equipments; and, if possible, to solve the mystery of the Great Medicine in the white tent. The Osage warriors, strong, weather-beaten men, every one provided with a rifle in addition to the usual arms of an Indian, had no reason to fear the scrutinizing eye of the Crow; indeed, the latter began already to calculate how he might best avail himself of their aid in an expedition which he meditated against his hereditary enemies, the Black-Feet.

After the pipe had been smoked, and food set before his guests, Mahéga desired one of the smaller packages to be opened, from which he selected a blanket, and spreading upon it various beads and trinkets, presented the whole, in token of friendship, to the Upsaroka chief, who seemed highly delighted with the gift.

His expressions of gratitude, conveyed through Besha, were unbounded. He did not, however, think it requisite to express, at the same time, his vehement desire to become the possessor of all the goods and chattels belonging to the Osage; neither did the latter forget to propitiate the interpreter, whom he presented with a knife, and ornamented sheath, both of which were graciously accepted.

The Crow was resolved not to leave the spot until he had solved the enigma of the mysterious tent; and finding that his guest still kept silence on the subject, he directed Besha to use his best exertions towards the gratification of his curiosity. An opportunity being afforded by the appearance of Lita, who went out to draw some water from the stream, the interpreter inquired whether that woman was the "Great Medicine," of which he had spoken.

Mahéga, who was desirous of impressing the Crows with a due respect for Prairie-bird, shook his head, replying, "That is the slave of the Great Medicine."

Besha. "Is the Great Medicine a chief—a wise man?"

Mahéga. "No: it is in the form of a woman; but its power is very great. It talks with the Great Spirit, and the Wahconda* listens to its speech!"

Besha. "Many are the medicine-men who talk with the Great Spirit; they see dreams, and give counsel to the warriors and chiefs; there is no new Medicine here."

"My brother speaks truth," said the Osage, smiling scornfully. "But if the medicine-men of the Upsaroka call to the sun, will he come out of his path, or hide his face at their words?"

Having thus spoken, Mahéga lowered his voice, as if afraid of being overheard by the mysterious tenant of the tent, and related to the wondering Besha the circumstances attending the late eclipse.

The interpreter having given the explanation to his chief, they looked at each other in speechless astonishment; for not only was there an air of truth in the statement of Mahéga, but the Crows having themselves observed the mystery of the darkened sun, were thereby led to listen with believing awe to the wonderful disclosure made by the Osage.

Perceiving his advantage, the latter again relapsed into silence, which was broken, after a few minutes, by the interpreter, who inquired, on the part of his chief, whether the Great Medicine of the tent would receive a present from him. To this the cautious Osage replied, that the daughter of the Unknown cared not for the things belonging to other women; but that her smile and her good words would bring prosperity to those with whom she dwelt, while her curse would ensure their destruction; on which account it would not do any harm if the Upsaroka were to offer a present to her Medicine.

The latter now finding that, during this visit at least, his curiosity would not be gratified by a sight of the mysterious dweller in the tent, arose and took a courteous leave of the Osage chief, who remained for some time ruminating abstractedly over his future plans, and the probability of their ultimate success.

Scarcely half an hour had elapsed ere Besha returned, accompanied by two young Indians, one of whom led a wild horse, which he presented on the part of his chief to Mahéga; and the other was the bearer of a large package of beaver-skins of the finest quality, which he laid down at the door of the tent, and retired, casting back uneasy glances, apparently relieved at having safely executed a commission fraught with danger.

Mahéga presented each of the youths with a handsome knife, and Besha with a mirror, wherein he contemplated his cyclopean countenance with undisguised satisfaction; so long, indeed, did he continue this admiring self-inspection, that the two young Crows left him engaged in it, and returned to their quarters.

They had not been long gone before the interpreter commenced a confidential conversation with the Osage chief, during which each endeavoured, with little success on either side, to overreach the other; at the same time, the conference was not without its satisfactory issue to both par-

* As the Great Spirit is designated by the Delawares, Chippeways, Sâkis, and other tribes on this side of the Mississippi by the name of "Manitô," or "Manitou," familiar to every reader of Transatlantic travel or romance, so is he known among the Osages, Omahaws, Ioways, and other Missourian tribes, by the designation of "Wahconda" or "Master of Life."

ties; for Mahéga ascertained that the Crows viewed the mixed band of Whites and Delawares with feelings as hostile as his own, and that they were as deeply impressed as he could desire with awe for the mysterious powers of Prairie-bird. On the other hand, Besha satisfied himself that his own services would be almost indispensable to the Osage, and that the latter was neither unwilling nor unable to reward them liberally; so that after a complimentary conversation of some length, these two rogues parted, with many expressions of mutual regard and esteem.

Scarcely was the interpreter out of sight, when Mahéga sprang from the ground to examine more closely the steed presented to him by the Crow chief. It was a strong, high-mettled bay colt, untamed, and almost untameable; if the truth must be told, the latter had given it to his guest because neither he nor any of his warriors could subdue its violent and vicious spirit, although the Crows are renowned among the Indian nations as bold and expert horsemen.

On whatever side Mahéga endeavoured to approach to mount it, the horse struck fiercely at him, using both hind and fore feet with equal rapidity; but the Osage, penetrating at once the motives of the Crow's liberality, smiled in disdain of the shallow trick, and, seizing his opportunity, threw himself upon the wild, unsaddled animal, despite of whose furious plunging and resistance, he sat unmoved like a centaur; and plying his whip and heel with unmitigated severity, compelled it to gallop at full speed over the prairie, until he thought fit to bring it back to the camp, wearied, breathless, and subdued. Then throwing the halter to one of his men, he quietly resumed his pipe, leaving the Crow chief and his people to draw their own conclusions from what they had seen.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

Containing various incidents that occurred to the party following the Trail.—Plots and Counterplots, and a discussion upon Oratory, which is very much out of place, and, fortunately for the reader, is not very long.

There is scarcely any position or occasion in life more gratifying to a young and generous spirit, than when it finds itself, for the first time, entrusted with a high responsibility. The elastic mind, far from succumbing under the unwonted burden, springs upward with increased vigour to resist its pressure; and the trials and difficulties which threaten to overwhelm it, only serve to call forth and multiply its energies. Such was the case with Wingenund, who now found himself, although not yet seventeen years of age, leading a gallant band on a trail,—a task which is at all times the greatest trial of an Indian warrior's skill; and, if successful, lays the foundation of his fame. The issue at stake was, in this instance, heightened by the importance of the object to be attained, and by the remarkable circumstance that he had ventured to differ from, and overrule, the opinion of his elder brother, the most sagacious warrior of the tribe.

Fully impressed with the serious responsibility that he had incurred, the youth set forth upon the trail with a gravity of demeanour which contrasted strongly with his almost boyish years. Yet, while his keen eye darted from point to point, suffering not a blade of grass to

escape its scrutiny, his countenance wore a beaming look of confidence, that imparted its cheering influence to the whole party.

For some hours he marched rapidly forward with the assured step of a man who was treading a familiar path. Attó followed at no great distance, next to whom, on the trail, came Reginald, with Ethelston, Baptiste, and the other Whites, the line being closed by the Delawares, who brought up the rear. It may easily be imagined that Reginald bent his eyes anxiously on the path; but although frequent traces were discernible of the passage of men, as well as of various animals, he could not discover the slightest indication of the marks for which he looked; neither did the observation of the more experienced Baptiste meet with any better success.

When Wingenund reached the streamlet, on the sandy edge of which he had before noticed the light tread of a foot, which in spite of its dimension, he believed to be that of Prairie-bird or her attendant, he halted the party, and summoned Attó to a close examination of the trail. Stooping over it, the Indian looked long and earnestly, after which he shook his head, as if dissatisfied, and muttering a few words, the meaning of which Baptiste was not near enough to catch. Wingenund made no reply, and crossing the brook, resumed the trail on its opposite bank.

"Does Attó find the mark of women's feet on the sand?" inquired Baptiste.

"He is not sure; bison have passed over the marks, and trodden them," was the evasive reply, and the party proceeded on the track.

Nothing of any importance occurred for some time to enliven the tedium of the march. The sanguine hopes of Reginald had been checked by what had fallen from Attó, of whose acuteness he justly entertained a high opinion. Ethelston seemed buried in deep reflection; and even the comic sallies of Monsieur Perrot failed to excite any mirth in those to whom they were addressed.

"Ethelston, I fear that I acted imprudently," said his friend, in a low voice, "when I preferred the counsel of this youth to the more experienced opinion of War-Eagle; yet there was something in his manner that I could not resist."

"Doubtless," replied Ethelston, "the counsel of the elder warrior was entitled to the greater weight; and yet I do not think that he would himself have placed this detachment under the guidance of Wingenund, unless he felt sure that the latter had strong grounds for the tenacity with which he clung to his opinion."

"I would willingly peril my life on his truth and fidelity," said Reginald. "The question is, whether on this occasion he may not have been led into some error by the very eagerness of his wishes, and the ardour of his temperament."

Scarcely had he uttered these words, when Wingenund stooped to pick up a small object which his quick eye had caught beside the rail, in another minute he placed it in the hand of Reginald, while a triumphant smile lit up his animated features. The object referred to was a slip of folded paper, damp with the dew which had fallen upon it. Reginald opened its folds, then gazed upon it in silence, with a fixed look, like one in a trance, while his powerful frame trembled from head to foot. "The paroxysm of

excitement lasted only but for a moment, then putting the slip of paper into the hand of Ethelston, he threw himself into the arms of Wingenund; and, if a tear escaped him, it fell unseen upon the bosom which he pressed with grateful affection to his heart.

Meanwhile Ethelston made himself master of the secret which had produced an effect so sudden, as to cause the greatest astonishment in the whole party, now gathered round to ascertain what had happened. He had read on the slip the magical word "Follow," written in a distinct legible hand, and every doubt as to the Prairie-bird having passed along the trail vanished in an instant. This was no sooner made known to the hunters, and by Baptiste to the Delawares, than a shout of triumph from the whole party roused Reginald from the momentary weakness into which he had been betrayed.

"Follow thee!" he exclaimed aloud, holding the paper in his left hand, and grasping a rifle in his right; "Follow thee, dearest one! yes, over prairie and mountain, through valley and river, in cold or in heat, in hunger or thirst, there are those here who will never cease to follow thee, until thou art set free, and the injuries done to thyself and thy kindred dearly avenged!"

Again a shout of sympathetic enthusiasm broke from the party, as they caught the words of their leader, and read on his glowing countenance the intense ardour of feelings, too strong to be repressed.

What must have been, in the meantime, the sensations of the Delaware youth! The affectionate yearnings of his heart towards his adopted brother, his deep anxiety for his sister's fate, his future fame as the rising war-chief of his tribe, all these combined together to swell the triumph of the hour; yet there was not visible in his features the slightest appearance of gratified pride or vanity; and if his dark eye beamed with a brighter lustre, it was not so much with self-congratulation at what he had done, as with high aspirations for the glorious task before him.

Ethelston, who had watched him closely, was surprised at his calm, unmoved demeanour, and whispered to Baptiste, "Wingenund evinces little anxiety or emotion on this occasion; and yet this undoubted token which he has found on the trail must be a great triumph to him, after the doubts expressed by so many warriors of greater experience."

"It's partly the natur', and partly the trainin' of the boy," replied the Guide, leaning on his long rifle; the stronger his feelings the less will he show 'em to another man. I reckon this has been one of the proudest moments in his life, yet, as you say, he looks almost as if he'd nothin' to do with the matter; and he'd look the same if the Osages were pinchin' his flesh with hot tongs. Wingenund is three years older now than he was last month!"

"You are right, Baptiste," replied Ethelston; "it is not days, nor weeks, nor months, but rough trials, brave deeds, and deep feelings that make up the calendar of human life."

So saying, he sighed, and musingly resumed his place in the line of march, remembering in how short a space of time Nina's unrequited love had, while she was still younger than the sad of whom he was speaking, consigned her, wasted and heart-broken, to the grave.

Again Wingenund moved swiftly forward on the trail, and the whole party followed, their hopes excited, and their spirits raised by the occurrence above related. Reginald walked silently on, still clasping in his hand the magic token which had conjured up hopes and thoughts too deep for utterance. From time to time his lips unconsciously murmured "Follow!" and then the idea shot like fire through his brain, that all his power to obey the dear behest hung upon the sagacity of the youth who was now tracing the steps of an enemy, skilled in all the wiles of Indian warfare, and whose object it clearly was to baffle pursuit.

Before the close of day the watchful perseverance of Wingenund was again rewarded by finding another of the slips of paper dropped by Prairie-bird, which he brought, as before, to Reginald. The magic "Follow" again met his longing eyes; and as he announced it to the rest of the party, a joyful anticipation of success pervaded every breast.

After a brief consultation with Atté, Wingenund now resolved to halt for the night, as the increasing darkness rendered it impossible any longer to distinguish the trail with accuracy; so the horses were picketed, the succession of sentries arranged, and the party bivouacked under the shelter of two enormous pines, where the preparations for a substantial supper were soon completed, Monsieur Perrot taking charge of that destined for Reginald and Ethelston, while Bearskin and the other hunters prepared a meal for themselves and the Delawares apart. Wingenund was about to join the latter party; but at the earnest request of the two friends, he placed himself beside them, Baptiste being invited to sit down with them also.

It may be imagined that the conversation turned chiefly upon the all-engrossing subject of the pursuit in which they were engaged; and Ethelston was struck by the change which he observed in the demeanour of Wingenund; for the latter had now put off the gravity and somewhat haughty bearing of the aspiring warrior, and had resumed the playful and touching simplicity of manner that was natural to his years, and accorded equally well with the almost feminine delicacy of his features, and the soft melody of his voice. He took no pains to conceal the pleasure with which he received the warm and sincere eulogium that Reginald passed upon the patience and sagacity that he had displayed in his arduous task.

"Netis owes me no thanks," he said, smiling "Love for my sister and revenge on the Wash ashees, who like cowards and false friends slew my kindred,—these lead me on the trail."

"It is not your eagerness, nor the strength of your motives that I call in question, dear Wingenund; but I am surprised that you are able to follow so slight a trail without being deceived by the tricks and devices of the Osage."

"The Black Father has often told me that among the southern men there are dogs who can follow the foot of a man by day or night, and will never leave the scent till they seize him. If an antelope is wounded, the wolf will hunt the track of her blood on the prairie till he finds her; if a bison is killed, turkey-buzzards many in number, fly from far to the carcass, though there is no trail in the air for them to

follow. Is it wonderful that the Great Spirit should bestow on the son of his ancient people a gift enjoyed by these beasts and fowls?"

"What you say is true," replied Reginald, "yet certainly we who live in settlements have not these faculties; at least we have them in a very inferior degree."

"The wise men of our nation have always said that the eyes and ears of white men are not good; but the Black Father says that their speech is not true, for that the Great Spirit has made the ears and eyes of red and white men alike, only the Pale-faces do not improve them as we do by use."

"Your Black Father may say what he likes," interposed Baptiste, "but I maintain that the ears of a white man are no more like the ears of a real Indian than the paws of a bear are like the legs of an antelope. I remember, though it's now some twenty years ago, I was out on a hunt in the North with a Delaware comrade; he was called in the tribe 'The-man-who-hears-from-far';—to say truth, I thought he often pretended to hear things that never happened, only just to keep up his name. We had walked all the morning, and having killed an elk, sat down to cook it on the prairie. All at once he held up his finger for me to keep silence; and turning his head to listen, his countenance changed and his ear pricked up like that of a scared doe. Nay, Master Reginald, you need not smile, for it's as true as a gun-barrel; and said I, 'What's the matter now?' He made no answer, but went a little way off; and lying down, put the side of his head to the ground. He soon returned, and told me that a 'big canoe was coming over the lake.' 'What,' said I, 'over that lake we passed this morning beyond those high woods?' 'Yes,' he replied, 'the same; I hear the paddles dip in the water.' I laughed in his face, and told him he was dreaming; for the lake was, maybe, two miles off; but he declared that he had heard the paddles as plain as he now heard my voice. I tried to listen, but could not hear a sound; however, I knew that if he was right, the canoe would be full of enemies, seen' that we had no particular friends then in the Dacotah country, and I thought it better to believe him for once; so we put more sticks on the fire, to make as great a smoke as we could, and then ran off to the top of a hill, where a big pine-tree grew; and as it was about half way between the fire and the lake, we clomb in among its branches, where we could have a good look-out on both. We remained some time without hearing or seeing anything; and I began to conceive that my comrade had made a fool of me, as well as of himself, when we saw five or six Sioux devils peep out of the brush at the edge of the prairie, where they pointed to the smoke that rose from our fire, and began to creep cautiously towards it."

At this point the narrative of the Guide was unexpectedly interrupted by a sharp cry uttered by Monsieur Perrot, who jumped up from his seat, and capered like a harlequin, making at the same time the most doleful grimaces and ejaculations. Wingenund was the first to perceive and to explain to Reginald the cause of the unfortunate valet's distress, in doing which he laughed with such hearty inexpressible mirth, that the tears started from his eyes.

It appeared that Monsieur Ferrot, in his anxiety to hear Baptiste's adventure, had unconsciously edged himself nearer and nearer to the fire, by the side of which was a small pile of dry burrs and prickly adhesive twigs; while sitting upon these, and listening intently to the narrative, they had become accidentally ignited, and not only burnt him as he sat, but adhered to his nether garments when he jumped up, where they continued to crackle and smoke in spite of the efforts which he made to disengage himself from them. To add to his terror, he remembered at this critical juncture that there was a powder-flask in the hinder pocket of his jacket; a circumstance which he communicated to his master with renewed exclamations, and unavailing attempts to rid himself of the dangerous magazine. On hearing this, Ethelston emptied a vessel full of water over a blanket that lay beside him, in which he immediately enveloped the alarmed valet, and by this ready application of one element freed him from the more serious danger to be apprehended from the other.

As soon as the gravity of the party was in some degree restored, Reginald requested the Guide to conclude the narrative which had been so unexpectedly interrupted, expressing at the same time his curiosity to learn how Baptiste and his comrade had extricated themselves from their unpleasant position among the branches of the pine-tree.

"Why, you see, Master Reginald, as soon as they were fairly busied in making their way to the fire which we had left burning, we slipped down the tree, and struck into the wood, where we had no difficulty in finding their back-trail to the lake, and creeping cautiously towards the shore, we found that the hot-headed fools had left no one to watch their canoe, which we spied under the boughs of an alder that hung over the lake; so we just stuek a piece of stick in the ground, with a Delaware mark on it to vex 'em on their return, when we paddled away to the other side; and having bored two holes in the canoe, and broken the paddles, we went on our way; and since that time I've always held my own opinion about an Indian's ears, and I'm not likely to change it now."

Whether the Guide's story was tedious, or that the fatigues of the day had produced their effects upon his hearers, certain it is, that soon after its conclusion both the ears and eyes of the greater portion were closed in sleep, and nothing having occurred during the night to alarm those who had watched, the whole party set forward as soon as daylight broke on the following morning.

Wingenund had no difficulty in making out the trail until he reached the banks of the river, in crossing which Mahéga had taken so much pains to mislead his pursuers. Here the youth halted, and informed Reginald that he might look for game during the remainder of the day, as it would be necessary for him and Attó to search for War-Eagle's party, and with them to find the right trail on the opposite bank.

The two Delawares started at a rapid pace to the westward, bestowing as they went careful attention to the various tracks of bison and other animals which had crossed at the different fords that they passed. After a toilsome march

of some hours, they fell in with War-Eagle's party, whom they found occupied in a like investigation. The chief learnt his young brother's success with undisguised pleasure; his nature was too noble to entertain a thought of jealousy; and one of the first wishes of his heart was to see Wingenund take his place among the first warriors of the tribe. He had ascertained beyond a doubt, that although the horses of the Osages had crossed the river opposite to the trail which he had been following, they had not travelled far in that direction, but had returned to the bed of the river for the obvious purpose of baffling pursuit; and the Delaware now crossed to the northern bank, and after minute examination of every path and track which led from it, they arrived in the evening at the point from whence Wingenund started, confident that the right trail must, if the Osages had crossed at all, be at some spot lower down the stream.

The whole party, now again reunited, encamped for the night, and related, over their evening meal, the indications and tracks which they had remarked on their respective lines of march. At the earliest dawn War-Eagle was again afoot, and after an hour's patient search, he struck a trail, which he pronounced without hesitation, to be that of the Osages. As it led through a wooded and hilly region along the base of the Great Mountains, abounding in narrow and dangerous passes, every precaution was used against ambush or surprise; War-Eagle, Wingenund, and Attó leading the advance, with several of the most swift and skilful of their warriors, and the white men, who brought up the rear, being cautioned against straggling or falling behind the main body.

Another slip of paper found upon the trail, bearing Prairie-bird's inspiring watchword "Follow," raised the spirits of the party to the highest pitch. They halted at midday to refresh themselves and their horses for an hour, under the shade of some spreading cedars, above which rose a high conical peak, on the sides of which were scattered a few dwarf oaks and other timber of stunted growth. Obeying a signal from War-Eagle, Reginald climbed with him to the summit of this hill, whence they could command an extensive view of the sand hills and undulating ocean of prairie to the eastward, while above them to the westward towered the lofty and still distant mountain-tops, clad in their bright mantle of eternal snow.

But it was not to enjoy the splendour of this magnificent prospect that the Delaware had toiled up this steep ascent, or that he now cast his restless and searching eye towards the north and east horizon: he had another object in view. Neither did he seem to have altogether failed in its attainment, for after gazing long and intently upon a spot to the northward, his countenance brightened, and he desired Reginald, who was unable to distinguish so distant a speck with the naked eye, to examine it carefully with his telescope, for that he would see something there that would make his heart beat.

Reginald did so, and having succeeded in catching the indicated object with his glass, he exclaimed, "War-Eagle, my brother, you are right I can see them plainly, one—two—three

—aye, twenty Indian lodges, and the white tent among them. Heaven be praised for all its mercies, we shall save her yet!"

For a few moments the chief was silent, then he said, "Let my brother use the glass again, and say how many lodges he can count."

"There seem to be very many," said Reginald, after a careful survey, "more than fifty but I cannot count them, for the tent is on a small hill, and some may be hid behind it."

"Mahéga smokes the pipe with a powerful tribe," said the Delaware, musing; and the two friends descended the hill, each contemplating according to the bent of their respective characters, the difficulties yet to be encountered, and the means by which those difficulties might be overcome.

Meanwhile it must not be supposed that Mahéga remained in idle security a resident in the Crow encampment; he appreciated too justly the skill and perseverance of War-Eagle to suppose that the latter would not strike and follow his trail, he therefore turned his attention to the strengthening of his alliance with his new friends by every means in his power. In this endeavour his own sagacity was admirably, though perhaps unconsciously, seconded by the winning manners and character of Prairie-bird, for the Crows, who had been prepared to look upon her with a feeling akin to dread, were agreeably surprised by her extreme beauty, and the gentleness of her demeanour.

The cunning Osage, knowing that she could only be drawn from the strict seclusion in which she lived by her never-failing willingness to alleviate suffering, had caused several children, and others afflicted with illness, to be brought to her, and she never declined giving them such remedies from her remaining stock of medicine as she thought most likely to afford relief. The general success of her simple pharmacy fully answered the expectations of Mahéga, in the increasing anxiety daily evinced by the Crows to guard and protect the "Great Medicine of the tent;" and thus, while obeying the dictates of her own gentle and humane feeling, the maiden little knew that she was strengthening the cords of her captivity.

Neither did Mahéga neglect to take every precaution against an attack or surprise on the part of War-Eagle and his party. Although ignorant of their precise force, he knew that they would in all probability be well armed, and was far from satisfied with the position of the present encampment occupied by the Crows.

After conversing once or twice with Besha, and the judicious admixture of a few presents to that disinterested personage, he learnt that there was at a distance of half a day's march to the northward a favourite strong hold of the Crows, to which they frequently resorted when attacked by an enemy too numerous to be resisted in the open plain, and it was represented to be in a neighbourhood affording abundance of game, and a plentiful supply of pasture for the horses.

Mahéga found it not a very difficult task to persuade the Crow chief to withdraw to this post, representing to him the formidable equipment of the Delaware aided by their white allies, and he urged him also to send a few of his best runners to hang about the trail by which he

had himself arrived, so that timely notice of the enemy's approach might be received.

The Crow acquiesced in both suggestions, and the united band moved off accordingly to the post above referred to, which they reached in the afternoon of the same day; it was a conical hill, covered on one side with low juniper bushes, and rising suddenly out of the prairie at a distance of several miles from the higher range of mountains to the west; a few hundred yards further to the east was another height of similar elevation, but of less circumference, and between these two lay a valley of extreme fertility, watered by a stream so cool and clear, that it bespoke at once the mountain source whence it flowed; the eastern side of this second hill was almost perpendicular, so as to be secure against any attack from that quarter: while an enemy approaching from the valley would be exposed to missiles shot from either height.

Mahéga saw at a glance the strength of the position, and proposed to the chief that he, with his Osages, should garrison the smaller height, leaving the larger hill and the intermediate valley to be occupied by the Crows.

This arrangement being agreed upon, the tent of Prairie-bird was pitched near the summit, on a spot where the ground gently sloped to the westward, and a few scattered oaks, cedars, and pines afforded not only a partial shelter from the rays of the sun, but a sufficient supply of fuel for cooking the venison and bison meat, which the hunters had brought in abundantly. Some twenty lodges of the Crows were placed upon the opposite and larger height; these consisted chiefly of the principal braves and warriors; the intermediate valley being occupied by the remainder of the band, and an ample space was left for picketing the horses at night between the two hills.

On arriving at her new quarters, Prairie-bird could not avoid being struck by the singularity, as well as by the beauty of the scenery. It was evident that the face of the sandstone rock, above which her tent was pitched, had been eaten away by the action of water and the elements; and she imagined that ere many years should pass, the precipitous cliff on its eastern front would partially fall in, and leave in its place a broken and turreted ruin, such as she had before noted and admired on the western borders of the great prairie. It was a great relief to her that she was so much by herself; for the lodge of Mahéga and his followers was pitched somewhat lower down the hill than her own tent, and she was yet further removed from the dirt and other annoyances of the Crow lodges. This was, indeed, a great luxury, as the quantity of bison-meat brought into the camp on the first day's hunt was so great, that the Upsaroka women were spreading and drying it in every direction: and as these ladies are not usually very particular in removing the offal, the odour thence arising in the valley below was not the sweetest that could be imagined.

Mahéga was in high good humour in consequence of the successful result of his arrangements; for he now occupied a post not only well protected against the attack of an enemy, but where his baggage could not be purloined

by the light-fingered youths, who are so proverbially abundant among the Crows. But however secure he might feel, he did not relax his usual vigilance, in which he was zealously seconded by Toweno; and whenever the one was absent from the garrison, even for a short time, the other always remained at home on the watch. He renewed, also, a rude breastwork of unhewn logs, which had been thrown up by the Crows on some former occasion, and which afforded a shelter, from behind which he and his men could fire upon an approaching enemy without being themselves exposed.

They had not long been settled in their new quarters before the detachment which had been sent to reconnoitre returned to report that they had seen the united band of white men and Delawares, about thirty in number, advancing cautiously along the base of the hills towards the Upsaroka camp. The scouts had recognised Reginald as the person who had killed one of their principal warriors; and the announcement of his approach was received with a yell that showed how determinately the Crows were bent on revenge.

A war-council was immediately held, which Mahéga was summoned to attend; and although the wary Osage kept himself in the background, and showed no disposition to offer his advice until twice pressed by Besha to do so, it was soon evident that his spirit would rule the meeting, and that on him would devolve the conduct of the struggle in which they must soon expect to be engaged: such was the impression already made upon his new allies by his gigantic stature, and the air of command that accompanied his every word and gesture.

Unless the advantage of numbers was to be very great on his side, Mahéga did not augur favourably of the result of an open conflict between the Crows and the small but well-appointed force opposed to them. He formed a just estimate of the skill and sagacity of War-Eagle, and of the impetuous courage of Reginald Braadon. He hated both, especially the latter, with all the bitter intensity of which his nature was capable; and resolved that no stratagem should be left untried to heap upon them every species of suffering and disgrace.

With this view, he conferred long, through the medium of Besha, with the leading warriors of the Crows as to the nature of the ground in the neighbourhood of the enemy's line of march; being determined, if possible, to lead them into an ambush; or at least to attack them in some defile or pass, where the bow and arrow would be a better match for the rifle than in the open plain. Not being altogether satisfied with the replies which he received, he declined giving his opinion until he should have reconnoitred the district in person, and set forth without delay, accompanied by the dwarfish interpreter and two Crow warriors, all being mounted on swift horses.

Having reached the base of the first range of hills, the Crow who acted as guide struck into a narrow winding ravine; after following the course of which for some distance, the party emerged upon an elevated table-land, which they crossed at full speed, and found themselves at the base of a second range of hills, more broken and abrupt than the first. Here the

guide and Mahéga dismounted, and having concealed the horses, and left them behind the projection of a rock in charge of the other two, they climbed with some difficulty to the brow of a sandstone cliff, whence they could command an extensive view of the region to the southward.

Creeping cautiously to the edge of the height, and screening themselves behind the junipers and scanty bushes growing there, they could easily distinguish the camp of the Delawares and white men in the valley below. The band had come to a halt, and were evidently engaged in refreshing themselves and their horses with their midday meal.

The Osage chief glared upon them like a tiger on his anticipated prey. He examined the ground in front and rear and flank of their position; he noted the breadth of the pass where the valley opened out upon the plain beyond, and questioned his guide closely as to the route which they would probably take in advancing towards the Crow encampment.

We will leave him for a time to pursue these investigations, while we return to Reginald and War-Eagle, whom we left deliberating as to the most advisable course to be pursued for the rescue of Prairie-bird.

The Delaware chief having been soon informed by his scouts of the enemy's retreat to another and a stronger position, lost no time in pushing forward his party to the point in the valley where it had (as above mentioned) been descried by Mahéga and his guide. Reginald and the other white men were at a loss to imagine why War-Eagle had selected for his halt a spot where a dense thicket on the side of each hill seemed to offer to an enemy, familiar with the country, a favourable opportunity for attacking him unawares; and even Baptiste, when questioned upon the subject, shook his head, saying, "Wait till to-morrow; we shall know by that time what hole the coon is making for."

As for the Delawares, they ate their bison-meat and smoked their pipe with as much indifference as if they were in the heart of their own hunting-ground, being confident in the skill of their leader, from the experience of many a foray and fight. The latter, having thrown forward two or three of his men as outposts, to guard against surprise, summoned Wingendund, to whom he gave, in an earnest voice, some minute directions, which did not reach the ears of others in the party; and the youth, as soon as he had received them, went up to Reginald, and said to him, "Will Netis lend Nekimi to Wingendund; he will be back before the moon is up,—and if he meets the Upsarokas, he must leave them behind."

Reginald testified his willing assent to the youth's request, and in a few minutes Nekimi was bounding over the prairie beneath his light burden with a speed that soon brought him to a point whence he could command a view of the two heights, upon and between which the Crows were encamped.

The sand-hills in that region project in many places from the base of the Great Mountains into the open plain, like the promontories of an indented shore into the ocean, and it was by skirting one of these until he reached its extremity that he continued to watch the encampment

of the Crows without being observed by their scouts; for several hours he stood motionless by the side of Nekimi, under the shade of a pine, with that untiring patience which renders an Indian unequalled as a spy, when he saw four horsemen emerge from the camp, and gallop off towards the base of the mountains. As soon as they entered a valley where they were screened from his view, he put Nekimi to his speed, and by a shorter cut reached the head of the same valley before them, then leaving his horse behind a thicket of junipers, he crept forward, and hiding himself in some brushwood, waited for the passing of the horsemen.

As the roughness of the ground had compelled them to slacken their speed, he had no difficulty in recognizing Mahéga, but the features of the misshapen interpreter and the Crow warriors were, of course, strange to him. He watched the Osage chief and his companion as they climbed the hill, from the top of which they made their observations of the Delaware camp; and as they returned and remounted their horses, they passed so near to his hiding-place that the youth distinctly heard two or three words which Mahéga spoke to Beshah in the Osage tongue. As soon as they were out of sight he hastened to the spot where he had left Nekimi, and returned at full speed to make his report to War-Eagle.

The chief had evidently been awaiting with some impatience the return of his messenger, and when he received the intelligence which the latter brought back, he said, "It is well, let Netis and the chiefs be called to council—there is no time to lose."

A few minutes sufficed to assemble the leaders, who were expected to take a part in the deliberations about to be entered upon, all of them being well aware of their vicinity to the enemy of whom they had so long been in pursuit; but when called upon to express their opinion as to the course to be adopted, a manifest reluctance prevailed, arising probably from the wild and rugged nature of the region, and from their ignorance of the strength of the band with which Mahéga had allied himself. After a brief pause, Baptiste, who was thoroughly versed in the character of the Delawares, arose and said, "Are the tongues of the warriors tied! the sun will not stay in his path, neither will the grass grow beneath the feet of the Washashee and Upsaroka; the white men and the Lenapé wait to hear the voice of the Great Chief—let War-Eagle speak."

Thus called upon, the Delaware leader came forward to address the council. He painted the wrongs that his tribe had suffered at the hands of the Osages, the treachery and cruelties practised on their wives and children; then he dwelt on the spoiling of their lodges, the abduction of Prairie-bird, and the attempted murder of Wingendund. Having thus roused the passions of his Delaware hearers, he gradually brought them back to a calmer state of reflection, by representing to them the dangers and difficulties of their present position, owing to the alliance formed by their implacable enemy with the Upsaroka, who knew every pass and dangerous defile of the country through which they were marching, and he impressed upon them the necessity of their having recourse to stratagem in

order to make up for their deficiency in numbers and in local knowledge. He then proceeded to unfold his plan of operations, which (as afterwards explained by Baptiste to Reginald and his friend) was nearly in the following words:

"Mahéga and the Upsaroka will attack our camp to-night—the wolf shall fall into a trap—they will come to take scalps, let them look after their own—but we must divide our party—Wingenund has seen the Washashee camp, he shall guide ten warriors to it in the dark, and while Mahéga is leading his blind followers here, the tomahawk and the fire shall be in his lodge!"

A deep murmur of approbation satisfied the chief as to the sentiments of his stern and determined band; and Ethelston, although he knew not the meaning of the words which had been uttered, was struck by the dignity with which they had been spoken, and by the rich and varied intonation of War-Eagle's voice.

"Reginald," said he, "how much I regret that I could not follow your Indian brother in his discourse. His attitudes brought to my mind the orators of old, as represented to us by classic pen and chisel: it seemed as if I could almost gather his meaning from his eloquence of eye and tone!"

"Certainly," replied Reginald, "whether the merit of oratory consists in action, as held by the 'old man eloquent who fulminated over Greece,' or in the art of persuasion, by convincing the judgment while moving the passions of the hearers, as held by the best authors who have since written on the subject, War-Eagle possesses it in an eminent degree."

"Yes," replied Ethelston, "I admit the persuasive power, and the action at once graceful and commanding, but I maintain that there is yet a stronger element, the mention of which you, and the authors whom you quote, have strangely neglected, namely, Truth; that immortal essence, which pervades the whole intelligent creation, before which falsehood shrinks abashed, and sophistry vanishes into vapour. This it is that guides the winged words of man direct to the heart of his brother: by this, and this alone, did the voice of Luther triumph over the thunders of the Vatican, and beneath its mighty influence the haughty Felix trembled before the captive apostle. This is, if I mistake not, the secret of your Indian friend's oratory; every word that he utters finds an echo in the breast of those whom he is addressing. The injuries that he recounts are recent; the dangers against which he warns them are real and present; and the vengeance to which he guides them, they pant for with a thirst ardent as his own."

"Far be it from me," replied Reginald, "to disparage the might and majesty of truth, or to doubt that in the end it must triumph over error and falsehood, as certainly as Good shall obtain the victory over Evil. Nevertheless, I hold, that as the object of eloquence frequently is to 'make the worse appear the better cause,' and to guide the hearers, not so much to their own real good as to the immediate purpose of the speaker, there are some occasions where he will more effectively attain it by working on their prejudices, frailties, and passions, than he could by the most direct appeal to justice or to truth. If Felix trembled at the denunciations of Paul,

the bolder and mightier spirit of Wallenstein quailed before the wily astrologer, who pretended to have interwoven his destinies with the mysterious movements of the planets."

"I see the scope of your argument, Reginald, and acknowledge its force. It is because men obey the dictates of passion more willingly than those of conscience, that they are more easily led by the factious sophistry of a Cleon than by the virtuous wisdom of a Socrates. Nevertheless, you will not deny that even sophistry and faction bear testimony to the might of truth, by putting on her semblance, and disguising themselves as her followers: thus do they achieve success, until they encounter some champion strong enough to unmask and detect them; as the Trojans fled before Patroclus clad in the armour of Achilles, until Hector pierced his disguise, and killed him."

"Is it not strange," said Reginald, laughing, "that in this wild and remote region, and amidst its wandering tribes, we should renew discussions which we so often held together in early days on the banks of the Elbe and Rhine! I remember that you generally beat me in argument, and yet permitted me to retain possession of the field of battle. On this occasion I think we must draw off our forces, and neither claim the victory. The Indians are already preparing for the night's expedition, and interests so dear to me depend upon its result, that I look forward to it with the deepest anxiety. If War-Eagle is correct in his calculation, that the Osages and their allies will attack our camp to-night, it is uncertain whether they will carry Prairie-bird with them, or leave her behind under a guard. We must be prepared for either plan; and, in dividing our force, arrange it so that, if we succeed, she may be sure of falling into the hands of those fit and authorised to protect her. I will take with me Wingenund, and our steady friends Baptiste and Pierre: do you remain with War-Eagle, Paul Müller, and the main body reserved for the defence of the camp."

"Be it so," replied Ethelston; "I trust we shall not be long separated, and that before this hour to-morrow we shall have rescued your betrothed from her captors." He added, with a smile, "Remember that in our German expedition you made me many promises of discretion, which, in the excitement of action, you were somewhat apt to forget; you must not do so now that you are engaged in the cause of one to whom your life is perhaps dearer than it is to yourself."

"Baptiste himself shall not be more cautious than I will be," replied Reginald, grasping his friend's hand; and they parted to make the requisite preparations for their respective duties

CHAPTER XXXVII.

A scene in the tent of Prairie-bird, who gives some good advice, and receives in a short space of time more than one unexpected visitor.—The Crows, led by Mahéga, attack the Delaware camp by night.—The defeated party achieve a kind of triumph, and the victors meet with an unexpected loss.

THE evening passed away with the rapidity usual in that western region, where twilight has no sooner thrown its dusky hue over mountain

and plain, than it again yields its place to the darker gloom of night; and yet it were a libel upon nature to call by the name of gloom that uncertain light in which that mighty landscape reposed. The moon was half full, and her beams, scarcely piercing through the deep foliage of the wooded vale, streaked with silver lines its mossy herbage; eastward lay the vast expanse of undulating prairie, on which countless herds of bison lazily cropped the dew-sprinkled grass, while high above the scene towered the gigantic peaks of the Western Andes, slumbering in a light as cold and pale as their own eternal snow.

Nothing was heard to disturb the reign of silence, save the distant murmur of the streamlets as they plashed from rock to rock in their descent to the quiet river that flowed beneath; or here and there the stealthy foot of the panther or prowling bear. A few stars glimmered in the vault above, and clouds of ever-varying shape flitted athwart its surface, now hiding, and again partially revealing the dark outlines of forest, vale, and rugged cliff.

It was an hour and a scene calculated to inspire thoughts of awe, piety, and gratitude, towards the Creator; of love, gentleness, and peace towards his creatures; and yet through those groves and glens feet more stealthy than the panther's step, foes more fell than the prowling bear, now wound their silent way, bent on their secret errand of destruction and of blood.

In one quarter Reginald, followed by Baptiste, Pierre, and six men, moved swiftly across the prairie, under the guidance of Wingeneud, towards the camp of the Osages; in another, Mahéga led a numerous band through the defiles before described, to surprise the encampment of the Delaware; while at the latter place War-Eagle, aided by Attô and his chosen warriors, was making all the necessary dispositions for a stratagem by which he hoped to defeat the expected attack of his enemies.

It was already several hours past midnight, the moon had withdrawn her light, and Prairie-bird was buried in the refreshing sleep that visits the eyelids of guileless youth; Lita slumbered on a couch of skins stretched across the entrance of her mistress's tent, before which, at a little distance, the Osage sentry, seated by the breastwork thrown up for the defence of the position, hummed a low and plaintive air of his tribe. Suddenly his ear caught the sound of approaching feet, and quick as thought the arrow was fitted to his bowstring, but he checked the hasty movement, remembering that sentries were posted at the base of the hill, who would not have permitted any hostile step to approach unchallenged. As the new comers drew near, he distinguished through the gloom the figures of a man and a woman—the former short and square-built, the latter slight and graceful.

"What do the strangers seek?" inquired Toweno; for he it was whom Mahéga had left in charge of his camp, and who now guarded the tent of Prairie-bird.

"Toweno is a great warrior among the Washashe; his voice is welcome to the ear of a friend," replied, in the Osage tongue, the rough voice of Besha, the horse-dealer. "The Upsaroka maiden wishes to speak with Olitipa, the Great Medicine of the tent."

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"This is not a time for maidens to visit or to speak," replied Toweno; "the feet of the braves are on the night-path, and many wives who sleep now will be widows ere the sun is up."

"Besha knows it well," answered the horse-dealer; "now can he understand how Toweno is in the camp while Mahéga and his warriors are on the bloody-path."

"The Pale-faces are cunning," replied the Osage, "and Mahéga would not leave the rich skins of otter, beaver, and bison, and the Great Medicine of the tent, without a guard."

"The Pale-faces will not come near the high-camp," said Besha, casting a rapid glance over the bales of fur and cloth. "Have you many warriors left with you?"

"Four of the Washashe, and four times four of the Upsaroka, is the band in camp;* but what does the woman desire of Olitipa?"

"She is the youngest and favourite wife of the Upsaroka chief," replied Besha, lowering his voice, "and she desires a medicine that his love for her may never change; her heart is good towards the Washashe, and her hands are not empty." Here he whispered a few words to his companion, and the girl, timidly extending her hand, placed in that of the Osage a small roll of tobacco.

The grim features of the warrior relaxed into a smile, as his fingers closed upon the scarce and much coveted leaf;† and, without further delay, he moved to the entrance of the tent, and waking Lita, desired her to arouse her mistress for a conference with the bride of the Upsaroka chief.

Although surprised at this unexpected summons, Prairie-bird hastened to receive her visitor, supposing that some sudden illness or accident must be the cause of her coming at such an hour. Her simple toilet was soon made; and fastening to her girdle the bag containing the slender stock of instruments and trifles that she always carried with her, she stepped into the outer compartment of the tent, and desired Lita to admit the stranger.

The Crow girl, led by Besha, came forward with apparent reluctance, obviously under the influence of the greatest terror; and Prairie-bird was, for the moment, annoyed at the admission into her tent of a man whom she had only seen once or twice before, and whose appearance was forbidding in the extreme; but quickly remembering that without him it would have been impossible to communicate with her visitor, she desired Lita to place three mats; and seating herself upon one, kindly took the Crow girl by the hand, drawing her gently to that nearest to herself; then motioning to Be-

* The various methods of counting adopted by the western tribes are curious in the extreme; some reckon chiefly by fives, and among these an expression equivalent to "hands and feet" signifies "twenty"; in one language the number eight is expressed by a word meaning six with two; in another, by a word signifying ten with out two; in fact, some very interesting illustrations of their language and modes of thought might be drawn from an accurate investigation of their numerals, but they would be entirely out of place in a work of fiction.

† Tobacco is extremely scarce, and highly valued among the western tribes; at the close of the last century, it was probably unknown among the Crows, so that we must suppose that the horse-dealer produced this present from his own stores, and for purposes best known to himself.

sha to occupy the third, she requested him, in the Delaware tongue, to explain the object of this nightly visit.

"The tale of the Upsaroka maid is secret," he replied; "it is only for the ears of Olitipa."

At a signal from her mistress, Lita, throwing a blanket over her shoulder, stepped into the open air, and leaned against the breastwork not far from the post of Toweno.

"Does the 'Bending-willow' wish all to be told?" inquired Beshah of his companion, in a whisper.

Bending-willow, who had not yet dared to lift her eyes from the ground, now timidly raised them; and encountering the kind and encouraging glance of Prairie-bird, answered, "Let all be told."

Having received this permission, the one-eyed horse-dealer proceeded to relate, with more feeling than could have been expected from his harsh and uncouth appearance, the story of his fair companion. She was the daughter of the principal brave in the nation; both he and his only son had fallen lately in a bloody engagement with the Black-feet. The father had, with his dying breath, bequeathed his surviving child to the protection of his chief, and the latter had fulfilled the trust by giving her in marriage to his eldest son, a gallant youth, who, although not yet twenty-five years of age, had already two wives in his lodge, and had taken many scalps from the Black-feet, against whom he was now absent on an expedition undertaken to avenge the slain relations of his newly espoused bride.

Bending-willow, who had not yet seen eighteen summers, was passionately fond of her young lord, who now returned her affection with an ardour equal to her own; this had moved the spite and jealousy of his two former wives, who took no pains to conceal their hatred of her; and although they dared not strike or ill-treat her as long as she remained the favourite, they endeavoured by every means in their power to vex and annoy her, and to bring her, by degrees, under the suspicion and distrust of their husband.

It was to obtain from Prairie-bird a medicine by which she might secure his continued affection, that Bending-willow had made this visit; and she had come stealthily by night, in hopes of escaping thereby the observation of her watchful colleagues.

During the horse-dealer's recital, Prairie-bird glanced more than once at the young woman's countenance, of which she was enabled by the red light of the wormwood torch that burnt near the centre of the tent, to distinguish the features and expression; both were remarkably pleasing and attractive, while the long black hair falling over her shoulders in two plaits, interwoven with beads of various colours, was set off by the delicate hue of the fawn-skin dress, which displayed to advantage the symmetry of her light and graceful figure. Prairie-bird took her hand in silence, and the Crow girl fixed her eyes with guileless and admiring wonder upon the surpassing loveliness of the "great medicine of the tent," which struck her more forcibly, as she had come in the expectation of seeing a person decked out and ornamented after the fantastic fashion adopted

among the Indian tribes by those who pretend to supernatural powers.

After a brief silence, Prairie-bird, addressing her visitor through the interpreter, said, "When the wives of the young chief scold and speak bad words to Bending-willow, what does she reply?"

"She gives them bad words again, sharper and harder than their own," answered the bride hastily.

Prairie-bird shook her head and continued, "Has Bending-willow watched their faces when they scold and heap angry words upon her? How do they look then?"

"They look ugly and spiteful as spotted snakes!"

"Bending-willow has come for a medicine to, make the love of her husband endure fresh and green as the valleys watered by the Nebraska! Does she think he would love her if, when he returns to his lodge, he hears sharp, angry tones in her voice, and sees spiteful looks in her countenance? The Great Spirit has made her face and voice sweet as the breath of the morning: if she makes them ugly and harsh, the medicine of Olitipa cannot preserve her husband's love."

The Crow bride cast down her eyes, evidently confused and puzzled by this address. At length she inquired, in a subdued tone, "What, then, is the counsel of Olitipa? What is Bending-willow to do when these sharp tongues scold and rail at her?"

Prairie-bird opened the volume that lay beside her, and answered, "The words of the Great Spirit are, 'A soft answer turneth away anger!' When the tongues of the women are bitter against Bending-willow, let her give gentle words in reply; they will be ashamed, and will soon be silent."

"But," said the quick-tempered bride, "the angry spirit gets into the heart of Bending-willow: when fire is in the breast, cool water flows not from the tongue!"

"Olitipa will give a medicine to her sister," replied our heroine; and opening a case that stood near her, she drew thence a small hand-mirror. Presenting this to her visitor, she added, "When Bending-willow finds the angry spirit in her heart, and bitter words ready on her tongue, let her look at her face in this medicine-glass, and say to herself, 'Are these the soft eyes that the chief loves to look upon?'"

The bride took the glass, and contemplated her features therein, apparently not without satisfaction. But their expression was troubled, for she was frightened at the words which Prairie-bird had told her were those of the Great Spirit, and her eyes wandered from the book to the maiden, as if she would willingly learn more of her mysterious communion with the powers above.

At this crisis the wild war-cry of the Crows rang through the tent; several shots followed each other in rapid succession, mingled with the whistling of arrows, and the clash of blows, while loud above the din of the conflict rose the voice of Toweno, urging and encouraging his men.

Beshah started to his feet, and rushed from the tent to learn whence came this sudden and unexpected attack, and Lita hastened to the

de of her mistress, as if resolved to share her fate, whatever that might be.

Louder and nearer came the mingled cries and yells of battle, and a stray rifle-ball pierced the canvass of the tent, leaving a rent in it close to the head of Prairie-bird. She neither stirred nor spoke; and as the wailing and terrified Bending-willow, the daughter and the bride of warriors inured to scenes of blood, looked on the pale, calm cheek of the Christian maiden, whose hand still rested on the mysterious volume, she felt as if in the presence of a superior being, and crept closer to her side for protection and security.

But we must leave the tent and its inmates, and turn to the scene of strife without. The darkness of night was giving place to the gray hue of dawn, and a faint streak of light was already discernible in the eastern horizon, ere Reginald's party, guided by Wingenund, was able to reach the base of the hill on which the Osages were posted. His intention had been to arrive there several hours sooner; but he had been prevented by various obstacles, such as might be expected to occur on a night-march through so rugged and difficult a country, and also by the necessity of making a considerable circuit to avoid being seen by the Crows encamped, as was before mentioned, on a hill on the opposite side of the valley.

Reginald had no means of ascertaining the force that might be left to guard the camp and the tent, and it appeared rash in the extreme to attempt by daylight the storming, with only ten men, a position so fortified by nature, and defended by warriors familiar with its local advantages. But his impetuous ardour had communicated itself to all his party, and it was unanimously agreed that the attack should be made.

In the sketch before given of the Osage camp, it was stated that the hill was steep, and of a conical shape, sloping less abruptly towards the valley, while the front that it presented to the prairie eastward was precipitous and inaccessible. The attacking party had made their approach from this quarter, rightly conjecturing that it would be left unguarded. They succeeded in gaining the base of the cliff unperceived; but in spite of the caution with which they advanced towards the more sloping face of the hill, they were descried by the enemy's outposts, who discharged at them a flight of arrows, uttering at the same time the shrill wavery, that had startled the party within the tent.

There being now light sufficient to enable the combatants to distinguish each other, the rifles of the white men told with fatal effect, and several of the Crows fell at their first fire; the remainder retreated, fighting, towards the breastwork above, whither Reginald's party pursued them with an impetuosity not to be resisted. When, however, the Crows gained the protection of the breastwork, they recovered from their temporary panic; and animated by the example of Toweno, and the few Osages with him, let fly their arrows with precision and effect.

The leader of the Osages, and one of his band, were provided with rifles, and although the attacking party availed themselves of the shelter of trees and bushes in their

ascent, two of them received severe bullet-wounds from the marksmen securely posted above. They were not unnoticed by the quick eye of Baptiste, who, having reloaded his long rifle, deliberately waited until the Osage beside Toweno showed the upper part of his head above the breastwork as he aimed at Reginald, now within pistol-shot of him. The finger of the savage was on the trigger, when a ball from the rifle of the Guide struck him in the centre of the forehead, and with a convulsive bound he fell dead on the spot, overthrowing in his fall Toweno, whose rifle was thereby for the moment rendered unserviceable.

"Forward! Master Reginald," shouted the Guide; "Wingenund is already at the breastwork!"

Light as an antelope, and active as a mountain cat, the Delaware youth had distanced all his companions in the ascent; and regardless of the fearful odds of numbers opposed to him, was already clambering over the stockade, when an arrow pierced his arm, and a war-club, hurled with equal force and precision, struck him on the head, and he fell backwards at the feet of Reginald. The latter, rendered desperate by the fall of his Indian brother, caught from Baptiste the huge axe that hung at his belt, and springing forward to the stockade, soon hewed himself a passage through its wooden barrier—wounded slightly by an arrow in his thigh, grazed by another on the cheek, his hunting-cap pierced and carried from his head, it seemed as though his life were charmed against the missiles of the enemy—and despite every obstacle, he stood at length within the breastwork, followed by Baptiste and his brave companions. The Guide, whose cool and wary eye noted every movement, had reserved the fire of the pistols in his belt, and twice, while his young master was hewing with reckless daring at the tough barrier, had an unerring ball from them rendered powerless an arm raised for his destruction.

Although still superior in numbers in the proportion of two to one, the allied band of Osages and Crows were so discouraged by the storming of their barrier, that they offered but a feeble resistance, each endeavouring to provide for his own safety. Toweno alone, aided by one of the bravest warriors of his band, determined in this fatal crisis to execute the bloody orders of Mahéga; and by a preconcerted signal, as soon as Reginald made good his footing within the breastwork, they rushed into the tent of Prairie-bird.

From the beginning of the affray, the terrified Upsaroka bride had never moved from the side of our heroine, on whose countenance she fixed her anxious eyes, as if expecting from her some display of supernatural power for their common protection. Lita clung also to the arm of her mistress; and the Christian maiden, trusting to that Word on which her hand and her heart alike reposed, awaited with patient resignation the issue of a peril, of which she knew neither the nature nor the extent. That the camp was attacked she was well aware, by the shouts and cries of the combatants; but who the attacking party might be, and whether likely to fail or to succeed, she had no means of judging.

Besha had in the commencement of the fray shot several arrows from the breastwork at the invaders; but seeing them press forward with such determined resolution, he bethought himself of the bride, for whose safety he was responsible, and retired within the tent, resolved, if possible, to withdraw her from the scene of confusion while there might yet be time for escape; but Bending-willow obstinately refused to quit the side of Prairie-bird, and he was still urging his entreaties to that effect, when the two Osages burst into the tent.

"Let the Medicine-woman of the Bad Spirit die," shouted Toweno, as he raised his tomahawk to strike; but Besha caught the descending blow, and endeavoured to avert the murderous weapon from his hold. Meanwhile the other Osage advanced to execute the fell purpose of his leader, when the devoted Lita, throwing herself in his way, clung to his upraised arm with the strength of despair. Slight, however, was the resistance which she could offer; and the savage, throwing her with violence to the ground, again raised his knife above the head of his unresisting victim. Lita shrieked aloud, and the fate of Prairie-bird seemed inevitable, when a warlike figure burst into the tent, and Reginald Brandon, still wielding the axe of Baptiste, stood in the midst of the group. His fiery glance fell upon the savage about to strike his beloved, and swift as thought that terrible weapon descending, clove the Indian's skull.

By this time Toweno had freed himself from Besha, whom he had rendered almost helpless by two severe wounds with his scalp-knife, and he now flew at Reginald with the fury of a tiger at bay; but the presence of Prairie-bird nerved her over's arm with threefold strength, and parrying the blow which his opponent aimed at his throat, he passed his cutlass through the body of the Osage, and threw him, bleeding and mortally wounded, several yards from the tent. At this moment a shout of triumph without, raised by Baptiste and his companions, assured Reginald that the victory was complete, and that those of the enemy who survived had fled and left him in possession of the camp. Then he cast himself on his knees by the side of his betrothed, and as she leaned her head upon his shoulder, a flood of tears relieved the suppressed emotions caused by the fearful trial that she had undergone. Few and broken were the words that passed between them, yet in those few words what volumes of the heart's grateful and affectionate language were expressed!

The entrance of Baptiste recalled to the recollection of Reginald the duties that still remained for him to perform, while the wounds received by Besha, in her defence, pleaded with the maiden for such remedies as she had within her power. After briefly explaining to her lover the circumstances which had brought the horse-dealer and his still trembling companion to her tent, she sought her stock of healing ointments and salves; while Reginald, although slightly wounded, went out to arrange with Baptiste and Pierre for the defence of their newly-acquired possession, and to ascertain the loss which his party had sustained. This last was less than he had feared it might prove; and it was with heartfelt pleasure that he shook by

the hand young Wingenund, who had recovered from the stunning effects of the blow which he had received in his gallant attack upon the breastwork.

"Let my young brother go into the tent," said Reginald; rest will do him good, and the eyes of Olltipa will be glad to see him."

As the youth hurried away, Baptiste added, "Let not the man nor the Crow woman escape; we may want them yet."

Wingenund replied by a sign of intelligence, and entered the compartment of the tent, where he found his sister exercising her office of charity.

We will now leave Reginald Brandon and his party busily employed in repairing the breach made in the breastwork, in examining and strengthening all the defences of the post (which they found much stronger than they had expected), and in making all the requisite preparations for the attack which they anticipated on the return of Mahéga and his Crow allies. The booty, ammunition, and supplies found in the camp, exceeded their expectations, as in searching the Osage lodges they discovered all the goods stolen by the latter from the Delawares. The eyes of Baptiste and Pierre brightened at the sight of this recovered treasure; those experienced hunters well knowing that the Osage chief, when deprived of the means of offering presents or bribes, would not long retain the friendship of his treacherous allies.

We will now go back for a few hours, and see with what success he met in the expedition which he undertook against the camp of War-Eagle. So confident did he feel in its issue that he had prevailed upon two-thirds of the fighting men of the Crows to join his party, promising them abundance of scalps and plunder, as well as revenge for the losses which they had sustained at the hands of Reginald's band. Having already carefully noted all the land-marks on the path by which he meant to make his approach, he followed it with instinctive sagacity, and a few hours' rapid night-march along the base of the hills brought him to the opening of the narrow valley, at the upper extremity of which the enemy's camp was posted. Here they slackened their speed, and advanced in silence with noiseless step, Mahéga stealing onward in front, darting his quick glance from side to side, as if he would penetrate the gloom, rendered yet deeper by the trees and rocks, beneath which they wound their cautious way. It was not long before he was enabled to distinguish the site of the Delaware camp, by the ruddy glare cast by the watch-fires on the surrounding foliage. The Osage stopped and pointed out the welcome beacon to his followers—not a word was spoken—every warrior there knew the preconcerted plan of attack, and was aware that a careless step upon a dry stick might discover and defeat it. Mahéga carried a rifle, and the discharge of it was to be immediately followed by a flight of arrows from his party, after which they were to rush on the surprised foe, with battle-axe and tomahawk. Onward moved the dusky band; and it seemed as if fate had given the enemy into their power. Not a deer nor mountain-cat was startled from its lair to give warning of their approach; and at length Mahéga succeeded in creeping to the

bushy summit of a hillock, whence, at a distance of less than fifty yards, he commanded a view of the camp below.

"For once, have the cunning and watchfulness of War-Eagle failed him," said the triumphant Osage to himself, as he loosened the thong of his war-club, and thrust forward the barrel of his rifle.

One by one of his followers crept forward, until they lay in line beside him, behind the crest of the hillock, ever which their eager eyes looked down with savage anticipation upon the Delaware camp. The moon had entirely withdrawn her light, and all the scene was wrapt in impenetrable gloom, save where the camp-fires cast a red glare on the bark and branches of the surrounding trees, and on the figures which lay around, enveloped in blanket or in bison-robe; no sound disturbed the deep silence of the night, except the nibbling bite of the horses as they cropped the cool grass of the valley below the camp. For a minute Mahéga contemplated, with fierce delight, the helpless condition of his hated foes, then taking deliberate aim at a blanketed form supported against the tree nearest to the fires, he pulled the fatal trigger, and without waiting to see the effect of his shot, he shouted his battle-cry, and sprang forward with his war-club towards the camp. Scarcely had the bullet left his rifle ere the Crows discharged their arrows, each aiming at the figure that he could the most easily distinguish; then they rushed forward to complete the work of destruction with knife and tomahawk.

Leaping into the camp, fifty of the savages were already in the full glare of its fires, when a shrill whistle was heard, and the simultaneous report of a dozen rifles echoed through mountain, forest, and valley. So near were the marksmen, and so true their aim, that not a bullet failed to carry a death or fatal wound; and the surviving Crows now first ascertained that the figures which they had been piercing were stuffed with grass, and wrapped in blankets or robes, so as to resemble sleeping warriors! Great was their terror and dismay; they knew neither the number nor position of their concealed foe, and the master-spirit who had led them, and to whose guidance they trusted for their extrication, was nowhere to be seen. Such had been the impetuous haste of the Osage to satisfy his desire for vengeance, that in his rapid descent upon the enemy's camp he had caught his foot in a tough and tangled ground-brier, and had fallen headlong forwards. It happened that the very spot where he fell was the post of one of the concealed Delawares, who grappled with him before he could rise to continue his course.

Though taken thus by surprise and at disadvantage, the fierce Osage lost not for a moment his courage or self-possession; seizing the up-raised arm of his antagonist, he wrenched the knife from his grasp, and, swift as thought, drove it into the heart of his foe; then tearing off the scalp, and suspending it to his belt, he looked upon the scene of confusion and slaughter below. A glance sufficed to show him that he had fallen into the trap that he had prepared for others, and that a continued contest with an enemy armed with rifles, and securely hidden, must be attended with great and unavail-

ing loss. His own person had not yet come within the light of the fires, neither had the groans of the dying Delaware been heard amid the yells of the Crow attack, and the succeeding report of the guns; thus was the Osage enabled to retire unobserved a score of paces into the wood, bearing with him the yet undischarged rifle of the Delaware whom he had slain; then he applied his war-whistle* to his lips, and blew a loud and shrill recal.

Glad were his faithful followers and the terrified Crows to hear and obey the signal; yet did they not leave the scene without further loss, for ere they got beyond the circle around which the camp-fires shed their uncertain light, another volley was fired after them by the enemy, and although none were killed by this second discharge, many were so grievously wounded that they were with difficulty borne off by their companions. It was some relief to them in their hasty retreat to find that they were not pursued. Mahéga placed himself in the rear; he even lingered many yards behind the rest, crouching now and then behind tree or bush in hopes of being able to slake his burning thirst for revenge; but in vain, War-Eagle was too sagacious to pursue by night, in an unknown and broken country, an enemy who, although dismayed and panic-struck, still outnumbered his band in the proportion of three to one.

"Bloody-hand, the great warrior of the Osages, will not come again soon to visit the Lenape camp," said War-Eagle, in answer to Ethelston's congratulations, as they stood surrounded by their victorious handful of men on the spot whence they had just driven the enemy with so much slaughter. "Let Attó count the dead," continued the chief, "and bring in the wounded, if any are found."

"War-Eagle," said the Missionary, who from his concealment had been an unwilling spectator of the late brief, but sanguinary skirmish, "forbear to exercise here the cruel usages of Indian war; let the wounded be cared for, and the dead be put to rest in peace below the earth."

"The ears of War-Eagle are open to the Black Father's words," replied the chief sternly; "if any wounded are found, they shall suffer no further hurt: but the scalps of the dead shall hang on the medicine-pole of the Lenape village, that the spirits of Tamenund and his fathers may know that their children have taken vengeance on the fork-tongued Washashe."

Further conversation was interrupted by a cry uttered by Attó, who had found the body of the unhappy Delaware slain by Mahéga. The whole party hastened to the spot, and War-Eagle, without speaking a word, pointed to the reeking skull whence the fierce Osage had torn the scalp.

Paul Mäler, feeling that all reply would be ill-timed and unavailing; turned away, and walked towards the feeding-place of the horses,

* Some of the Indian warriors when leading a war-party carry a shrill whistle, wherewith they direct the movements of their followers. These whistles vary as to their form and ornament according to the tribe to which the leader belongs. Those which the Author has seen in most frequent use were made from the bone of the wild turkey's leg, and were fancifully adorned with stained porcupine-quills.

while the Delawares scalped, and threw into an adjacent hollow, the bodies of the Crows and Osages who had fallen. Of the latter they counted two, and of the former ten, besides a much greater number whom they knew to have been borne off mortally wounded.

As the Missionary strolled onward, accompanied by Ethelston, a low moan caught his ear, and stooping down, he discerned an Indian coiled up in a position indicative of intense agony under the branches of a juniper. They carried him back to the camp-fire, and on examining him by its light, he proved to be a young Crow warrior, shot through the body, who had dragged himself with difficulty for some distance, and had then fallen exhausted to the ground. Doubtless he expected to be immediately scalped and dispatched, nor could he for some time be induced to believe that those into whose hands he had fallen were indeed endeavouring to alleviate his sufferings.

War-Eagle, faithful to his promise, rendered every assistance in his power to the worthy Missionary while thus employed, but it might easily be seen by the scornful curl of his lip that he looked upon this care of an enemy wounded in battle as an absurd and effeminate practice.

Day broke, and the dispirited band of Crow and Osage warriors returned from their fruitless expedition, only to find a worse disaster at home. Great, indeed, was their dismay, when they were met by a scout from their village, who informed them that a party of white men had stormed the Osage camp by night, and still retained possession of it, having destroyed the greater proportion of those left to defend it. In this description of the attack, the height, the strength, the daring and impetuous courage of the young warrior who had led it, were painted in colours exaggerated by terror; yet the Osage chief had no difficulty in recognizing the hated rival who had struck and disgraced him, and who was now master of the fate of her for whose sake he had toiled, and plotted, and suffered so much.

Stung to the quick by these suggestions of wounded jealousy and pride, he ground his teeth with fury that would not be repressed, and he swore that before two suns had risen and set, either he or his rival, or both, should see the light of day no more. His position was now precarious in the extreme, all his goods and ammunition having fallen into the enemy's hands excepting that which he and his few remaining followers had about their persons. He knew that if he no longer possessed the means of making presents, the Crows would abandon, if not betray him at once, and he resolved to strike some sudden and decisive blow before that thought should obtain possession of their minds.

This resolve imparted again to his manner its usual fierce and haughty grandeur, and, although the Crows loved him not, they could not help looking with a certain awe upon the man who, amid the confusion and panic of the late disastrous attack upon the Delaware camp, had borne away from the victorious enemy the bloody trophy which now hung at his belt, and who, although he had lost by a single blow his lodges, his supplies, and the Great Medicine of the tent, reserved unsubdued the commanding pride of his demeanour.

The success of the stratagem which he now meditated will appear in due season; meanwhile we must return to the camp of War-Eagle, who began his march at dawn of day with the view of rejoining Reginald and his band with the least possible delay.

Although he did not anticipate any attempt at reprisals on the part of the Crows to whom he had just given so severe a lesson, yet he was aware of Mahéga's having escaped, and well knew that he would leave untried no schemes for obtaining revenge.

On this account the Delaware chief went forward to the front, taking with him several of his warriors, whom he sent out from time to time to examine the ground, and leaving Attö with Ethelston and Paul Müller to bring up the rear. The latter could not be prevailed upon to abandon the wounded Crow, whom he had placed upon his own horse, which he led by the bridle, while Ethelston supported the sufferer in the saddle.

Ever since the occasion when Reginald Brandon had presented to Attö the bear-claw collar as a testimony to his bravery, the Delaware had attached himself more and more to the white men; and although, with the instinctive sagacity of his race, he foresaw that the best exertions of the two now in his company would fail to effect a cure of the wounded man, he willingly and good-humouredly assisted their charitable endeavours.

In this order they had marched for some hours, and the leaders of the band having attained the summit of a ridge, already saw at no great distance the two remarkable hills before mentioned as the favourite encampment of the Crows. Encouraged by the sight, they descended the opposite slope, with increased speed, War-Eagle being most anxious to learn the success of Reginald's detachment. The whole band had passed over the summit of the ridge excepting the small party who escorted the wounded Crow, when the latter grew so faint from the effects of internal bleeding that they were no longer able to keep him in the saddle, and deposited him gently on the grass. The poor fellow pointed to his parched lips, and made an imploring sign for water. Paul Müller casting his eyes around, saw at a small distance a broken ravine or fissure, in which he hoped that some rain-water might be found, and he desired Attö to hasten thither with all speed.

The Delaware obeyed, and had approached within a few paces of its edge, when an arrow from an unseen enemy pierced him through the breast, and Mahéga, leaping from his concealment, killed the brave fellow with his club, and attached another Lenape scalp to his belt. He was followed by eight or ten well-armed Crow warriors, who, passing him while he stooped over his fallen enemy hastened forward and surrounded Paul Müller, Ethelston, and the wounded man. Great was their astonishment at recognizing in the latter a highly-esteemed brave of their own tribe, and greater still at observing that the two white men were so busily engaged in tending and supporting him in his sufferings, as not to have noticed their approach.

When Ethelston became aware of their presence, his first impulse was to lay his hand upon a pistol in his belt, but with a steady self

possession of true courage, he saw at a glance that he should, by unavailing resistance, only cause the certain death of himself and his peaceable companion, so he continued his attentions to the wounded man, and poured into his mouth the last few drops of a cordial which he had reserved in a leathern flask.

Fresh from the slaughter of the unfortunate Attô Mahéga now came forward, and would have sacrificed the unresisting Missionary to his blind fury, had not one of the Crow warriors caught his arm, and pointed in an attitude of remonstrance to his wounded comrade.

The Osage perceived at once that the time was not propitious for his indiscriminate revenge, and contented himself with explaining by signs to his allies that ere long the party now out of sight behind the hill, would reappear over its crest in search of their missing companions.

This hint was not lost upon the Crows, who forthwith deprived Ethelston of his arms, and, tying him with a leather thong to the Missionary, hurried them along in an oblique direction towards an adjoining thicket, while some of them relieved each other in the care of the dying man.

War-Eagle was already far advanced in his descent of the hill on the opposite side, when his progress was arrested by shouts and cries from the rear. On looking round he perceived that these proceeded from Monsieur Perrot, who was waving his arms, and with other gesticulations, indicative of the greatest excitement, calling upon the chief to return.

"Varicle, Varicle, come quick back!"

Although the latter had little regard for the character of the French valet, he saw that something alarming had occurred; and hastening to the spot, scarcely waited to hear his explanation that "Monsieur Etelston, de Black Fader, and de wounded Corbeau, were not to be seen," but pushed on at once to the top of the hill, over which he had so lately passed.

Casting his anxious eyes around, he looked in vain for the missing members of his party; but he saw at a considerable distance on the back trail the Missionary's pony quietly cropping the prairie-grass. Having called one of his men to his side and given him a few brief instructions, he returned speedily towards the scene of the late catastrophe, and on approaching it, found the scalped and plundered body of Attô, from which the Crows had carried off the arms, the belt, and the bear-claw collar given to him by Reginald. Although deeply grieved at the loss of the bravest of his followers, War-Eagle was too much inured to scenes of strife and bloodshed to give way to any emotion save the ardent desire for revenge; and he struck off alone upon the enemy's trail, some of his party following him at a distance.

As he approached the thicket, his attention was caught by a column of smoke ascending from a point near the centre of it; and he judged that the band must be very strong, either in their position or in numbers, if they could have the audacity thus to light a camp-fire in defiance, as it were, of his pursuit. Influenced by this consideration, he waited until his whole party had come up, when he again moved forward towards the wood, cautiously watching every

bush and shrub, in momentary expectation of seeing the enemy start from the covert.

These precautions seemed, however, altogether unnecessary; for he reached unmolested the spot whence he had seen the smoke ascend, and on his arrival found that the fire was consuming the last mortal remains of some human being, whose bones were mingled with its dying embers. This he knew at once to have been the wounded Crow who had expired in the arms of his companions, and to whom they had paid in their retreat this hasty funeral rite, to prevent his body from being liable to any indignities in the event of a pursuit. The quiver and tomahawk of the deceased warrior were suspended by a branch over his funeral pyre, and War-Eagle turned from the spot in moody, silent meditation. He felt assured that the retreating party were now too far advanced for him to overtake them, unless he gave up the idea of joining Reginald; and he thought it by no means improbable that this attack had been devised for the purpose of preventing that junction so important to the safety of both parties; wherefore he resolved to effect it without delay, and afterwards to employ all possible means for the recovery of the prisoners.

With this view he returned upon the steps; and having seen the last honours paid to the remains of the faithful Attô, again proceeded in the direction of the Crow camp.

As his little band drew near upon the prairie it was distinctly visible from both the fortified hills, and some fifty or sixty horsemen galloped cut from the higher of the two, with the apparent intention of attacking him; but the steady front presented by the white men and Delawares deterred them from approaching too near the glittering tubes levelled to receive them, and they galloped and wheeled in rapid circles over the prairie, taking care, however, to keep beyond rifle range. At this juncture the cheering notes of a bugle rose on the air; and Reginald, who had desecrated his friends, now came down with two men from his little garrison to meet them. The Crows, seeing that further opposition on the open ground was unavailing, retired with threats and yells to their camp; and a few minutes afterwards the parties under War-Eagle and Reginald were reunited within the little fortress so hardly won by the latter, who now learnt, with unspeakable regret, the capture of Ethelston and Paul Müller, and the death of the brave warrior who had shared with him the perils of the first skirmish with the Crows.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

The negotiation set on foot by Reginald for the release of his friends.—Beaha becomes an important personage.

WU S r mm

SCARCELY had War-Eagle entered within the breastwork by the side of his friend, ere his eager and indefatigable spirit prompted him to inspect the defences of their new camp, and to guard every approach open to the attacks of their dangerous neighbours. On this service Baptiste willingly agreed to accompany the chief; and while they were thus employed, Reginald undertook the painful task of commu-

nicating to Prairie-bird the intelligence that her beloved instructor was, with his friend Ethelston, a captive in the hands of the Crows.

Trials and sufferings of her own the maiden could bear with fortitude; but her feelings towards the missionary were those of the fondest daughter towards a parent; and when she thought of the risk that he incurred of ill-usage or death at the hands of his captors, she burst into tears, and exclaimed, "Oh, Reginald! cannot he be rescued ere it be too late?"

At the sound of that voice, and the sight of those tears, Reginald's heart would have prompted him to rush headlong into the camp of the Upsarokas; but he felt that he would thereby only sacrifice his own life without effecting the object in view; and, moreover, he was by no means certain whether Mahéga and his party had conveyed their prisoners to the central camp.

The doubt and anxiety of his mind were plainly visible on his countenance, when a low voice whispered in his ear, "May Wingenund speak to Netis?"

"Surely, dear brother," said Reginald, laying his hand kindly on the youth's shoulder, "when I remember that it was Wingenund who guided me over the prairie to his sister's tent, I were worse than ungrateful to reject his counsel now!"

"That young woman," he replied, pointing to the captive bride seated in the corner of the tent, "is dear to the Upsaroka chief; she is his youngest wife, and his heart is warm towards her. Let the one-eyed stranger from the unknown tribes, who speaks many tongues, go back to the Crow camp, and tell the chief that if his prisoners are hurt, his bride shall be burnt alive; if they are set free, she shall return unhurt to his lodge."

"It is a brave device, dear Wingenund, and shall be executed without loss of time; but can we trust the stranger?"

"Methinks you may," said Prairie-bird, "for he received his wound in defending me from those cruel men."

"True," replied Reginald; "let my brother speak to him in the Delaware tongue, and explain the message he is to bear."

"It is well," answered the youth; adding, with an arch look, "and let Netis not send him away with empty hands. There is cunning in the stranger's eye, he knows that Mahéga is poor; and he will rather make friends with those who have something to give."

"Be it so," said Reginald laughing; and he forthwith desired one of his men to select from a package containing knives, powder, tobacco, and cloth, a quantity equal to the usual Indian price for a horse. Wingenund, having waited in silence the return of the messenger, addressed the prisoner as follows:—

"Has the stranger a name in his tribe?"

"He is called Besha in the southern prairies."

"Besha dwells among the Crows. They have shed the blood of white men and Delawares in battle; his scalp belongs to those who have taken him."

The horse-dealer bowed in silence, and the youth continued.

"But the heart of the white chief is great; he will not take Besha's life, neither will he bind his limbs. Besha is free to go where he likes."

The horse-dealer stared as if he did not quite believe his ears; but Wingenund, without appearing to notice his surprise, proceeded.

"That is not all. Besha received a wound in defending Olitipa from the Washashes. The white chief's hand is open; it is quick to reward good deeds, and to punish bad ones; the presents in that package, of knives and cloth, tobacco and powder, are for Besha; he may return to the Upsaroka camp, and his friends shall not say that he comes with empty hands."

The deep-set eye of the horse-dealer gleamed with pleasure, as he fixed it on the welcome bale, and heard these words. His first movement was to rise from the ground, and place the right hands of Reginald and of Wingenund on his heart in token of gratitude; then turning towards the latter, he inquired, "Is there a dark cloud over the Upsaroka bride? Will the white chief kill her, or make her a slave?"

"Let Besha open his ears," replied the youth, earnestly, "and let not the wind blow away good counsel. The Washashes and the Upsaroka have taken captive two white men from this band; these have killed no red man; they have done no harm. If any hurt be done to them, or their lives be taken, the Upsaroka bride shall be burnt before the next setting sun; but if they are set back free and unhurt, she shall return to her husband the same hour, and a present four times as great as this shall be given to Besha."

Having thus spoken, the youth placed the package in the horse-dealer's hands, and made him a sign to go. Before obeying this hint, the latter whispered a few words to Bending-willow, in which he comforted her with the assurance that he would labour incessantly for her release; after which he departed towards the Crow camp, with a gait somewhat tottering and uncertain, from the joint effect of the weight of his burden and the wound that he had so lately received.

We will now leave Reginald engaged in the sad, yet dear employment of comforting his betrothed, and striving, by a thousand suggestions, to relieve her anxiety respecting the fate of her beloved instructor, and her lover's friend. Neither will we follow War-Eagle and Baptiste in securing the important post which they had so unexpectedly won; but we will return to the Crow camp, where Mahéga had newly arrived with his prisoners, and where everything was in a state of alarm and confusion.

Great had been the panic consequent on the double defeat which they had sustained; nor had its effects been entirely removed by the successful blow last struck by Mahéga, and the capture of the two white men. The Osage chief had lost all his warriors, with the exception of four, his baggage and ammunition were in the hands of the enemy, and he well knew that his only remaining chance of retaining the support of his allies, was in vigorously pursuing the success which he had so opportunely gained. The Crow chief, on the other hand, disheartened by the loss and disgrace which had befallen his tribe, and vexed beyond measure at the detention of his son's favourite wife, justly attributed both these misfortunes to an alliance which had brought no increase either to his power or his wealth.

Such was the state of parties when the coun-

of the Utearokas met to decide upon the fate of their prisoners. The debate being carried on in their own language, Mahéga was unable to gather the sentiments of the several speakers, and he declined to sit in the circle, but stood leaning against the outer post of the council lodge, his quick eye bent upon the countenance of each successive speaker, as if he would read there the purport of his harangue. One fierce and hot-headed warrior proposed that the prisoners should be instantly put to death, and a sudden attack be made with their whole force on the opposite hill, which would be easily recovered, and an abundance of plunder acquired. An older Indian next addressed the meeting in a persuasive tone, that suited well the sharp and cunning expression of his countenance. He argued, that the Crows had derived no advantage, but rather loss and misfortune, from their alliance with Mahéga, and that it was their interest to make friends with the newly-arrived band, who were more rich and powerful; wherefore he advised that the lives of the prisoners should for the present be spared.

The debate was at its height, and the assembly apparently divided in opinion, when Besha entered the council-lodge, and sat down in the outer circle near to the entrance. All eyes were turned to him, as the report of his capture had already spread through the village, and his wasted appearance, as well as the bandages over his neck and arm, showed that he had been wounded in the late affray. After a brief silence, the chief desired that he would relate what had occurred, a command which the horse-dealer obeyed without hesitation.

Although not gifted with any oratorical powers, he was a shrewd fellow, thoroughly versed in all the wiles of Indian diplomacy; and well aware, as a resident guest among the Crows, that his best chance of a favourable hearing was to frame his speech according to their interests, which happened in the present instance to tally with his own. In relating the events which had occurred in the opposite camp, he exaggerated the strength and wealth of the enemy, dwelling at large upon the clemency shown to himself, and upon the desire evinced for peace; stating, in conclusion, that he was the bearer of a specific message, or proposal, to the great chief. At this announcement there was a general murmur of curiosity, and Mahéga bit his lip with vexation at his inability to understand what was going on.

At a signal from the chief, Besha proceeded to inform the council that Bending-willow, the bride of their favourite and absent war-leader, was now a captive; and he recounted faithfully the circumstances under which she had visited the white tent with him, and the terrible threats held out respecting her in the event of any injury being done to the white prisoners. The effect of this announcement was so great, that it was visible even to Mahéga; nor was he surprised when Besha explained to him, by order of the chief, that the council had decided upon sparing the lives of the white men, at least until the return of the war-leader and his band of braves, now absent on a foray into the country of the Black-feet.

Agreeably to this decision, Paul Müller and Ethelston were confined in a lodge adjoining

that of the chief, under a Crow guard, to whom strict orders were given to prevent their escape, and also to protect them against any attempt on the part of Mahéga or his followers. Besha was allowed to see them, and they learnt from him that their friends had been completely successful, and had re-captured the Great Medicine of the tent, as well as the ammunition and baggage. He further informed them, that he would do all in his power to effect their release; adding a significant hint that he should not be unwilling to receive tangible proofs of their gratitude.

The captives were, upon the whole, much comforted by this interview; and on his departure, Ethelston said, addressing his companion, "Reverend father, we have cause to be grateful for the intelligence communicated to us by this man, inasmuch as we expected no less than to be put to an immediate, and perhaps a cruel death. Yet, methinks, for a messenger of good tidings, he has the most uncomely and villainous countenance that ever I beheld."

"I will not say that his face recommends him," said Paul Müller, smiling; "albeit, the expression thereof may have been altered for the worse by the loss of an eye. I have seen him more than once before among the tribes bordering upon the Mexican frontier, and if my memory serves me, he bore the reputation of being a crafty and designing knave in his vocation; but I never heard him charged with cruelty, or thirst of blood."

"What, then, do you think, are the motives for the friendly exertions which he professes to make in our behalf?"

"We will hope that they are partly owing to a grateful sense of the treatment he has experienced at the hands of our friend Reginald, and partly from the expectation of presents and rewards, which the Osage is no longer in a condition to offer. Meanwhile, we must solace ourselves in our captivity with the reflection, that my beloved pupil is safe under the charge of friends, upon whose fidelity and devotion we can fully rely."

Leaving the captives to comfort each other with these and other similar suggestions, we will return to Reginald Brandon, who forgot not, even in the enjoyment of Prairie-bird's society, to occupy himself constantly in devising plans for their liberation. In these he was warmly seconded by War-Eagle and Baptiste; but, after carefully reconnoitring the Crow camp, they agreed that it was too strong to be carried by open attack by their small party, especially as they had learnt from Besha, that the husband of Bending-willow, the son of the Great Chief, had just returned with his band, consisting of fifty chosen warriors, from a successful foray into the Black-foot country.

The wily horse-dealer was allowed, in his mixed capacity of interpreter and envoy, to pass from camp to camp; and as both parties were desirous of securing his co-operation, presents were liberally heaped upon him, and his grey eye twinkled as he cast it upon the increasing pile of goods at the back of his lodge. "There will soon be enough to exchange for a hundred beaver-skins," said he to himself, "then Besha will look for some fine horses, and go towards the east."

While he was thus congratulating himself on his prospects of future wealth, a tall figure darkened the entrance of his lodge, and the young war-chief stood before him. "White-Bull* would speak with Besha," said the former in a haughty tone, adjusting with dignity the cream-coloured robe from which he took his designation.

"Let the young chief be seated," replied the horse-dealer, making at the same time a signal to one of his lads to offer food and a pipe to his guest.

White-Bull's first impulse was to refuse this hospitality, but he checked it, and having tasted a morsel, and emitted two voluminous puffs of smoke from the pipe, he turned to the horse-dealer, and said in a stern, deep tone, "Bending-willow is a prisoner in the white tent; Besha took her there, he must bring her back, for the heart of White-Bull is dark—there is no light or pleasure without her."

"The will of the bride was strong," he replied; "she would take no counsel from Besha; if he did not go with her, she would go alone, to consult the Medicine of the tent; Besha went with her that none might do her harm."

"The ears of White-Bull are not to be tickled by the songs of birds," said the young chief, fiercely. "Besha took her to the white men's camp, and he must bring her back before two suns have set, or his heart shall be cut out from his body."

"White-Bull knows that there are two white prisoners here, let him give them to Besha, and he will bring back Bending-willow before the sun is in the west."

"The white prisoners belong to the war-council," said the young man sullenly. "White-Bull cares not whether they live or die; but he wants his bride, whom the fool Besha led away to a place where she was caught like a beaver in a trap; if he does not bring her back within two sun-sets, the blade of this knife shall be red. White-Bull has spoken, and his words are not wind!" So saying, the violent youth passed with angry strides from the horse-dealer's lodge.

Besha now found himself in an awkward predicament, in endeavouring to extricate himself from which, his first step was to consult the young chief's father, hoping that the latter would give his consent at once to release the prisoners for the recovery of the favourite bride. But the old man would not agree to the proposal, giving as his reason, that the council had resolved either to take the lives of the prisoners, or to make the enemy pay many horses and much goods for their ransom. "Besha has a tongue," continued the crafty old man. "He can speak with the white men; he can tell them that if the bride is given up their friends shall be returned, they will believe him, and all will be well."

"Besha, though not particularly scrupulous in his morality, was startled at first by this proposal of treacherous and deliberate falsehood towards one who had spared his life, and had given him his liberty, besides loading him with

* It was at one time currently rumoured among the trappers of the Rocky Mountains, that a Crow warrior had found and killed a white bison-bull, the skin of which he wore as a robe. The story, whether true or false, is adopted here, and assigned to the husband of "Bending-willow."

presents; but his conscience being of an extremely elastic texture, he soon reconciled himself to the idea by the reflection that it was his best, if not his only chance of saving his life from the fury of the incensed White-Bull. He made no reply to the old chief; but, as he went away, the two rogues exchanged a look which satisfied them that they understood each other.

The horse-dealer proceeded without delay to the lodge where Paul Müller and Ethelston were confined, into which he was admitted by their guards. Having explained to the Missionary that he was about to visit the white men's camp for the purpose of liberating him and his companion by the recovery of the captive bride, he desired to be furnished with a sign by which they would be induced to give her up without hesitation; for Besha, in his rambles on the Mexican frontier, had frequently met with the Spanish traders, and although he could not read letters himself, he knew how they were used for the interchange of communication at a distance.

Before giving any reply, Paul Müller explained the state of affairs to his companion, and asked his counsel.

"Methinks we should trust the fellow," said Ethelston, "for he has hitherto befriended us; but let us not write anything that can endanger the safety of Prairie-bird."

"I agree with you, my son," he replied, "and will write accordingly."

So saying, he took a small pocket-book from his breast, and wrote with a pencil upon a leaf of it the following words:

"Ethelston and Paul Müller send their affectionate greeting. The bearer says that he can liberate them if the captive bride is restored. Reginald Brandon will consult with those about him, and do what he thinks best. Let the safety of Prairie-bird, and of those who are now her protectors, be the first object. Glad and thankful should we be to embrace our dear friends again; but we are well and cheerful here; in joy and in sorrow, in life and in death, we are in the hands of One who rules all for the best Farewell."

Having received the paper, Besha lost no time in setting off to the opposite camp

CHAPTER XXXIX.

David Muir and his Daughter pay a Visit to Colonel Brandon.—The Merchant becomes ambitious.—He entertains Projects for Jessie's future Welfare, which do not coincide with that young Lady's Wishes.

WHILE the events related in the preceding chapters were passing in the Great Western Wilderness, the days of early summer glided smoothly on at Mooshanne, uninterrupted by any incident worthy of record. Aunt Mary continued her round of busy occupation with her usual indefatigable activity. Never could there occur in the neighbourhood a case of sickness or of sorrow to which she did not hasten to administer the needful consolation; and in the town of Marietta her benevolent exertions were assisted by Jessie Muir, whose attendance in her father's store enabled her to gather all the current news from the numerous customers who frequented it.

"The Merchant" (for so David Muir was designated by all who did not wish to affront

him) grew daily in importance and dignity. His speculations in trade had been, for the most part, successful, and two or three of his suggestions for the improvement of the town had been adopted. A sharp attack of fever had subdued for a season the domineering spirit of Dame Christie, and David found himself not only respected by the neighbours, but even enjoyed the sweet, though brief delusion, that he was master in his own house.

Neither his pride nor his increasing wealth interrupted, however, his close attention to business; and Colonel Brandon, finding that the affairs entrusted to him were managed with great punctuality and skill, treated him with corresponding confidence.

On a fine summer's morning, about a month after Ethelston's departure for the Far-West, the merchant's four-wheeled chaise stood before his door, drawn, not by a sorry pony, but by a strong horse, the condition and appearance of which betokened the thriving circumstances of the owner. Jessie Muir, wearing a very becoming bonnet, and a shawl newly arrived from England, had just cast a passing look into the oval mirror in the back parlour, and was busily employed in giving directions respecting the contents of a parcel about to be placed in the seat of the chaise, while Henry Gregson was listening, with ill-dissembled impatience, to the repeated cautions given to him by David as to his conduct during the brief absence which he meditated.

"Noo, Hairy" (for thus was the name of Harry pronounced in David's north-country dialect), "ye maun be vera carefu' o' the store, and see that the lads attend weel to the folk wha come to buy, and that Jane stays aye among the caps an' shawls and printed cottons, instead of keekin' out o' the window at a wheen idle ne'er-do-weels in the street; and as for the last lot of Bohea, ye can truly say it's the finest that ever cam' to Marietta; I'm thinkin' the minister's wife will be fain to buy a pun' or twa. And, Hairy, mind that ye . . . but the deil's in the lad! What are ye glow'ring at, over my shoulder, as if ye se'd a wraith, an' no listening to what I'm sayin'?"

Here the merchant turned round, and his eye happening to fall upon a parcel of fire-irons, so carelessly placed on an upper shelf that they threatened the destruction of a pile of crockery below, he ordered the shop-boy to secure the offending toffs, and, turning to Harry, continued in a more complacent tone, "It's nae wonder, lad, that ye could na tak' your een off they irons; they had like to make an awfu' smash among the cups and saucers; I'm glad to see that ye're so canny and carefu' o' the goods."

Harry bit his lips, and made no reply, while the merchant, who had already seen Jessie take her seat in the chaise, was preparing to follow, when he turned to the young man, and said, in a low voice, "Ye'll no forget that the mistress will need her gruel at midday?"

"I will take care that it is not forgotten; and I suppose, sir, the glass of French brandy is to be put into it?"

"Glass o' French brandy, ye daft chiel," said the merchant, forgetting for a moment the prudential whisper; then resuming it, he added, "Wha talks o' glasses o' French brandy? Ye ken, tho', that the mistress has no gotten her strength yet, and she said she would like just

four spoonfu's o' brandy in the gruel, to gie't a taste and keep the cauld out o' her wame. Ye ken the mistress's ain spoon in the tea-cup-board?"

"Yes, sir, I know it well," replied Harry, with demure gravity, adding, half aloud, as his principal drove from the door, "and a precious gravy-spoon it is; before it is four times filled and emptied it will make the largest wine-glass in the store; run over the brim, and the old lady's tongue go like a mill-wheel. Never mind, for Jessie's sake I'll brew the gruel as stiff as my father's grog, and bear Dame Christie's scolds without complaint."

"He's a canny, dounce lad, yon Hairy," said the merchant to his daughter, as they jolted leisurely along the uneven but picturesque road that led from Marietta to Mooshanne, "and does na' care to rin about the toon like other idle gillies, but seems aye content to min' the store. Did ye see, Jessie, how he caught, wi' ae blink o' his ee, the airs that were about to fa' amongst my best Wedgewood?"

Had the merchant not been occupied, as he put this question, in guiding the wheels between sundry deep ruts and holes in the road, he could not have failed to observe the heightened colour that it brought into Jessie's countenance; for the maiden was conscious that, at the moment referred to, Harry's gaze had been fixed, not upon the fire-irons or the Wedgewood, but upon her own comely self.

It is one of the peculiar properties and triumphs of love that, not content with securing its own position in the human heart, it delights in unsettling and metamorphosing the tenants by which it was previously occupied. Under its wayward sway boldness becomes timidity and fierceness is transformed into gentleness, while bashfulness is rendered bold, and simplicity has recourse to the device of cunning!

Thus Jessie Muir, who was naturally of a frank, open disposition, but who had a secret presentiment that her father would reject the suit of her lover if it were now to be declared, acquiesced demurely in his observation respecting the attention shown by Harry Gregson to the business of the store.

"Weel, a-weel," continued the merchant, "he's a gude lad, and no ill-faured neither; I'm thinkin', Jessie, that he and Jean will, maybe, fancy each other; they're aye thegither i' the store, an' the bit lassie might gae further and fare waur than by takin' up wi' Hairy."

This speech was too much for Jessie's equanimity; the coolness with which her father spoke of his servant-maid "takin' up" with her lover stung her to the quick, and she replied, tartly, "Father, I wish you would mind your driving among these holes and stumps, instead of talking about Jean and her idle nonsense. Indeed, father, that last jolt nearly threw me out of the chaise."

"Weel, Jessie, ye need na mak' such a pother about a stump mair or less atween Marietta and Mooshanne; and though I'll no say that my drivin' is like that of Jehu, the son of Jehoshaphat, ye need na fear that I'll coup the brae new chaise for a' that."

Jessie was well pleased to have turned her father's thoughts into another channel, and being a little ashamed of the momentary irritation to which she had given way, she now exerted herself to please and amuse him, in which she succeeded so well that they reached Mooshanne

in cheerful mood, and with wheels uninjured by hole or stump.

Colonel Brandon, seeing the merchant drive up to the door just as he, with Lucy and Aunt Mary, were about to sit down to dinner, went himself to the door, and, with the frank hospitality of his nature, invited him and his daughter to share their family meal. This invitation was no small gratification to the pride of David Muir, who had on former visits to Mooshanne regaled himself with Monsieur Perrot in the pantry. The boxes and parcels having been safely deposited, and the chaise sent round to the stable, Lucy aided Jessie to uncloak and unbonnet, and in a few minutes the party, thus increased, found themselves assembled at the Colonel's table.

"My worthy friend," said the latter, addressing his guest, "you seem to have brought an unusual variety of packages to-day; I suppose the greater part of them are for Lucy's benefit rather than for mine?"

"Maybe Jessie has brought a few things fresh frae Philadelphia for Miss Lucy to look at," replied David; "but the maist part o' what I hae wi' me the day, came late yestreen, by Rob Mitchell's batteau from St. Louis. There's a wheen letters and parcels frae Messieurs Steiner and Roche, which will, nae doubt, explain the settlement o' the matter anent your shares in the fur trade."

"Are there not any other letters from Saint Louis?" inquired Lucy, colouring slightly.

"There's nane, my bonny young leddy," replied David, "excepting twa, ane frae auld Miller, to acknowledge the receipt o' the last ten barrels o' saut pork that I sent him, and anither frae Reuben Stiggs, wha keeps the great outfitting store for trappers, to order an early freight o' blankets, Bibles, religious tracts, scalp-knives, and whisky, for the Indian trade."

In spite of her disappointment, Lucy could not forbear smiling at the gravity with which the merchant enumerated this strange mixture of goods ordered for a warehouse, to which the missionary and the trapper both resorted for their respective supplies.

The dinner passed agreeably enough; and Jessie Muir having soon recovered from the diffident shyness by which she had been at first overcome, amused Lucy and Aunt Mary by her quiet but shrewd observations on persons and things in Marietta, while the merchant enjoyed, with evident satisfaction, several glasses from a certain bottle of madeira, which he knew to have been for some years deposited in his own warehouse.

As soon as dinner was over, the ladies retired to Lucy's boudoir, where she examined the contents of the packages which Jessie had brought for her inspection, while Colonel Brandon looked over the letters and papers from St. Louis. These proved to be of considerable importance, as they announced that all the points in dispute with the other fur company had been satisfactorily arranged, and that his own shares, as well as those in which Ethelston's property was chiefly invested, had risen greatly in value. During the perusal of this correspondence the Colonel spoke from time to time familiarly and unreservedly with his companion. He had learned from Lucy the attachment that existed between Henry Gregson and the merchant's daughter, and had formed an internal resolution to contribute to its successful issue by advancing to the young man a sum sufficient to enable him either

to enter into partnership with the merchant, or to commence business on his own account; but it was not his intention to develop this scheme until he had spoken with the elder Gregson, wherefore he contented himself for the present with sounding the merchant in vague and general terms respecting the disposal of his daughter's hand.

"My good friend," said the Colonel, "now that we have despatched our business, it occurs to me that I ought to remind you of a circumstance which may not yet have entered your thoughts, namely, that your daughter Jessie is grown up to be a very pretty, sensible, and discreet young woman, and that having no son of your own, you ought to seek for her a worthy husband, who might hereafter aid her in comforting the declining years of Dame Christie and yourself."

During this address the merchant fidgeted on his chair, and betrayed other evident symptoms of uneasiness; but he made no reply, and the Colonel continued: "I think I know of a young man who has long entertained an attachment for her; and, if I am not mistaken, Miss Jessie would be more likely to smile than to frown upon his suit. Feeling myself not a little interested in his future prospects, I should, if Mrs. Muir and yourself approve the match, willingly contribute, as far as lies in my power, to their comfortable settlement."

"Really, Colonel Brandon, ye're vera kind, I can no' fin' words to thank ye," stammered David, who seemed to have lost his self-possession; and before he could recover it so far as to make any distinct reply, Lucy came into the room; and taking the Colonel's arm, looked up affectionately into his face, saying, "Dear father, you have given enough time now to business; come into my room and hear one of Jessie's Scotch songs. I have just been listening to one which was written, as she tells me, by Robert Burns; it is so simple and so beautiful, she has promised to sing it over again for you."

The Colonel smiled, and followed his daughter, saying to the merchant as they left the room, "We will speak further on that subject the next time that we meet."

As soon as the little party was assembled in the boudoir, Colonel Brandon entreated Jessie Muir to fulfil her promise of singing again the song which had given so much pleasure to his daughter. Blushing slightly, Jessie complied, and sung, in a voice of much natural sweetness and without accompaniment:

"Oh! wert thou in the cauld, could blast,
On yonder lee, on yonder lee;
My plaidie to the angry airt,^{*}
I'd shelter thee, I'd shelter thee.
Or did misfortune's bitter storms
Around thee blaw, around the blaw;
Thy ~~deist~~ should be my bosom,
To share it a', to share it a'."

"Or were I in the wildest waste,
Sae black an' bare, sae black an' bare;
The desert were a paradise,
If thou wert there, if thou wert there.
Or were I monarch of the globe,
Wi' thee to reign, wi' thee to reign,
The brightest jewel in my crown
Should be my queen, should be my queen."

The Colonel having bestowed not undeserved praise upon the taste and feeling with which Jessie had sung her simple melody, added, "Yet I do not remember these words among the songs

* "Angry airt," the quarter whence the angry wind was blowing
† Shelter

of the Ayrshire bard. Lucy, you have often read to me from the volume of his poems which came from England; do you recollect having seen this song among them?"

"Indeed I do not," replied Lucy; "yet it is so full of his peculiar force of expression and feeling, that it is difficult to believe it to have been written by any one else."

"I have been told," said Jessie, "that this song was found among his papers after his death. This may be the reason why you have not seen it in your volume."

The conversation having once turned upon the subject of the writings of Ayrshire's immortal bard, whose fame was then spreading far and wide over the habitable globe, it dwelt for some time upon the attractive theme; and the tall pines were already beginning to cast their lengthened shadows over the laws, ere the merchant remembered that Dame Christie might be "wearyin'" for his return, and perhaps scold him for exposing himself and his daughter to the perils of the Mooshanne stump-studded track in the dusk of evening. The chaise having been ordered to the door, David Muir put on his hat and cloak, while Jessie donned her bonnet and shawl; and a few minutes saw them jogging steadily away on their return to Marietta.

For some time neither broke the silence of the deep forest through which they were driving, for each had their own subject for meditation. Jessie, whose spirit was softened by the songs of her father-land, and had been touched by the gentle kindness of Lucy's manner towards her, looked steadily towards the west; and while she thought that she was admiring the gigantic hemlock pines, whose huge limbs now came out in bold relief from the ruddy saffron sky beyond, her musings blended in sweet but vague confusion the banks of Allan, Doon, and Ayr, with those of the river beside her, and pictured the "Jamies," "Willies," and other "braw, braw lads" of Scottish minstrelsy, in the form of no less a personage than Harry Gregson.

She was roused from her reverie by the voice of her father, whose meditations had taken quite a different direction, as will be seen by the conversation that ensued between them.

"Jessie, it's a gae bonnie house, yon Mooshanne, an' the mailen's* the best in th' hail Territory."

"Indeed, father, it is a very pretty house, and most kind are those who live in it."

"Wad ye no' like to live in it yoursel, Jessie?"

"To say truth, father, I would rather live in a smaller house that I might call my own."

"But suppose ye might ca' yon fine house your own, what wad ye say then, lassie?" This inquiry was enforced with a significant poke from the merchant's elbow.

Jessie looked up in her father's face, and seeing that it was unusually grave, she replied, "Father, I do not understand what you are aiming at. I am very happy in our house at Marietta, and wish for none better."

"Ye're a fule," said the merchant, angrily. "I tell ye, Jessie, ye're no better than a fule; and when fortun' hauds oot her han' to ye, ye'll no' gang half-way to tak' it. Hae ye no' seen how oft Maister Reginald comes to our store, and hangs about it like a tod round a hen-roost?"

"Indeed, father, I have made no such remark; and if Master Reginald did often come to our

store, it was for powder, or a knife, or some trifles for Miss Lucy, and not for any other cause."

"Hoot awa' wi' your pouther and knives, ye blind hizzie," said the merchant; "it was to see and speak wi' yoursel', and no' for any other cause."

"Father, I am sure you are mistaken; Master Reginald would never so far forget the difference in our rank and condition, and I should be very sorry if he did."

"What do ye mean, lass, about difference o' rank and condection? Are the Muirs no' as weel-bora as ony lord or duke in the auld kintra? Do ye no' ken that my mother's father's sister was married to Muir of Drumliwhappit, an' that he was near cousin to the Laird o' Blagowrie, wha married the sister o' the Earl o' Glencairn? Rank and condection, indeed! as I tauld ye just now, ye're neither mair nor less than a fule, Jessie. Why, the Colonel spak' wi' me anent the matter this vera day, an' said that he'd do what lay in his power to mak' a smooth an' comfortable."

Jessie Muir was now, indeed, surprised; for she had hitherto imagined that the idea of Reginald Brandon having taken a fancy to her, was one of those crotchets which the merchant sometimes took up, and which he would then maintain with all the pertinacious obstinacy of his character; but she knew him to be incapable of a direct untruth, and was, therefore, overwhelmed with astonishment at the communication last made to her.

We should not faithfully portray Jessie's character were we to say that she experienced no secret gratification, when she learned that her hand was sought by one possessed of so many advantages of person and fortune; but we should do her injustice were we not to add, that the sensation endured only for a moment; and then her heart reverting to Henry Gregson, she thought only of the increased obstacles which would now interfere with their attachment, and she burst into tears.

"Dinna greet, lassie, dinna greet,"* said the merchant, surprised and somewhat softened by this unexpected emotion, and he muttered to himself, "There's no kenning the twists and krankums o' a woman's mind! I tell her that she's courted by a weel-faured young man, wi' the best prospects in the hail Territory, and she taks on to greet like a *skelpit wean*."†

After various ineffectual attempts to draw from her any explanation of the cause of her grief, he ceased to interrogate her, wisely resolving to consult Dame Christie on the subject, and they drove on in silence until they reached their home in Marietta.

As they entered the house they were met by Harry Gregson, who led the way into the parlour, where he placed in the merchant's hand a paper which had arrived during his absence, and which proved to be an extensive order for articles to be shipped for St. Louis on the following day.

While David Muir ran his eye over the list, calculating the amount of profit which he might expect to realize from the whole, young Gregson, observing the tears not yet dry upon Jessie's cheek, cast upon her a look of anxious affectionate inquiry, which seemed only to increase her confusion and distress.

* Farms-buildings.

* Cry or weep.

† Whipped child

"Father, I am tired," she whispered, in a subdued voice, "and will go to my room to rest." Having received his embrace, she turned towards the door, where Gregson presented to her a candle that he had lighted for her, and in so doing he took her hand and pressed it; she withdrew it gently, and, in reply to his "Good night, Miss Jessie," gave him in silence a parting look so full of mingled tenderness and grief, that his anxiety was no longer to be controlled, and he resolved to draw from the merchant some explanation of her agitation. Seeing that he had at length finished his careful perusal of the paper, he said, "I think, sir, that Miss Jessie looks very unwell this evening; has anything happened to hurt or alarm her?"

"Naething, naething, my gude lad, only I tauld her some news that ought to have made her blithe as a lavroch,* and she thought fit to wet her een wi' doolt anent it."

"That is strange, indeed," replied the young man; and he added, in a hesitating tone, "I hope, sir, you will not think me impertinent, as I take so much interest in all that concerns your family, if I inquire what was the nature of the good news that you communicated to Miss Jessie?"

"Why, Hairy," replied the merchant, sinking his voice to a confidential whisper, "as ye're a discreet cannie lad, that'll no crackt about they things all ower the toon, I may just tell ye that Jessie—"

"David! David!" screamed a shrill voice from the room above, "are ye gaun to haver's there the lee-lang night?"

"Comin' this moment, Christie," said the obedient husband, leaving the room as he spoke, with the air and countenance of one so thoroughly hen-pecked, that Harry Gregson, in spite of his anxiety, laughed outright; saying to himself, as many a lover has said before and since, "How unlike is Jessie's voice to that of her mother!"

CHAPTER XL.

Besha pursues his Career as a Diplomatist.—An agreeable Tête-à-Tête disagreeably interrupted.—The Steps that Mahéga took to support his declining Interests among the Crows.

WE left Besha engaged in an attempt to liberate the bride of the young Crow chief, by proposing to Reginald and his party an exchange of prisoners.

On arriving at the camp he was allowed to pass by the sentries, and took his way up the hill to the tent of Prairie-bird. As soon as the object of his errand became known a council was held, consisting of Reginald Brandon, War-Eagle, Baptiste, Pierre, and Wingendum, and, having heard the proposal made on the part of the Crows, they proceeded to deliberate on the course to be pursued.

They could have no hesitation in agreeing to an exchange of prisoners, could that be effected upon equal terms, but the Crows insisted upon the return of Bending-willow as a preliminary step towards the release of their prisoners, and to this Baptiste and Pierre were most strongly opposed, especially the latter, who had experienced on more than one occasion the proverbial treachery of the Upsaroka tribe.

Reginald was disposed, with the fearless generosity of his nature, to be satisfied with binding them by the most solemn obligations, recognised by their customs, to release their prisoners on the safe return of Bending-willow, but his opinion was overruled by his companions; and the horse-dealer's mission wore a most unpromising aspect, when he bethought him of delivering the note written by Paul Müller to Reginald.

The perusal of this effected an immediate alteration in the sentiments of the council, and the restoration of the captive bride was decided upon. She was seated in the outer compartment of Prairie-bird's tent when Besha entered, accompanied by Reginald, to inform her of her liberation.

Pierre, who was still suspicious of some treachery, and who had some knowledge of the Crow language, placed his ear at the corner of the aperture with the intention of discovering any under-plot that might be going forward.

Besha, however, was too crafty to be caught in such a trap, or else he did not intend to make Bending-willow the confidant of his real intentions, so he simply announced to her that she was free to return to her husband's lodge, and that the white prisoners were to be restored in exchange for her.

Shaking off the sadness by which she had been of late overcome, she sprang to her feet, and her eyes sparkling with grateful joy, she pressed her hand upon Reginald's breast, then looking round, she pronounced distinctly the name of "Olitipa."

On hearing herself thus called, Prairie-bird came forth from her inner tent, and having learned the intelligence that, by the restoration of her new friend, the liberation of Paul Müller was to be effected, she embraced the former and presented her with a necklace of coral. Bending-willow returned the embrace with affectionate earnestness, and was then led by Besha from the tent.

As they passed towards the stockade, Pierre, whose suspicions were not yet entirely lulled, and who felt a deep interest in the safety of Ethelston, came up to the horse-dealer, and whispered in his ear, "If the tongues of the Crows, or of Besha, are forked, if the white prisoners are detained or injured, many widows shall howl in the camp, and the tongues of the wolves shall be red with Upsaroka blood!"

The Prairie-Guide spoke these words in a tone of deep meaning, and Besha knew that he was not a man likely to utter an idle or empty threat; he answered accordingly, "If Besha lives, the prisoners shall return unhurt before the next sunset," and so saying pursued his unmolested way to the Crow-camp.

While they were crossing the valley which separated the two encampments, Reginald, War-Eagle, and Baptiste still lingered near the door of the tent, discussing the events of the day, and expressing their respective opinions as to the probable conduct of the Crows.

"What says Prairie-bird?" inquired Reginald, addressing the maiden, who had been a not uninterested auditor of the discussion.

"Has not the Crow chief," she replied, "given a faithful promise that on the return of the bride he would restore my father and his friend unhurt?"

"He has."

"What then is the doubt?"

"The doubt is, whether the word of the Crow can be believed; whether he may not still detain, or injure his prisoners?"

* Lark.
† Gossip.

† Sorrow.
‡ Chatter.

Prairie-bird mused for a few seconds, as if debating within herself the possibility of such falsehood; then raising her head, she said in a tone of emphasis, "Fear not: my father and your friend will return to us uninjured."

"I accept the omen, sweet prophets!" exclaimed Reginald, cheerfully; "and will believe that their thoughts are honest and straightforward as you deem them, unless their conduct should prove the contrary; in that event," he added, turning to War-Eagle, "my Indian brother and I will see what our own heads and hands can do to set free our friends."

The chief replied not; but the sarcastic smile that played over his dark features, showed how little he shared in Prairie-bird's opinion of Up-saroka faith.

Meanwhile, Bending-willow returned in safety to her lodge, where Besha presented her, with an air of triumph, to her impatient lord. The other wives and women retired while she related to him her adventures, and from the mingled laughter and caresses with which he listened to her narrative, it is probable that she confessed to him the motive that had induced her to seek the Medicine of the white tent.

As soon as she concluded, he desired one of his young men to lead before the lodge a favourite horse, swift, high-couraged, and strong, from the back of which he had killed, with lance and bow, many a bison cow. Placing the bridle of raw hide in the hands of the horse-dealer, he said, "Besha has brought back the Sweet-scented-willow to its bed, he shall not go away with empty hands. When he rides through the village the warriors shall say that his horse is fit to carry a chief; and if any speak to him bad words, let him tell them to beware, for White Bull calls him brother!"

So saying, the young savage, who had now completely recovered his good humour, half-lifted, half-threw the astonished dealer upon the horse's back, and turned again into the lodge to renew his caresses to his recovered bride.

"All goes well!" thought Besha within himself, as he rode towards his own quarters, proving with professional skill, the paces and qualities of his new steed. "All goes well!" and this animal will fetch me two hundred dollars in the lower Arkansas country; few such are to be found there. I wonder where this Crow thief found or stole it? If I can manage with fine words to get a few more skins from this tribe, and a few more presents from the white men, I will join the summer return-train from the Black Hills, and make my way back towards the east."

Indulging in these honest and disinterested meditations, the horse-dealer arrived before his own lodge, where his Indian wife awaited his coming with a savoury mess of bison-meat and marrow; after despatching which he smoked his pipe, without permitting any reflections concerning the prisoners whose cause he had so shamelessly betrayed, to disturb his appetite, or his present easy enjoyment.

It was fortunate for them that they had an advocate more honest and zealous in a quarter where they least suspected it. This was Bending-willow; who, after showing to her lover-husband the coral necklace given to her by Prairie-bird, and repeating to him the kind treatment that she had experienced in the tent, entreated him to use his influence for the restoration of the prisoners.

This she was not able to effect, as he stated that they belonged to the great council, who would decide upon their fate, after consulting the Medicine; but she obtained from him a promise that he would in the meantime protect them from all chance injury, as well as from the violence of any personal enemy who might beat them ill-will.

The deliberations of the Indian tribes are, in fact, carried on in a manner more strongly resembling those of civilised nations than is usually believed; that is, a few leading men meet together, and arrange the plan of operations to be pursued, after which they convoke the grand council by whatever name it may be called, and insensibly lead its members to propose, second, and carry the measures previously agreed upon. Thus it was with the Crows upon the present occasion. The old chief of the band, as soon as he learned the safe return of Bending-willow, sent for his son the White-Bull, whose rank as leader of the braves entitled him to be present at a secret council; two other warriors, of more advanced age and experience, were also admitted; and these four being assembled, they entered upon their deliberations with a freedom of thought and speech such as could not have been consistent with the forms and usages of a public meeting.

It would be tedious to relate in order the various arguments that were adduced by the several speakers in turn; suffice it to say, that the father of White-Bull, independent of his claim to authority as chief, happened to be the oldest man and the greatest rogue present; all which concurrent advantages gave a preponderating influence to his advice. The result was, as might have been expected, its adoption by the unanimous consent of his three companions; and, as the after-movements of the band were regulated by it, a brief sketch of its purport and objects will not be misplaced.

His counsel, stripped of Indian imagery and ornament, was, that they should for the present detain the prisoners; and in order to avoid the consequences of the violent ebullition of resentment which might be expected on the part of the White Men and Delawares, that they should instantly decamp, and marching towards the south and west by the most intricate and difficult passes, make their way to the neighbourhood of the district where Mahéga informed them that he had concealed his goods and stores. These it was their intention, of course, to appropriate, and afterwards to deal with their dangerous and haughty possessor as might be found most expedient. Meanwhile it was certain that the allied band would follow their trail for the recovery of the prisoners, and if they did so, with their baggage and Prairie-bird's tent, the Crows had little fear of being overtaken, excepting when they chose to halt for the purpose; if, on the contrary, the allied band should divide, the chief knew that from the intimate acquaintance of his warriors with the localities, they would easily find means to attack and overcome the weakened party left in charge of the tent, and its wonderful mistress.

This outline of operations being settled, it was further agreed that the prisoners should be entrusted to the care of White-Bull, who made himself responsible for their security, and who was to lead the van of the retreat, while Besha was summoned, and ordered to explain to the Osage chief the proposed plan of operations, and

that to him was to be assigned the honourable post of defending the rear of the march.

In consequence of all these preliminary arrangements, a formal council was summoned, at which they were proposed and agreed upon, with the sanction of the Medicine, and a treaty was entered into with Mahéga, by which he bound himself with his companions to fight faithfully for the Crows, and to make over to them one half of his goods concealed in the cache, on condition that they should do everything in their power to recover for him the Great Medicine of the tent, and his baggage now in the hands of the Delawares.

These arrangements and agreements were no sooner completed than they were carried into execution with a speed, order, and noiseless silence peculiar to these roving tribes, whose fate is so often dependent upon the secrecy and celerity of their movements.

While these things were going forward in the Crow camp, Reginald sat by the side of Prairie-bird under the small cedar-tree in front of her tent. Being still somewhat stiff from the wounds and bruises received in the late attack, he gladly availed himself of that pretext for enjoying a few hours of repose in the society of his beloved, while he left the chief care of the defence of the camp to Baptiste and War-Eagle.

His eye wandered occasionally across the valley below, and scanned with an anxious look the opposite hill upon which the dusky figures of the Crows were seen moving to and fro between the lodges and bushes, until it returned to rest upon the lovely countenance of his companion. That countenance, which was now lighted up by the parting rays of the declining sun, beamed with emotions too deep for utterance.

Her love for Reginald was not like the love so often found in the artificial world of society, a mere preference, engendered, perhaps, by fancy, and nurtured by habit, accident, or mere congeniality of tastes, but a single absorbing passion, the intensity of which she trembled to acknowledge even to herself. All the poetry, the enthusiasm, the yearnings of womanly feeling in her nature were gathered into a focus, and nothing but her strong and abiding sense of religion prevented that love from being idolatry.

As her eye fell upon the recent scar upon his forehead, and the sling in which his left arm was enveloped, she remembered that twice already had his blood been shed in her defence, twice had her life been saved at the risk of his own. Tears of delicious gratitude, tears sweeter than any smiles that ever dimpled the cheek of joy began to flow, and half averting her face from her lover, she turned it thoughtfully towards the western horizon.

The orb of the sun had just disappeared behind the rugged and far-distant mountain range, whose towering and snow-clad peaks stood out in clear relief from the deep masses of cloud whose wavy edges still reflected his golden light. A mellowed haze wrapped as in a saffron mantle the nearer hills, whose irregular forms, some rocky and precipitous, others undulating and covered with dense forests of pine and cedar, formed the foreground of the magnificent evening landscape. A single star glistened palely in the twilight heaven, a forerunner of the thousand glorious lights about to emerge from its unfathomed vault. To look up from nature to nature's God was the habitual process of Prairie-bird's mind, a habit resulting partly from the

fatherly instructions of the Missionary, but chiefly from her constant study of the Scripture amid scenes calculated to impress its lessons most deeply upon her.

Such a scene was that now before her, and as the deepening shadow fell upon mountain, forest, and vale, a holier calm stole over the current of her thoughts, and imparted to her eloquent features an expression in which the sweet consciousness of reciprocated earthly affection was blended with adoring gratitude to Him whose everlasting name is Love.

The earnest and affectionate gaze of Reginald was still riveted upon her countenance, when a gentle sigh fell upon his watchful ear. Taking her hand within his own, he whispered "Is Prairie-bird sad?—Does any sorrow disturb her peace?"

Dropping to the earth those humid eyes so late upraised to heaven, she replied, in a hesitating voice, "Not sad, dear Reginald, but . . . afraid."

"Afraid! dearest; and of what? Nay, blush not, but tell me your cause of fear."

"Afraid of too much happiness, of too much love. I tremble, and doubt whether my thoughts are such as God approves."

"Be not rash nor unjust in self-condemnation," said Reginald, in a chiding tone, while secretly delighted by a confession which his heart interpreted aright; "think you that the Creator who implanted these affections within us, and who has pronounced repeated sanctions and blessings upon the bond of wedded love, think you, dearest, that He can be offended at your love for one to whom you have pledged your troth, and who, albeit in many respects unworthy of such a treasure, has at least the merit of repaying it a hundredfold?"

"Unworthy!" repeated Prairie-bird, in a tone of reproachful tenderness,—other words trembled upon her lips, but the instinct of maidenly reserve checked their utterance, and she was silent.

"Nay, if you like not the word, it shall be unsaid," whispered Reginald, gently pressing the hand which he held within his own; "and my whole future life shall be a constant endeavour to make it untrue. Let me, however, guess at the secret cause of your fear, and of the sigh that escaped you,—you were thinking of your dear fatherly instructor, and were afraid that he would not return?"

"Indeed my thoughts were not of him at the moment," she replied, with earnest simplicity; "nor am I afraid on his account."

"Why is he not yet in the hands of an enemy whose cruelty and treachery are proverbial? What if the Crow chief should, in spite of his solemn promise, refuse to give up his prisoners?"

"It cannot be," she replied gravely; "God will not permit such falsehood."

"You speak," said Reginald, "like one who has studied chiefly your own heart, and the precious book now lying at your side; but even there you may have read that the Almighty sometimes permits falsehood and wickedness to triumph upon earth."

"It is too true," replied Prairie-bird; "yet I feel a strong assurance that our friends will return to us in safety. I cannot tell whence it comes—whether from a dream sent in the watches of the night, or the secret whispers of some mysterious and unseen counsellor, but it brings hope, rest, and comfort to my heart."

"God forbid," said Reginald, passionately,

"that I should say anything likely to banish such sweet guests from so sweet a home. But if the Crow chief should be guilty of this treacherous act of falsehood, I will endeavour to inflict upon him a vengeance so signal, as shall deter him and his tribe from any future repetition of the crime."

"It is lawful," replied the maiden, "to recover our friends by force or device, if they are detained by treachery; but remember, dear Reginald, that vengeance belongs not to our erring and fallen race; if the Upsaroka should sin as you expect, defeat, if you can, his evil schemes, but leave his punishment to the Great Avenger, who can make his latter days loathsome as those of Gehazi, or his death sudden and fearful as that of Ananias and his guilty spouse."

Reginald coloured deeply, for his conscience reminded him that on a late occasion he had used, in a discussion with War-Eagle, the same argument as that now applied with so much force to himself, and he felt ashamed of having forgotten, in the excitement of his own passions, a truth which he had laboured strongly to impress upon another.

"Thanks, dearest monitress," he replied, "for recalling me to my better self; would that you were always by my side to control my impatience and reprove the hastiness of my temper. Nay, I trust ere long that you will be always at my side; your father and instructor will return, and will unite us in those holy bands not to be severed by man. You will then leave the prairie and the tent, and come with me to a home where a second father and a loving sister claim a share in your affection."

"It shall be so," replied Prairie-bird in a low and earnest voice; "read my answer in the language of one who, like myself, was humble and friendless, but who, trusting in her God, found in a strange land a husband and home."

"Nay, read it to me," said Reginald, anticipating her selection; "however beautiful the words may be, your voice will make them fall more sweetly on my ear."

Prairie-bird opened the book, but she looked not on the page, for the words were treasured in her heart; and she repeated in a voice faltering from deep emotion, "Whither thou goest I will go, and where thou lodgest I will lodge; thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God. Where thou diest will I die, and there will I be buried; the Lord do so to me, and more also, if aught but death part thee and me."

As she concluded these words, she looked up to the face of her betrothed with eyes beaming with truth and affection. The strong man was overcome; he could only utter a deep Amen. The consciousness that the trustful, guileless being now at his side had surrendered to his keeping the ark of her earthly happiness, mingled an awful responsibility with the more tender feelings that possessed his inmost soul; he felt what has been so truly described by a poet out of fashion and out of date,—that

"The treasures of the deep are not so precious
As are the concealed comforts of a man
Locked up in woman's love."

Then did he record a secret and solemn vow that he would guard his precious treasure with a miser's care; the stars began more brightly to twinkle in the sky, the watch-fires emitted through the deepening gloom a clearer ray; and as the head of Prairie-bird lightly rested upon her lover's shoulder, they gave themselves up

to the delicious reveries suggested by the hour, the scene, and hearts overcharged with bliss.

The happy pair were suddenly aroused from their waking dream by the sharp crack of a rifle, the flash of which Reginald distinctly saw through the bushes on the side of the hill below them; a bullet whizzed close to his head, and a half-suppressed cry broke from Prairie-bird.

"Speak, love, speak!" he exclaimed in frantic alarm; "speak but one word to tell me you are not hurt!"

"I am not hurt," she replied; "God be praised that you are also unharmed! Nay, dearest, do not break from me." Here the report of firearms was again heard, mingled with the shouts and tumult of a sudden fray. "Our friends are on their guard! you are still weak from your late wound! Oh, Reginald, stay! I entreat—I implore!"

But he heard her not; the din of arms and the foul attempt at murder, directed, as he believed, against the life of his betrothed, had awakened the tempest within him; the wounded arm was released from its sling, and, with drawn cutlass in his right hand, he rushed down the steep slope of the hill with the reckless speed of a madman. We will now proceed to explain the cause of this sudden interruption of their *idyllic*.

It has been already mentioned that Besha had been charged with explaining to Mahéga the arrangements and plans adopted at the Upsaroka council. No sooner had he done so, than the Osage chief, finding that the evacuation of the camp was to take place during the night, resolved upon striking, before they withdrew from the neighbourhood, one blow at the foes who had defeated and baffled him.

Too cunning to be deceived by the Crows, or to be misled by the flattery of Besha, he knew that as he had now no more presents to offer, his only chance of retaining any authority or influence with them was by such deeds of daring as should compel them to look up to him as a war-leader. This feeling, stimulated by his thirst for revenge, led him without hesitation to attempt a feat which, if successful, must render him the terror not less of his allies than of his foes.

As soon as the Horse-dealer had left him he summoned his few remaining followers, and informed them that they must prepare to march during the ensuing night; he told them also that he was about to set forth himself on the war-path alone, and all that he required of them was to conceal themselves among the bushes fronting towards the enemy's camp, so as to cover his retreat in case of his being pursued from that quarter, and that he intended to return, if possible, on a horse.

The men listened with silent attention to their leader's orders, and retired without making either comment or reply. Mahéga then stripped himself of every ornament that could attract attention, and threw off his hunting-shirt and leggins, thrusting a brace of small pistols and a long knife into his waist-belt; and with no other covering than a light pair of moccasins on his feet, he stole out of the camp at a point which was not visible from the enemy's quarters.

Availing himself of every ravine and undulation of ground, he made a swift circuit in the distant prairie, and approached the De'aware camp on the north-eastern side, where, as has

been before mentioned, it was protected by a precipitous cliff. He had observed a narrow valley in this direction, not more than half a mile from the base of the rock, to which the white men drove their horses for pasture; and as a view of it was commanded from the height, they were only guarded by a single man, who drove them back in the evening to the camp. The man who happened to be on duty there was a hunter belonging to the band brought out by Pierre, a brave, and somewhat reckless fellow, who had been inured to all the hardships and risks of a mountain trapper's life.

The crafty Osage, having succeeded in obtaining the important advantage of seeing his opponent before he could be himself perceived, directed his movements accordingly. He might, perhaps, have succeeded in creeping near enough to shoot him, and have gained the shelter of his own camp before he could be overtaken; but such was not his purpose. He had determined that the bullet now in his rifle should lodge in the heart of Reginald or War-Eagle, and no other life could satisfy his revenge.

Not more than a hundred paces from the spot where the unconscious sentry sat, with his face towards the Upsaroka camp, the valley made a bend, becoming at the same place narrower and steeper in its banks; thither did Mahéga stealthily creep, and on reaching it found that he was not within sight of his enemy.

After waiting some time, during which he carefully noted every bush and hillock that might be made subservient to his projected plan, he saw feeding towards him a steady old pack-horse, whose scarred back and sides showed that he had carried many a weary burthen over mountain and prairie. The Osage remarked also, that the animal had a long laryette of hide round its neck. As soon as he felt assured that it had passed the bend, and could no longer be seen by the man on guard, he caught the end of the laryette, and led his unsuspecting quadruped prisoner to a spot further up the valley, where some thick bushes offered him the means of concealing himself. Here he twisted the laryette firmly around the fore-leg of the horse, and enconcealing himself behind the largest of the bushes, patiently awaited the result.

As the shades of evening drew on, the hunter rose to collect and drive his horses to the camp. Having gathered those in the lower part of the valley, he afterwards came in search of those that had strayed beyond the bend. When his eye fell upon the old pack-horse cropping the long grass, and occasionally the younger shoots of the adjacent bushes, he muttered to himself, "The old fool hasn't sense to know summer from winter; there he stands, gnawing the twigs off the bushes, when he might be eating the best grass in the bottom."

As soon as he reached the animal whom he thus apostrophised, he laid down his rifle, in order to free the entangled leg from the laryette. While stooping for this purpose, a slight rustling of leaves caught his ear; and ere he could look round the fierce Osage sprang upon him with the bound of a tiger. The unfortunate man strove to catch up his rifle, but the foot of the giant was upon it, a grasp of iron was upon his throat, and ere he could utter a sound or raise a hand, the knife of the savage was buried in his heart.

Having thus far succeeded in his plan, Mahéga dressed himself from head to foot in the

clothes of his victim, taking possession at the same time of his knife and pistols, having first deliberately scalped him, and placed the scalp in his own belt, below the ill-fated hunter's shirt. When thus accoutred and attired, the Osage grinned with satisfaction, and proceeded to the next, and more dangerous portion of his enterprise.

His first step was to select and secure the best horse from those pasturing in the valley, which he bridled with the laryette already mentioned; and having slung the hunter's rifle over his shoulder, he mounted his newly-acquired steed, and began leisurely to drive the others towards the Delaware camp. As soon as he emerged from the valley he came in sight of the enemy's sentries and outposts; but the well-known wolf-skin cap, and elk-skin shirt, attracted no particular attention, and he rode deliberately forward until he reached a huge pine-tree, the shade of whose branches was rendered yet more dark by the deepening gloom of evening. Here he fastened his horse; and leaving the others to find their way as they best might, he struck boldly into the thicket that fringed the base of the hill.

Conscious that he was now in the midst of enemies, and that his life must depend upon his own skill and address, he crept forward up the steep ascent, now stopping to listen for the sound of a footfall, now straining his eyes through the dusky shade, in search of some light or object by which to direct his course. Knowing every inch of the ground, he was soon able to distinguish the angle of the stockade, and at no great distance above it the white tent, partially lighted up by a fire, round which were seated Monsieur Perrot, Pierre, and several others.

As night drew on, and the surrounding scenery became involved in deeper gloom, the watch-fire emitted a stronger light, by which Mahéga caught, at length, a view of Reginald seated by the side of Prairie-bird. All the stormy passions in his breast, jealousy, hatred, and revenge, were kindled at the sight; and as soon as he thought the muzzle of his rifle truly aimed at his rival's heart, he fired. Fortunate was it for Reginald that the light cast by the fire was flickering and uncertain, or that hour had been his last.

The savage, without waiting to see the result of his shot, which had alarmed the hunters and the Delawares patrolling near the spot, rushed down the hill towards the tree where he had left his horse. Twice was his path crossed by an enemy; the first he felled with a blow on the head from the discharged rifle, and the second, which was no less a person than honest Baptiste himself, he narrowly missed, in firing a pistol in his face at so near a distance that, although unhurt by the ball, his cheek was singed by the powder.

Completely taken by surprise, the Guide fired into the bushes after the retreating figure of his unknown foe, and then dashed forward in pursuit; but the darkness favoured the escape of the Osage, who never paused nor turned again until he reached the spot where he had fastened the horse; then vaulting on its back, he shouted his insulting war-cry, in a voice that might be heard above all the mingled sounds of pursuit, struck his heel into the flank of the captured steed, and, unscathed by any of the bullets that whistled after him, reached the Crow camp in safety.

The Osage warriors looked with some surprise upon their chief in his unusual attire, but he briefly returned their greeting, and proceeded without delay to the lodge of the Upsaroka chief. A fire was burning there, by the light of which he recognised the old man seated in the midst, with his son, White-Bull, on his right and Besha at some distance on his left. Mahéga had by this time thrown off the garments of the slain hunter, which were slung across the horse. Leading the latter forward, until the light of the fire fell upon it and upon himself, he stood a moment in an attitude of haughty and silent expectation. White-Bull and his father raised their eyes in surprise at the sudden appearance of their guest, and in involuntary admiration of his herculean figure, the fine proportions of which were seen to advantage by the ruddy glare of the blazing logs.

"Let Besha tell my brother he is welcome," said the old chief, cautiously; "and let him inquire whence he comes, and what he has to say."

"Mahéga is come," replied the proud Osage, "from a visit to the pale-faces and the Lenapé women. His hands are not empty; the shirt, the leggins, the belt, the head-dress, and the nose of a white hunter he has brought as a present to the Upsaroka chief. If White-Bull will receive the *Medicine-weapon*,* the heart of Mahéga will be glad."

White-Bull and his father accepted the offered presents with every demonstration of satisfaction. The latter, again addressing Besha, desired him thus to speak:

"Mahéga forgets that all his goods are in the hands of his enemies—does he keep nothing for himself?"

The Osage made no reply, but drawing the recent scalp from his belt, and pointing to it, the knife still red with human blood, he smiled scornfully, and strode through the camp back to his own lodge. His purpose was effected; he had succeeded in his daring exploit, and, although uncertain of the result of the shot fired at Reginald, he had regained some of his influence over the Upsaroka chief and his intractable son. Mahéga pondered over these things in his lodge, as he mechanically attached the scalp of his last-killed foe to a thong, on which were already fastened many similar trophies of his former prowess.

His musings were soon disturbed by the voice of Besha, who entered the lodge, bearing a sack of considerable dimensions, which he deposited upon the ground. "Mahéga is a great warrior," said he, greeting the Osage with something of the reluctant courtesy which a terrier shows to a mastiff; "his name will be heard far among the tribes of the Upsaroka nation. The Great Chief wishes to make his Washashe brother a present: the horses stand without the lodge to carry the followers of Mahéga on the path of the bison, or of the Lenapé."

The eye of the chief brightened with fierce pleasure at this announcement, as two of his few remaining men were unhorsed, and he satisfied himself, by going to the door of the lodge,

that the horses now presented to him were good and fit for service.

"That is not all," continued the horse-dealer; "White-Bull knows that the medicine-weapon cannot live without food; he has sent me to offer this bag to Mahéga."

As he spoke Besha opened the sack, and exposed to the view of the Osage powder and lead sufficient for fifty or sixty shots, and half a dozen pair of strong moccasins, such as are made by the Crow women for their lords.

"The hand of the Upsaroka is open," said Mahéga; "tell him that his gifts shall not fall upon the ground; the lead shall be buried in the hearts of his enemies."

Besha, having given to the chief a few brief explanations of the hour and the arrangements fixed for the night-march, withdrew, and left him to communicate them to his followers.

We must now return to Reginald Brandon, whom we left engaged in the disagreeable and perilous task of pursuing an unseen enemy down the slope of a steep hill in the dark. His was not, however, a foot or a heart likely to fail him in such an emergency, and, reckless alike of obstacles or of the difficulties in his path, he continued his rapid descent, and soon found himself among the glades and bushes whence the firing had aroused his attention. Advancing with his drawn cutlass still in his hand, he stumbled over something, which he found to be the prostrate form of a man, and in whom he recognised, by his dress, one of his own party. Finding that he could extract from him nothing but broken and muttered sentences about "the devil" and "the darkness," he hastened on until he reached a spot where he heard several voices in earnest conversation; these he found to be War-Eagle, Wingenund, and Baptiste; and he soon gathered from the latter all that he had to tell, which was, that having suddenly heard the crack of a rifle in the camp, and then a man rushing through the bushes in descending the hill, he had thrown himself in the way of the stranger, who, after nearly blinding him by the discharge of a pistol in his face, had darted past him into the thicket below. "I fired after him," continued the honest Guide, "both pistol and rifle, but I scarcely think I hit him, for, on reaching the edge of the timber, I could just distinguish a horseman crossing the prairie at full speed to the Crow camp; 'tis a bad business, but I fear there is worse yet behind."

"How mean you?" inquired Reginald.

"Why, I fear some foul play in our own camp; the fellow who shot the pistol at me was one of our party."

"Impossible!" said Reginald; "I will not believe it."

"Neither would I, if I could help it," replied the Guide; "but dark as it was, I could plainly see the fur-cap and elk-shirt upon him; whoever it was, he joined Mahéga on the prairie, for the Washashe shouted his cursed warwhoop aloud to insult us."

Wingenund here whispered a few words to War-Eagle, who replied, "Right, my young brother, let us visit the posts and the fires, we shall soon see who is missing."

While the chief, with the aid of Pierre and Baptiste, undertook this task, Reginald returned, accompanied by Wingenund, to the spot where he had stumbled over the wounded man. They found him seated in the same place, but his

* At the date of this tale the use of fire-arms was very little known among the tribes in the neighbourhood of the Rocky Mountains; and in most of their languages, to this day, the words by which they express "a rifle" signify, usually, "medicine-weapon," "wonderful fire-weapon," "fire-tube," &c., &c.

senses had returned, and with the exception of the severe bruises on the head, they were glad to learn that he was uninjured. He could give no account of what had passed further than that already given by Baptiste. He had been prostrated and stunned by a heavy blow from some one descending the hill with great rapidity; he also stated his impression that he had distinguished the dress of a white hunter.

The result of the investigation may of course be anticipated; the unfortunate owner of the wolf-skin cap was suspected of having plotted with Mahéga, and (after aiding him in an attempt to murder Reginald) of having gone off with one of the best horses to the Crow camp. Such was the conjecture of some, and if there were others who guessed more nearly at the truth, their opinions were for the present reserved; it being, however, impossible to make further inquiry until daylight, the different parties retired to their respective quarters, and Reginald again sought the tent to give to Prairie-bird an account of what had passed, and to assure her of his safe return. At the first sound of his voice she came forth, and listened with breathless attention to his brief narration. The watch-fire had been fed with fresh fuel, and its light falling upon her countenance, enabled her lover to see the intense anxiety which it expressed; a handkerchief, hastily folded like a turban, covered her head, and a dark Mexican mantle was thrown over her shoulders; her hand trembled in his, and a slight shudder passed through her frame as he mentioned the name of Mahéga.

"Nay, dearest," said Reginald, "I shall grieve indeed, if the name of that hateful savage hath power so to move and disturb your peace. Fear him not: believe me, we shall yet defeat all his attempts, whether of hidden fraud or open force."

"There is no room, dear Reginald, for thoughts of fear for the future in my heart, 'tis already full, too full, of gratitude for the past; you are again by my side, safe and unhurt. Yet, methinks, I am sadly changed of late! A short time since, the report of the rifle, the arrow's hissing path, brought no terror to my ear, and now I tremble when I hear them! Will you not regret having chosen a coward for your bride?"

"Perhaps I may," said Reginald, "when the thirsty summer-grass regrets being moistened by the dew of heaven; when the watchful mother regrets that she has borne the infant by whose cradle she is seated; when the miser regrets having discovered an unsuspected treasure; and the weary traveller regrets having found a fresh spring amid the burning sands of the desert; then may I perhaps regret having chosen Prairie-bird to be to my thirsting heart its summer-dew, its firstling, its treasure, its fountain of exhaustless joy and love!"

Although it was not the first time that she had received the assurance of his affection, her ear drank it in with delight; the repetitions of Love have for his votaries perpetual freshness and variety.

"How all'er-sweet sound lovers' tongues by night!"

So says one of the fairest creations of the Great Interpreter of human passion; yet it is only to each other that these voices do so sweetly sound; to others less interested, their parlance is apt to seem dull and monotonous.

Neither would a dinner of honey or Guava jelly alone be more nauseous and disappointing to the appetite of a hungry man than a volume filled with love-letters, or love-speeches, to one in search of literary food. Duly impressed with this truth, we will spare any further detail of the conversation that passed between Reginald and his betrothed, and will content ourselves with relating that, after more than one "Good-night!" such as only lovers know, Prairie-bird retired into her tent, with her thoughts so absorbed in one object that she was scarcely conscious of the affectionate attentions of her faithful Lita, or of the watchful care of young Wingenund, who took his accustomed station at the entrance to the outer division of his sister's canvass dwelling.

An hour before the dawn the wakeful youth arose and looked abroad; the pale and expiring fires of the opposite camp were still distinctly visible; but his practised ear missed the usual sounds of Indian life—the hum of men, the cries of children, and the barking of curs. Having learned the use of Reginald's spy-glass, he took it down from the peg on which it was suspended, and examined the opposite hill. As the light of day gradually advanced, and objects became more easily distinguishable, his suspicions became confirmed, and he resolved no longer to delay communicating them to War-Eagle. He found the chief seated at the door of his lodge, in an attitude which he at first mistook for slumber, but it proved to be one of deep meditation; for, on the youth's approach he looked up, and said, in the gentle tone in which he always addressed his beloved brother,

"Wingenund is a-foot before the sun; have his ears or eyes been open during the night?"

"They have," said the youth, gravely; "and the words that he brings to his brother are not good."

"The Wolf-cap hunter is gone to the Upsaroka camp; that is bad news; is there any worse?"

"Wingenund knows nothing of the Wolf-cap hunter; but the Upsaroka camp is like the village of the Lenape on the prairies of the east; there remains in it neither man, nor woman, nor child!"

War-Eagle sprang upon his feet, and hastily desiring Wingenund to summon Reginald, Baptiste, and Pierre to council, he descended the hill to the spot where his horses were fastened, and throwing himself upon the back of the swiftest, he galloped at full speed towards the opposite camp. As he approached it, he began to suspect that its apparent desertion might be only a manoeuvre to draw his party into an ambush, wherefore he wheeled his horse and made a circuit round the base of the hill, at such a distance as to be secure from the arrow or ball of any marksman hidden among the bushes. As he gained a spot whence the expanse of prairie was open to his view towards the south-west, he saw a body of horsemen retreating rapidly in that direction; they were already several miles from the camp, and he rightly conjectured them to be the rear-guard of the retiring enemy.

The main-body had marched early in the night, and only a score of the best mounted had been left to walk up and down by the fires, to talk aloud, and thus to prevent any suspicion of their movements from entering the Delaware camp.

Vexed and disappointed, the chief returned to

his party, which he found in confusion and dismay, from their having just discovered the body of the unfortunate Wolf-cap hunter, one of his companions having visited the valley before mentioned, in search of the missing horse and arjette!

The mystery was now cleared up, and the ruth flashed upon them that Mahéga, dressed in the clothes of their slain comrade, had actually come within their posts, and, after a deliberate attempt to shoot Reginald, had singed the beard of Baptiste, knocked down another of their party, stolen one of their best horses, and escaped in triumph to his camp!

It may well be imagined how such a complication of injury and insult aggravated the hatred which they already entertained towards the Osage. Yet were there many among the rough and hardy men present, who could not prevent feeling a secret admiration of his daring and successful exploit.

CHAPTER XLII

Wingenund devises a Plan for the Liberation of his Friends, and seeks to obtain by Means equally unusual and effective the Co-operation of the one-eyed Horse-dealer.—A further March into the Mountains.—Wingenund pays a Visit to his Friends, and the Latter make acquaintance with a strange Character.

It was about a week after the events related in the preceding chapter, that, in a deep romantic glen, apparently locked in by impassable mountains, there sat a hunter busily engaged in changing the flint of his rifle, it having just missed fire, and thereby lost him a fine chance of killing a bighorn, or mountain sheep; his countenance expressed little of the disappointment which would have been felt by a younger man on such an occasion, and its harsh, coarse features would have led any observer to believe that their possessor was habituated to occupations less generous and harmless than those of the chase.

As he fixed a fresh flint into the lock of his rifle, he hummed, or rather grunted, in a low tone, a kind of chaunt, which was a mixture of half a score different tunes, and as many various dialects, but from the careless deliberation with which he went on with his work, it was easy to perceive that his mind was otherwise occupied.

Whatever might have been his reflections, they were suddenly interrupted by a hand laid upon his shoulder, which made him start as if he had been stung by a serpent. Springing to his feet, and instinctively dropping the muzzle of his rifle to the breast of his unexpected visitor, he exclaimed, after a momentary pause, "Does Wingenund come as a friend or an enemy?"

"Neither," replied the youth, scornfully. "Wingenund has no other ship for a forked tongue; and if he had come as an enemy, Besha would not now have been alive to ask the question; 'twas as easy to shoot him as to touch his shoulder."

"For what then is he come?" inquired the horse-dealer, who, although somewhat alarmed at this reproof, was not disposed to endure the tone of superiority assumed towards him by the young Delaware.

"He is come to speak to Besha, and then to return; this is not a far way to his way words and time."

"Indeed it is not, for Wingenund knows that his enemies are within hearing of a rifle shot."

"There may be other rifles nearer than Besha thinks," replied the youth drily. "Wingenund is not a bird; wherever he goes friends can follow him."

The horse-dealer cast an uneasy glance around, and muttered half aloud, "If Wingenund is not a bird, I know not how he came to this place unseen by the Upsaroka scouts, who are abroad in every quarter?"

To this Wingenund deigned no reply, but entered at once upon the business upon which he had come. As he explained his proposal the single eye of his auditor seemed to dilate with unfeigned astonishment, and at its conclusion he shook his head, saying, "It cannot be! the mad spirit has entered my young brother's head. Besha would do much to serve his friends, but this would hold a knife to the cord of his own life!"

"The knife is there already," said the youth, sternly; "Besha has told lies to Netis and to War-Eagle, and unless he makes good his first words, their knife or bullet shall find him on the mountain or in the wood, or in the midst of the Upsaroka camp."

For an instant Besha was tempted to rush upon the bold speaker and trust the issue to his superior strength, but the quiet eye of the young Delaware was fixed upon him with an expression so fearless and resolved, that he involuntarily quailed before it, and as he was endeavouring to frame some further excuse, the youth continued in a tone of voice less stern, "Let Besha's ears be open, it is not yet too late; if he chooses to be friends with Netis, Wingenund can tell him some news that will be good for the person whom he loves best."

"And who may that be?" said the horse-dealer, doubtless surprised at the youth's pretending to a knowledge of his affections.

"Himself," was the brief reply.

The horse-dealer's eye twinkled with a comic expression, and a broad grin sat upon his countenance. "Supposing that my young brother's words are true, what is the good news that he has to tell?"

"If the white prisoners are given back unhurt to their friends, the lodge of Besha shall be more full of gifts than any lodge on the banks of the great southern river; if not, the mountain wolves shall gnaw his bones before the change of another moon: let him choose for himself."

"My brother's words are big," replied the horse-dealer, striving to overcome the effect produced upon him by the threat of the Delaware youth. "The tongues of women are very brave; if the Washashe tell the truth, not many summers have passed since the Lenapé were a woman-people."

The blood of the young chief boiled within him at this insulting allusion to an era in the history of his tribe which has already been explained to the reader, and had he followed his first fierce impulse he would have instantly avenged the affront in the blood of the speaker, but he never lost sight of the object for which he had so long sought an interview with the horse-dealer, wherefore he controlled his rising passion, and replied, "Wingenund comes with this message from those who not many days ago drove the Washashe and the Upsaroka from

their strong camp: Besha may judge whether they are women or warriors."

The horse-dealer felt, if he did not own, the justice of the reproof; he knew also that the greater portion of the coveted goods were in the possession of War-Eagle's party, and he was willing enough to conciliate them, provided he could ensure a safe retreat from the anger of the Crows, in the event of his intrigue being discovered by them.

Moved by these considerations, he said, in an undecided tone, "My young brother must not forget that the edge of the knife is on the cord of his life; if Besha agrees to his proposal, and the Crows discover him, he will be torn in pieces like a wounded elk among wolves."

"The life of Wingenund is like the breath of the mountain breeze," answered the youth; "it is in the hands of the Great Spirit, to move and send it whither he pleases. Let Besha taste this black water," he added, drawing from his belt a small bottle, "it is very wonderful."

The horse-dealer took the phial, which contained a strong, and not very palatable mixture, which had been borrowed by Wingenund from his sister's chest of medicine; but he declined tasting it, shaking his head in a manner that gave the youth to understand that he suspected something of a hurtful or poisonous nature.

"Let not Besha be afraid," said the youth, scornfully; "the tomahawk and the rifle are the death-weapons of the Lenapé, they war not with bad-waters!" and as he spoke he drank a portion of the dark and distasteful liquid.

It would now have been held, according to Indian custom, an act of unpardonable cowardice in Besha had he any longer hesitated to taste the pledge, and whatever doubts or scruples he might in secret have entertained, he concealed them, and drank off the remaining contents of the phial.

As soon as he had swallowed them, the youth, pointing up to the sky, said, with much solemnity, "Now Wingenund and Besha are before the Great Spirit, and they must beware what they do. This dark-water was given into their hands by the Medicine of the white tent; it is made up by Prairie-bird from a thousand unknown herbs; it is harmless to the good, but it is poison to the forked tongue! Has Besha ever heard of the sickness which makes the skin like a honey-comb; which spares neither woman, warrior, nor child; and in the course of half a moon turns a powerful tribe into a feeble and exhausted band?"

"He has heard of it," replied the horse-dealer, trembling from head to foot at this allusion to that *fell disease*,* which had already begun its fearful ravages among the Indian nations, and has since fulfilled to the very letter the description given of it by the Delaware youth. Its origin and causes were unknown, its cure beyond their skill; it is not therefore to be wondered at if they looked upon it with a mysterious dread.

"Yes," continued Wingenund, "if truth is on the lips and in the heart of Besha, the medicine-water will be good for him and make him strong. If he thinks of falsehood, and lies spring up in his heart, but he overcomes the bad spirit within, and treads it under his foot, then will the medicine-water give him pain for a short time, but he will recover and be stronger than before; and if his lips and heart continue full of deceit, diseases and sores shall come so thick upon his skin that

he shall die among these rocks, the hungry wolf and the turkey-buzzard shall refuse to come near the polluted carcase."

Such, or nearly such, was the warning threat which the youth held forth in the bold and figurative language of his tribe; and although Besha could not with justice be called a coward, and was superior to many of the superstitions of the Indian nations, still he had heard such well-authenticated accounts of the miraculous power of the Great Medicine of the tent, that the words of Wingenund produced all, and more than all, the effect he had anticipated.

"It shall be done," said Besha, in a subdued tone; "let Wingenund tell Olitipa that the lips and the heart of her friend will be true, and let him desire her to speak to the Great Spirit, that the medicine-water may not hurt him. Besha will be true; if the Crows discover and kill Wingenund, the hands of Besha shall be clear of his blood."

"Let the words of Wingenund remain in Besha's ears; let his tongue and his path be straight, and the hearts and hands of the Lenapé will be open to him. At two hours after nightfall* Wingenund will be here again."

So saying, the youth turned, and darting through some low bushes, clambered up the steep and rocky bed of a mountain-torrent with the activity of a mountain-cat.

Besha followed with his eyes the light form of the young Delaware, until it disappeared behind a tall cliff that projected so far across the narrow gorge as completely to hide its existence from the observation of any one traversing the valley, while its rugged and precipitous front might have deterred the boldest hunter from attempting the passage. The horse-dealer then shouldered his rifle, and returned slowly to the Crow camp, distant about a mile, revolving as he went along various schemes for ensuring the gratitude of the Delawares, without forfeiting the friendship of those with whom he was now allied.

Wingenund had rightly estimated the probable nature and quality of his reflections, and sundry sharp twitches which he felt in his stomach served to remind him of the dangerous liquid which it contained. Warned by these sensations, he made up his mind to obey the Great Medicine of the tent, and for the present, at least, to be faithful to the promise made to Wingenund.

The Delaware youth pursued his way up the rough and craggy gorge until he reached a cave that he had noticed on his descent as likely to afford shelter and a secure retreat. Here he stopped; and ensconcing himself in a dark recess, whence he could, without being himself discovered, see any one passing before the aperture, he threw himself on the ground, and drawing from his belt a few slices of dried bison-meat, he made his frugal meal, and quenched his thirst from a stream that trickled down the face of the rock behind him. While resting himself, he indulged in hopes and reveries suited to his enthusiastic nature; he was now engaged

* It has before been mentioned that the division of time vary extremely in the Indian tribes; those who have had much commerce with the Whites have coined words answering to what we denominate hours; but the tribes of the Far-western prairies usually express the successive periods of the night by resting the cheek upon the hand in a recumbent posture, and then, holding up the fore-finger and thumb in the form of a crescent, they show, by the number of motions which they make in pointing to the sky, the number of hours or parts as after nightfall which they wish to indicate.

* Small-px

In an enterprise such as he had often heard recorded in the songs of the Lenap warriors; he was about to trust himself alone in the midst of a hostile camp, and to risk his life for the liberation of his early benefactor and the friend of his adopted brother; he felt the spirit of his fathers stir within his breast.

"If I escape," said he to himself, "they shall escape with me; and if I die, I will not die alone, and the name of Wingenund shall not be forgotten among the warriors of his tribe."

In these and similar meditations he beguiled the hours until darkness overspread the earth, and the time of the appointed rendezvous drew nigh; then, once more emerging from the cave, he picked his way cautiously among the rocks, and at length found himself at the spot where he had parted from Besha. Having purposely concealed his rifle in the cave, he was now armed only with a knife and a small pistol, which he carried in his belt.

The night was cold and boisterous; dark clouds hung around the mountain-peaks, and chased each other in rapid succession over the disc of the moon, while a fitful gust of wind swept down the rocky giens, whistling as they passed among the branches of the scathed pines which were thinly scattered in that wild and desolate region.

He had not waited long when he heard the sound of approaching footsteps, and straining his keen sight to its utmost power, he recognised Besha, who came not alone, but accompanied by another man.

Although this was an addition to the company that he did not expect, the youth came fearlessly forward, his quick apprehension suggesting to him that if treachery had been intended the horse-dealer's companion would have been concealed. After exchanging a sign of recognition, Wingenund led the way to a deep recess which he had noted in a rock at no great distance, where they collected and kindled a few sticks of withered juniper and sage, which supplied them with warmth and light without rendering the place of their colloquy visible from the valley below.

By the light of the fire Wingenund observed with surprise that the horse-dealer's companion, a lad of nearly his own size and stature, had only one eye, the cavity of the other being covered with a patch of cloth; his complexion was of a hue so swarthy, that it evidently contained an admixture of the negro race and his hair, though not woolly, was coarse long, and matted, differing entirely in its texture from that of the tribes of purely Indian blood. He was wrapped in a tattered blanket, and stood apart, like one conscious of his inferiority of station. To account for his appearance, without entering at length into the explanations given by the horse-dealer to Wingenund, it will be sufficient to state that the latter had proposed to enter the Crow camp in a female dress, and to find an opportunity, as an inmate of his lodge, for communicating with Paul Müller and Ethelston.

As soon as Besha once made up his mind to forward the scheme, he resolved to do so with as little risk of discovery as possible. Happening to have in his lodge a slave, a captive taken in a horse-stealing skirmish among the Comanches, who was nearly the same age as Wingenund, he thought that the youth might personate him more easily than he could imitate the gait and appearance of a woman.

Many were the jokes among the Crows about the one-eyed Besha, and his one-eyed slave. The latter had lost his eye by the point of an arrow, in the same skirmish which threw him into Besha's power; and being a cunning and dexterous lad, he soon grew into favour with his new master, who frequently employed him as a spy, and found him extremely useful in stealing, marking, and disguising horses for him.

Wingenund saw at once the drift of Besha's project, and they lost no time in carrying it into effect. The exchange of dress was made in a few seconds, and the horse-dealer then drew from his pouch a small bladder containing ointment, with which he stained the youth's hands and face, fastening at the same time a patch over his left eye. Wingenund then desired Besha to walk up and down, and speak with the lad, that he might carefully note his movements, and the intonation of his voice. This observation he continued for some time, until he thought himself tolerably perfect in his lesson. There remained, however, one point on which he still felt himself very insecure against detection. On his explaining this to Besha, the latter grinned, and drawing from under his vest a head-dress of false hair, ragged and matted as that of his slave, he placed it on the head of Wingenund. The youth felt his disguise was now complete; and retaining his own knife and small pistol in his belt, threw the tattered blanket over his shoulder, and prepared to accompany Besha to his lodge.

The latter having instructed the slave to keep himself concealed among the rocks for a few days, and having provided him with a small bag of provisions, returned slowly towards the Crow camp, giving to his young companion by the way such hints as he deemed necessary for his safety. Fortunately for Wingenund, the lad whom he personated was known by the Crows to be ignorant of their language, so there was no great risk of his being betrayed by his speech.

As they picked their way slowly along the base of the rugged hills which frowned over the valley, they came to a spot where a few stunted pines threw a darker shadow across their path. To one of these was attached a horse, which Wingenund unfastened by desire of Besha, and led it after him by the halter.

As they reached the outposts of the camp Besha was addressed by several of the sentries, to whom he explained his night expedition, by informing them that he had been with his slave to recover a horse that had strayed. They were perfectly satisfied with this explanation, it being of very frequent occurrence that both master and man returned by day and by night with horses that they had "recovered," the latter word being in the Crow dialect almost, if not quite, synonymous with "stolen."

The lodge of Besha was pitched next to that of White-Bull, in which Ethelston and Paul Müller were confined. His entrance caused no disturbance among its slumbering inmates; and Wingenund, fore-armed with the requisite local information, tied up the horse beside its fellows; and nestling himself into his allotted corner, laid himself down to rest as composedly as if he had been in his usual quarters in the outer division of his sister's tent.

While Wingenund was thus carrying his project into effect, his friends fulfilled the intention they had formed of marching further into the mountains.

"Dear Prairie-bird!" said Reginald, as they

walked together in front of her tent, "I fear you must be much fatigued by this last march. I never could have believed that a horse, bearing a female rider, could have crossed that rocky pass by which we entered this valley."

"The horse deserves more praise than the rider, Reginald; and Nekimi seemed quite aware that his master attached a higher price to his burthen than it was worth, for he put his feet so safely and gently down, that I need not have feared his slipping, even had he not been led by one yet more gentle and careful than himself."

"It was, however, a severe trial, Prairie-bird," replied her lover; "for you remember that Lita's mule stumbled, and nearly fell with her over that fearful precipice! but Nekimi is unmatched for speed and sureness of foot, and is of so generous and affectionate a nature that I love him more than I ever thought I could have loved a quadruped. When we return to Mooshanne, he shall be repaid for all his faithful service; warm shall be his stable, soft his litter, and his beloved mistress shall sometimes give him corn with her own fair hand, in remembrance of these days of hardships!"

At the mention of his home, the cheek of Prairie-bird coloured with an emotion which that subject never failed to excite. Reginald observed it, and said to her, in a half-jesting tone, "Confess now, dearest, have you not a longing desire to see that home of which I have so often spoken to you?"

"It appears to me so like a dream, that I scarcely dare let my thoughts dwell upon it! But your sister, of whom Wingenund told me so much, I hope she will love me?"

Reginald bent his dark eyes upon her countenance with an expression that said, as plainly as words could speak it, "How could any one see thee, and fail to love thee!" Then turning the conversation to Wingenund, he replied, "Two days have now elapsed since your young brother went upon his dangerous expedition; I begin to feel most anxious for his safety."

"With grief I saw him go, for even if he succeeds in seeing and speaking with the Black Father, I cannot tell what advantage will come from it."

"They may perhaps devise some scheme for escape, and will at all events be comforted by the assurance that their friends are near and watchful. Three several times on the march hither had we made our plans for attacking the camp, and rescuing them, but the hateful Mahéga was always on his guard, and had posted himself in such a manner that we could not approach without incurring severe loss. War-Eagle has himself owned that the Osage has conducted this retreat with wonderful skill. What a pity that so great a villain should possess such high qualities!"

"If he were not in the camp of the Crows," said Prairie-bird, "my beloved father, and your friend would have been set free long ago; cruelty and revenge are his pleasures, and his hand is ever ready to shed blood."

"He will doubtless do all in his power to prevent their liberation; and if his malignant eye should detect the presence of Wingenund, he would represent the brave youth as a spy, and urge the Crows to destroy him."

"I trust much to Wingenund's skill, but more, oh! how much more, to the protection of Him, at whose word the strongest bars and bolts are broken, and the fetters of iron fall from the limbs of the captive!"

"What a strength and support must it be to you, dearest Prairie-bird, thus habitually to look up to heaven amid all the trials and troubles of earth!"

"How would it be possible to do otherwise?" she replied, looking up in his face with an expression of innocent surprise. "Can any one look upon the flowers of the prairie, the beauty of the swift antelope, the shade of the valleys, the hills and snow-clad mountains, the sun, the moon, and the thousand thousand worlds above, and yet not worship Him who framed them?"

"I grant you, dearest," he replied, "that no reasonable being could consider those things without experiencing the emotions that you describe, yet many, very many, will not consider them; still fewer are there who refer the thoughts, actions, and events of daily life to an ever-present, overruling Providence."

"Surely they can never have read this book," she said, pointing to the volume which was her constant companion; "or they must feel ever grateful for past mercies, present benefits, and the blessed promises of the future revealed in it!"

For a moment Reginald cast his eyes upon the ground, conscience reminding him of many occasions on which he had been led by temptation and carelessness to wander from those ordinances and precepts of religion which he respected and approved; at length he replied, "True, my beloved, but the human heart is a treacherous guide, and often betrays into errors which reason and revelation would alike condemn."

"It may be so among the cities and crowded haunts of men, of which I know nothing beyond what I have read, and what the Black Father has taught me; yet I cannot understand how a loving heart can be, in such cases, a treacherous guide. Is it not sweet to serve one whom we love on earth, to think of him, to bless him, to follow where he points the way, to afford him pleasure, to fulfil his wishes even before they are expressed! If such feelings be sweet and natural towards one frail and imperfect as ourselves, why should the heart refuse to entertain them towards the one perfect Being, our ever-present Benefactor, the Fountain of Love?"

Again Reginald was silent, the impassioned eloquence of her eyes told him how her heart overflowed with feelings but faintly shadowed in her simple language; and he desired rather to share than to shake her creed. Why should he tell her, that in spite of all the incentives of hope and gratitude, in spite of all the arguments of reason and the truths of revelation, the great majority of the so-called Christian world pursued their daily course of business or amusement as if the present were the substance of life, and Eternity a dream? Reginald felt his own heart softened, purified, and exalted by communion with the gentle being at his side; the cares and troubles of life might perhaps disturb at some future time the current of her lot, but her faith was built upon a Rock that would not be shaken, and his spirit already sympathizing with hers, experienced a new and delightful sensation of happiness.

He might have indulged longer in this blissful reverie, had not his ear caught the sound of an approaching footstep; he turned quickly, and recognising the light form of Wingenund, exclaimed, "See, Prairie-bird, our dear young brother safely returned! May all your other hopeful anticipations be as happily realized! Speak, Wingenund; let us hear how you have sped in your difficult and dangerous mission!"

Instead of giving the youth's narrative in his own words, we will resume the thread of his story where we left it, being thus enabled to relate various particulars which his modesty induced him to omit.

At the first dawn of day he looked round the horse-dealer's lodge, and made a survey of its inmates. In the centre lay Besha himself; and by his side a squaw from one of the southern tribes, who had been the companion of his rambles and expeditions for many years. Beyond them there slept, or seemed to sleep, a youth, whose appearance indicated that he also belonged to a southern clime, and that some Mexican blood ran in his veins; his features were finely formed, his complexion darker than that of a northern Indian, and a short mustachio began to shade his upper lip; his eyes were small, but piercing, and black as jet, and scarcely was the light sufficient to render distinguishable the objects in the lodge ere his quick gaze fell upon Wingenund, with an expression that convinced the latter that the plot had been confided to him. These were the only inmates of the lodge, which was filled with various indications of its owner's success in trade, packages and bales being piled therein to a considerable height.

Agreeably to the plan preconceived by Besha, his wife invited Bending-willow to come to her in the course of the morning; and, on her arrival, set before her some cakes of maize, sweetened with sugar,—a luxury equally new and agreeable to the Upsaroka bride. Further civilities beyond those interchangeable by signs were precluded between them, by the circumstance of their being each entirely ignorant of the other's language; but the offering of a string of blue beads after the cakes completed the triumph of the hostess in the good graces of her guest.

Besha did not lose this favourable opportunity for calling the attention of the latter to the subject of the prisoners, in whose behalf he expressed a hope that she would use her best exertions.

Bending-willow smiled, and said that she was a woman, and had no power in the council of the tribe.

The crafty horse-dealer saw at a glance how the assertion was belied by the smile, and replied,

"When White-Bull speaks, the braves listen: when Bending-willow speaks, does not White-Bull listen too?"

The Upsaroka beauty looked down and counted the beads upon her new bracelet, with an expression of countenance which encouraged Besha to proceed. "These white men are of no use in the Upsaroka camp; they eat and drink, and kill no game. If they are sent back to their own people, the lodge of White-Bull will be full of presents, and the women will say, 'Look at Bending-willow; she is dressed like the wife of a great chief!'"

By these, and similar arguments, the Crow bride was easily induced to connive at the plot laid for the liberation of the prisoners. Being a good-natured creature, and feeling that the kindness of Prairie-bird to her had been ill-requited, she was the more willing to favour the white people, and only held Besha to the promise that in contriving their escape no injury should be done to the person or property of any of her tribe.

With the assistance of Bending-willow, Wingenund found several opportunities of conver-

sing with Ethelston and the Black Father; but the camp was so strictly guarded that they could not devise any plan that seemed to promise success, while a failure was sure to bring upon them more rigid confinement, if not a severer and more summary punishment. Wingenund was authorised by Besha to comfort them with the assurance that they had a true friend in White-Bull's bride, and that they were quite safe from the malignant designs of Mahéga. On the other hand, the horse-dealer positively refused, under present circumstances, to incur the risk of aiding their escape while the position of the camp was so unfavourable for it, and the Crow sentries were kept so much on the alert by the immediate vicinity of War-Eagle's party.

Under these circumstances, the youth had slipped away by night to consult with his friends whether the liberation of the prisoners should be attempted by force, or whether it might not be more advisable to throw the Crows off their guard by discontinuing the pursuit, and leaving it to the ingenuity of Wingenund to devise a plan for their escape.

These two alternatives having been duly discussed in council, it was almost unanimously agreed to adopt the latter; and Wingenund prepared again to return to his perilous post, having received from War-Eagle, Reginald, and Prairie-bird the praises which his skill and enterprise had so well deserved.

He did not forget to take with him a small supply of beads and trinkets, which he concealed in his belt, and which were destined to secure the continued favour of Bending-willow.

As soon as he was gone, War-Eagle proposed that the party should quit their present station in search of one where they might be more likely to fall in with deer and bison, as meat was becoming very scarce in the camp; and a scout, sent out on the preceding day, had returned with a report that he had found, at the distance of half a day's march, a large and fertile valley, watered by a fine stream, and abounding in materials for fuel. This last consideration was of itself highly important, for the Crows had gathered every dry bush and stick from the barren glen in which they were now encamped; and the utmost exertions of the indefatigable Perrot scarcely enabled him to provide a sufficiency for cooking the necessary provisions; while the coldness of the atmosphere, especially at night, rendered the absence of fire a privation more than ordinarily severe.

The counsel of War-Eagle was therefore adopted without delay, it having been agreed that two of the most experienced men, the one a Delaware and the other a white hunter, should hover around the Crow camp, and communicate to the main body, from time to time, their movements and proceedings.

Having been supplied with an extra blanket, and a few pounds of dried meat and parched corn, these two hardy fellows saw their comrades depart without the least apparent concern, and soon afterwards withdrew to a sheltered and more elevated spot, whence they could, without being perceived, command a distant view of the Crow camp.

Following the steps of the scouts, War-Eagle led his party to a part of the valley where a huge rent or fissure in the side of the mountain rendered the ascent practicable for the horses. It was, however, a wild and rugged scene, and a fitting entrance to the vast pile of mountains,

that showed their towering peaks far to the westward.

Prairie-bird was mounted upon Nekimi, and Reginald walked by her side, his hand ever ready to aid and guide him among the huge stones, which in some places obstructed the path.

Never had velvet lawn, or flower-embroidered vale, seemed to our herd half so smooth and pleasant as did that rocky pass. At every turn some new feature of grandeur arrested the attention of Prairie-bird, who expressed her admiration in language which was a strange mixture of natural eloquence and poetry, and which sounded to his ears more musical than "Apolo's lute."

What struck him as most remarkable was, that, whether in speaking of the magnificent scenery around, or of the more minute objects which fell under her observation, her spirit was so imbued with Scripture, that she constantly clothed her ideas in its phraseology, without being conscious of so doing.

Thus, when in crossing the valley they passed by some ant-hills, and, in ascending the opposite height, saw here and there a mountain-rabbit nibbling the short moss that overspread the bed of rock, Reginald directed her attention to them, saying, "See, Prairie-bird, even in this desolate wilderness these insect-millions have built them a city, and the rabbit skips and feasts as merrily as in more fertile regions."

"True, dear Reginald," she replied, "therefore did the wise man say in days of old, 'The ants are a people not strong, yet they prepare their meat in the summer: the conies are but a feeble folk, yet make they their houses in the rocks.'"

A little further onward, the pass was overhung by an enormous cliff, from the top of which a bighorn looked down upon the party below, the long beard of the mountain-goat streaming in the wind. One of the hunters fired at it, but the harmless bullet glanced from the face of the cliff, while amid the echoes repeated and prolonged by the surrounding heights, the bighorn sprang from rock to rock across the yawning chasms by which they were divided, as lightly as the forest squirrel leaps from a branch of the spreading oak to that of the neighbouring elm.

Reginald watched the animal's progress, and called the attention of Prairie-bird to the surprising swiftness and activity with which it held on its perilous course.

When at length it disappeared behind the angle of an abrupt precipice, she said, "Does it not call to your mind the description given of the wild-ass of the East, in the Book of Job, 'Who hath sent out the wild-ass free? or who hath loosened the band of the wild-ass? whose house I have made the wilderness, and the barren land his dwelling? He scorneth the multitude of the city, neither regardeth he the crying of the driver. The range of the mountains is his pasture, and he searcheth after every green thing.' Tell me, Reginald," continued the maiden, after a momentary pause, "can the creature here described be the same dull patient animal that I have often seen bearing the packs of the Mexican traders?"

"The same, I believe, dearest, in its origin, and its place in natural history, but widely different in its habits and powers, if we may credit the narratives of travellers, whether modern or

ancient. I remember reading a most spirited description of this same animal in the account given by the eminent historian* of the expedition of the younger Cyrus, who relates that the herds of them found near the banks of the Euphrates surpassed the swiftest horses in speed, and were neither to be tamed nor approached without the greatest difficulty; and in later times they have been described as abounding in the wildest regions of Persia and Tartary, where their flesh is considered one of the greatest delicacies at the table of the hunter, and even at that of the prince. In order to distinguish this animal from its humble and degraded kindred in the West, it has been dignified by the name of the Onager."

The conversation was here interrupted by a sudden halt in the line of march, and Reginald heard the sound of numerous voices towards the front as of men speaking under surprise and excitement. When he advanced, with Prairie-bird at his side, they made way for him to pass until he reached the front, where he found War-Eagle holding by a leathern thong the most singular-looking creature that he had ever beheld. It bore in some respects the semblance of a human being, but the extreme lowness of its stature, the matted hair by which it was covered, the length of the finger nails, and the smallness of the deep-set eyes made it almost a matter of doubt whether it did not rather belong to the monkey tribe.

This was, however, soon dispelled by Pierre, who recognised in the diminutive and terrified creature one of the race known to mountain-hunters under the name of Root-diggers. They are the most abject and wretched of all the Indian tribes, living in caves and holes, and supporting their miserable existence upon such animals as they can catch, in toils of the simplest kind, and by grubbing and digging for roots such as no other human being could eat or digest. The one now taken by the Delawares had been engaged in the latter occupation when he first saw them approach, and he fled immediately towards the rocks. Had he been followed by an eye less sure, and a foot less fleet than that of War-Eagle, he might have escaped, for, despite his uncouth appearance, he was nimble as a mountain-cat, but the Delaware chief overtook and secured him; and in spite of all the endeavours made to reassure him, the unfortunate Root-digger now looked about him as if he expected every moment to be his last. Beads, trinkets, and shreds of bright-coloured cloth were all held up to him in turn, but were left unnoticed, and his deep twinkling eyes roved incessantly from one to another of the bystanders with an expression of the most intense alarm.

"Are they always thus fearful and intractable?" inquired Reginald of the Canadian hunter.

"Not always," replied Pierre; "but the Crows, and Black-feet, and white men too, generally treat them worse than dogs whenever they find them; that is not often, for they always hide among rocks and stones, and seldom come down so low in the valleys. I never saw one in this region before."

"Prairie-bird," said Reginald, in a whisper to the maiden, "speak to the poor creature a few words of comfort. Were he shy, suspicious, and wild as a wolf, that voice would subdue and dispel his apprehensions."

"The sweetness of the voice lies in the hearer's partial ear," replied Prairie-bird, blushing deeply; "but I will do your bidding to the best of my power; and if I mistake not the poor creature's symptoms, I think I can find a means to relieve them."

So saying, and leaping lightly from her horse, the maiden took from one of the packs a piece of baked maize-cake, and a slice of dried bison-meat. Carrying these in her hand, she approached the Root-digger, and motioning to the bystanders to retire to some distance, she deliberately untied the thong by which he had been fastened, and placing the food before him, made signs that he should eat. At first the uncouth being gazed upon her as if he could or would not understand her meaning; but she spoke to him in the soft Delaware tongue, and eating a morsel of the cake, repeated the signal that he should eat with her. Whether overcome by the gentleness of her manner, or by the cravings of hunger, the savage no longer resisted, but devoured with ravenous haste the food which she had set before him. Prairie-bird smiled at the success of her attempt, which so far encouraged her, that she again offered the several presents which he had before rejected, and which he now accepted, turning them over and over in his hand, and inspecting them with childish curiosity.

Reginald looked on with gratified pride, saying within himself, "I knew that nothing could resist the winning tones of that voice!

*'Since naught so stockish, hard, and full of rage,
But music for the time doth change his nature;'*

and where is there music like the voice of Prairie-bird?"

CHAPTER XLII.

The Root-digger makes Friends with the Party.—An Adventure with a grizzly Bear.—The Conduct of War-Eagle.

No sooner had Prairie-bird gained the confidence of the Root-digger, than War-Eagle, Reginald, and the other chief hunters, approached him with signs of amity and friendship; nevertheless, he continued shy and suspicious, still refusing to receive either food or present from any hand excepting that of the maiden. They were obliged, therefore, to make her their interpreter, and to endeavour, through her, to acquire the information of which they were in want respecting the scarcity or abundance of deer and bison in the neighbourhood.

In the discharge of this office, Prairie-bird discovered so much natural quickness, and at the same time so complete a knowledge of the Indian language of signs, that Reginald looked on with the most intense interest while the maiden, whose beauty was so strongly contrasted with the hideous face and figure of the mountain dwarf, maintained with him a conversation of some length, in the course of which she learned that there were few, if any bison in the neighbourhood, but that the argali, or mountain sheep, and deer of several kinds, were to be found at no great distance. She succeeded also, at length, in so far disarming his suspicions, that he agreed to act as guide to Baptiste and Reginald in pursuit of game, and to return with them to reap the reward of his trouble in further presents from the hand of Prairie-bird.

The sturdy back-woodsman did not seem to place much confidence in the fidelity of his new

acquaintance, and bluntly observed to Pierre, "For sure, I never saw an uglier crittur, and his eyes roll from side to side with an underlook that I don't half like; perhaps he'll lead us into some ambush of Upsarokas, or other mountain Ingians, rather than to a herd of deer."

"You need not be afraid, Baptiste," replied his brother hunter, laughing; "these poor Root-diggers are harmless and honest in their own miserable way. They are said to belong to the Shoshonies, or Snake-tribe, and are the best of all the Ingians hereabouts; not such fighting devils as the Black-feet, nor such thieves as the Crows, but friendly to the Whites. This poor crittur has been digging for roots many a long day with that sharpened flint, which you see in his hand. After you have started on your hunting trip, make him a present of a good knife. I have watched his eyes roving from belt to belt; he would give his ears for one, and yet is too frightened to ask for it."

"Thanks for the hint, Pierre," said his companion, looking carefully to the priming of his rifle; "thanks for the hint. I will carry a spare one with me on purpose; and in case we should fall in with a fat herd, do you, friend War-Eagle, give us the company of one of your stoutest men, that he may assist in bringing in enough meat for the party."

On hearing these words, Prairie-bird inquired of the Root-digger, by signs, whether one of the mules could not go over the hunting-ground. The savage looked first at the animal, then at the fair speaker, and then, with a grin, gave a most decided indication of a negative.

The preparations for the hunt were soon made. Prairie-bird urged Reginald, in a low voice, not to remain too long absent, a command which he faithfully promised to obey; and just as he was about to set forth, he led her up to the chief, and said, "War-Eagle will take care of his sister?"

The Indian's proud heart was gratified by this simple proof of his friend's unbounded confidence; he saw that no jealousy, no doubt of his victory over self, lurked in the breast of Reginald, and he replied, "While War-Eagle has life to protect her, Olitipa shall be safe as in the lodge of Tamenund."

Reginald turned and followed Baptiste and the Root-digger, who had already taken their way up the valley, accompanied by the Delaware selected to aid in carrying home the anticipated booty.

Leaving them to toil up one rocky steep after another, wondering at the enduring agility of the Shoshonie dwarf, who seemed almost as active and sure-footed as one of the mountain-goats of which they were in search, we will return to the valley where War-Eagle's camp was posted, which formed, as we have before noticed, a pleasing contrast to the savage scenery around. The stream that flowed through its centre fresh from the snowy bosom of the mountain, was cool and clear as crystal, and the shade of the trees which grew along its banks was delightfully refreshing after the fatigues of a summer march, even in a region the elevation of which rendered the atmosphere extremely cold before the rising and after the setting of the sun. Prairie-bird felt an irresistible desire to stroll by the banks of this stream,—a desire that was no sooner mentioned by Lita to War-Eagle than he at once assented, assuring her that she might do so in safety, as his scouts were on the look-out both above and below in the valley, so that no enemy

could approach unperceived. At the same time he gave instructions in the camp that none of the men should wander to that quarter, in order that it might be left altogether undisturbed.

Shortly afterwards Prairie-bird set forth, taking in her hand a moccasin, which she was ornamenting with stained quills for the foot of Reginald, and accompanied by her faithful Lita, who bore upon her head a bundle containing various articles belonging to her mistress and to herself, on which she was about to exercise her talents as a laundress.

They had pursued their respective avocations for several hours without interruption, when on a sudden they heard the report of a rifle and the voice of a man shouting, as if engaged in the pursuit of game. This was an occurrence to which both were so much accustomed, that they paid at first little attention to it; but they felt some alarm when they saw one of their party, a white hunter, coming towards them as if running for his life. Before reaching the spot where they were seated, he threw his rifle upon the ground, and climbed into a tree; immediately afterwards a young male, not full grown, of the species called the grizzly or rocky mountain bear came up, limping as if wounded by the rifle so lately discharged, and missing the object that he had been following, looked around him, howling with mingled rage and pain. At length he caught sight of Prairie-bird and her companion; and setting up a more loud and angry howl, trotted towards them. Unfortunately, the spot to which they had retired was a narrow strip of wooded ground, projecting into a curve of the stream above-mentioned, and they could not retreat towards the camp without approaching yet nearer to the wounded bear. There was no time for reflection; and in the sudden emergency, Prairie-bird hesitated whether she should not adopt the desperate alternative of throwing herself into the water, in hopes that the stream might carry her out of the reach of danger.

At this crisis the crack of a rifle was heard, and the young bear fell, but again rose and struggled forward, as if determined not to be disappointed of its prey. Seeing the imminent danger of the woman, the hunter who had climbed the tree dropped lightly to the ground, and catching up his rifle, attacked the half-exhausted animal, which still retained sufficient strength to render too near an approach extremely dangerous. War-Eagle, for he it was who had fired the last opportune shot, now sprang forward from the bushes, reloading his rifle as he came, in order to decide the issue of the conflict, when a loud shriek from Lita reached his ear; and on turning round he beheld the dam of the wounded cub, a she-bear of enormous bulk, trotting rapidly forward to the scene of action; the hunter was so much engaged in dealing blow after blow with the butt of his rifle, that he had noticed neither her approach nor the warning shout of War-Eagle, when one stroke from her terrible paw struck him bleeding and senseless to the ground. For an instant she smelt and moaned over her dying offspring; then, as if attracted by the female dress, pursued her way with redoubled speed and fury towards the spot where Lita clung, with speechless terror, to the arm of her mistress. The latter, although fully alive to the imminency of the peril, lost not her composure at this trying moment. Breathing a short prayer to Heaven for support and protection, she fixed her eyes upon War-Eagle, as if conscious

that the only human possibility of safety now lay in his courage and devotion.

Then it was that the Indian chief evinced the high and heroic properties of his character; for although every second brought the infuriated brute near and more near to her who had been from youth his heart's dearest treasure, he continued, as he advanced, to load the rifle with a hand as steady as if he had been about to practise at a target; and just as the ball was rammed home, and the priming carefully placed in the pan, he threw himself directly in front of the bear, so that it was only by first destroying him that she could possibly approach the objects of his care. It was a moment, and but a moment, of dreadful suspense, for the bear swerved neither to the right nor to the left from her onward path, and it was not until the muzzle of the rifle was within three yards of her forehead that he fired, taking his aim between her eyes; shaking her head as if more angered than hurt, she raised her huge form on her hind legs, and advanced to seize him, when he drew his pistol and discharged it into her chest, springing at the same time lightly back, almost to the spot to which Prairie-bird and her trembling companion seemed rooted as if by a spell. Although both shots had struck where they were aimed, the second appeared to have taken no more effect than the first, and the bear was again advancing to the attack, when War-Eagle, catching up from the ground a blanket which Lita had brought down to the brook, held it extended before him until the monster sprung against it, and with her claws rent it into shreds; not, however, before it had served for an instant the purpose of a veil; profiting by that opportunity, the heroic Delaware dashed in between her fore-paws and plunged his long knife into her breast. Short, though terrible, was the struggle that ensued; the bear was every moment growing weaker from the effect of the shot-wounds, and from loss of blood, and although she lacerated him dreadfully with her claws and teeth, she was not able to make him relax the determined grasp with which he clung to her, plunging the fatal knife again and again into her body, until at length she fell exhausted and expiring into a pool of her own blood, while the triumphant war-cry of the Delaware rung aloud through wood and vale.*

Alarmed by the shots, the yells of the dying

* To some who have read the descriptions of bear-hunts in Norway and Russia it may appear neither wonderful nor unusual that a single hunter should kill a full-grown bear; but it must be borne in mind, that the bear of the north of Europe bears about the same proportion to a grizzly bear of the Rocky Mountains (*Ursus Horribilis*) as a panther does to a Bengal tiger. The grizzly bear is not only the largest and most ferocious of his species, but his tenacity of life is so remarkable that he frequently runs a considerable distance and survives some hours after receiving several balls through the lungs, head, and heart. On this account it is never safe for the most experienced marksmen to attack him alone, unless there be some tree or place of safety at hand, for the grizzly bear cannot or will not climb a tree; and some idea of the animal's strength may be formed from the fact, attested by many credible witnesses, that, after killing a bison, he will frequently drag the carcass some distance to his lair. For descriptions and anecdotes of the grizzly bear see Lewis and Clarke's Expedition to the Rocky Mountains, and Major Long's ditto. A feat almost similar to that recorded in the text was performed some years ago by an Iroquois, one of the last of his tribe, and who, though grievously wounded, survived. The author saw this Indian hero arrive at St. Louis in a canoe, containing only himself and a boy, they having descended the Missouri for more than 1500 miles in their frail bark, and having passed in their perilous voyage the villages of Crows, Riccarees, Sioux, Black-feet, and other predatory tribes.

bear, and the shouts of the chief, several of the party now hastened towards the scene of action; but before they could reach it Reginald Brandon, who was just returning into camp with the results of a successful chase, caught the mingled sounds, and outstripping all his companions, arrived, panting and breathless, on the spot. For a moment he gazed on the strange and fearful spectacle that met his view. The Delaware chief, supporting his head upon his hand, still reclined against the body of his grim antagonist, his countenance calm in its expression, but both his face and his whole form covered with recent blood; at his feet lay Lita, perfectly unconscious, and sprinkled with the same crimson stream; while at his side knelt Prairie-bird, breathing over her heroic preserver the fervent outpourings of a grateful heart! Another moment, and Reginald was beside her; he understood instinctively all that had passed, and no sooner had ascertained that his betrothed was safe and unhurt, than he turned with affectionate and anxious solicitude to inquire into the condition of his friend. "Oliitpa is safe and War-Eagle is happy," replied the chief.

By this time the Delawares were all gathered round their beloved leader, and in obedience to an order which he gave in a low voice, one of them threw a blanket over his torn and blood-stained dress, while another brought from the stream a bowl of fresh water, which Prairie-bird took from the messenger, and held to his parched lips; then, wetting a cloth, she washed the blood from his face, cooled his hot brow, and inquired, in a tone of sisterly affection, whether he found himself recruited and refreshed.

"The hand of Oliitpa is medicine against pain, and her voice brings comfort!" replied the chief, gently. "War-Eagle is quite happy."

Not so were those around him. His stern warriors stood in sad unbroken silence; the features of the hardy guide worked with an emotion that he strove in vain to conceal, for he knew that the Delaware would not have retained his sitting posture by the carcass of the bear, had not his wounds been grievous and disabling; Reginald Brandon held the hand of his friend, unable to speak, save a few broken words of affection and gratitude: while Prairie-bird found at length relief for her oppressed heart in a flood of tears. So much engrossed were they all by their own feelings, that none seemed to notice the anguish of Lita, who still lay in a pool of blood at the feet of him whom she had long and secretly loved, giving no further signs of life than a succession of smothered wailings and groans that escaped from her unconscious lips.

The only countenance among those present that retained its unmoved composure was that of the Chief himself; and a bright ray shot from his dark eye when one of the bravest of his warriors laid down before him the claws of the huge bear and her cub, which he had cut off, according to custom, and now presented as a trophy of victory.

Baptiste and Pierre having conferred together for a few minutes, the former whispered to Reginald Brandon that Prairie-bird and Lita should be withdrawn for a short time, while War-Eagle's wounds were examined, and his real condition ascertained. Agreeably to this suggestion, Reginald led his betrothed weeping from the spot. Some of the Delawares and hunters removed Lita; but not without difficulty, as she still clung with frantic energy to the torn garments of the Chief; and, as they bore her away,

they now for the first time observed that she had received some severe scratches in her fruitless endeavour to rescue him from the struggles of the dying bear.

When all had retired to some distance, and there remained only by the Delaware the oldest of his warriors, Pierre and Baptiste, the latter gently lifted the blanket from the shoulders of the wounded man, saying, "Let my brother allow his friends to see the hurts which he has received, that they may endeavour to relieve or heal them."

The Chief nodded his assent, and no sign, save the dew that stood upon his brow, betrayed the agony and the sense of exhaustion that he endured. When the tattered remnants of his hunting dress were removed, a spectacle so terrible was presented to the eyes of the Guide, that even his iron nerves could not endure it, and, covering his face with his hands, he groaned aloud, while the exclamation, "Dieu de la misericorde!" broke from his lips in the language that they had first been taught to speak.

The left arm of the Chief was bitten through and through, and so dreadfully mangled that no skill of surgery could restore it; the shoulders and chest had been lacerated by the fore-paws, and some of the wounds wide and gaping, as it made by a saw or hatchet; these, however, might possibly yield to time and careful treatment; but the injuries that he had received in the lower part of the body were such as to leave no hope of recovery, for the bear, in her last dying struggles, had used the terrible claws of her hind-feet with such fatal effect, that the lacerated entrails of the sufferer protruded through the wound.

Baptiste saw at a glance that all was over, and that any attempt at closing the wounds would only cause additional and needless pain. War-Eagle watched his countenance, and reading there a verdict that confirmed his own sensations, gave him his hand and smiled. The rough woodsman wrung it with ill-dissembled emotion, and turned away his head that his Indian friend might not see the moisture that gathered in his eye.

A brief consultation now ensued, during which it was arranged that the carcasses of the bears should be carried away, and the wounded chief gently moved to a soft grassy spot a few yards distant, where his wounds might be so far dressed and bandaged as to prevent further effusion of blood. It was also agreed that the tent and the lodges should be brought to the spot, so that he might receive all the care and attention that his desperate case admitted.

These arrangements having been made, Baptiste walked slowly towards the place where the rest of the party awaited in deep anxiety the result of his report. As he drew near with heavy, lingering steps, and his weather-beaten countenance overspread with gloom, they saw to well the purport of his message, and none had courage enough to be the first to bid him speak. Prairie-bird clung to the arm of Reginald for support; the Delawares leaned upon their rifles in silence; and even the rough hunters of the prairie wore an aspect of sadness that contrasted strongly with their habitual bold and reckless bearing.

Recovering his composure by a powerful effort, the Guide looked gravely around him as soon as he reached the centre of a semicircle in which they stood, and addressing himself first to Reginald and the white men, said, "There is no cure for the wounds of the Delaware; were the

Black Father himself among us, his skill and his medicine would be in vain." Then turning to the Delawares, he added in their own tongue, "The sun of the Lenapé Chief is setting. The Great Spirit has sent for him, and he must obey: let his warriors gather round him to smooth his path through the dark valley."

Having thus spoken, the Guide hastened to carry into effect the arrangements above mentioned, and in a short time the little camp was moved to the spot where the Delaware reclined against the stump of a withered alder, over which his followers had already thrown some blankets and buffalo-ropes to soften his couch. Hither was brought the tent of Prairie-bird, which was so pitched that the outer compartment might shelter the wounded chief, and might afford to Reginald and Prairie-bird the means of watching him constantly, and administering such relief in his extremity, as was within their power.

Lita's energies, both of mind and body, seemed entirely paralyzed, she neither wept nor sobbed, but sat in a corner of the tent, whence she gazed intently, yet with a vacant expression, upon the sufferer.

He alone of the whole party maintained throughout a dignified and unmoved composure; nor could either the pangs he endured, nor the certain prospect of a lingering death, draw from him a word of complaint. He smiled gratefully as Prairie-bird from time to time raised the refreshing cup of water to his lips, or wiped away the drops which weakness and agony wrung from his forehead. Once, and once only, did a look of gloom and discontent pass over his countenance.

Reginald observing it, took his hand and inquired, "Is there a dark thought in my brother's heart, let him speak it?"

"There is," replied the chief, with stern energy, "Mahéga, the bloody-hand—the Washashe wolf—the slayer of my tribe, he lives, and War-Eagle must go to the hunting-fields of the brave, and when his fathers say to him, 'Where is the scalp of Mahéga?' his tongue will be silent, and his hands will be empty."

"His hands will not be empty," replied Reginald, breathing his own impassioned feelings in the figurative language of his friend. "His hands will not be empty; he can shew the scalps of many enemies; he may tell the ancient people that he was the war-chief of their race, that neither Washashe nor Dahcotah ever saw his back; and that, to save his sister's life, he gave his own. Where is the warrior who would not envy the fame of War-Eagle, and who would not rejoice in the glory of such a death?"

These words, and the tone of earnest feeling in which they were spoken, touched the right chord in the heart of the Chief; he pressed the hand of his friend, and a smile of triumph shot across his features like a sunbeam breaking through the thick darkness of a thunder-cloud.

CHAPTER XLIII.

Mahéga is found in strange company, and Wingenund defers, on account of more important concerns, his plan for the liberation of his friends.—A council, a combat, and a skirmish, in which last, the Crows receive assistance from a quarter whence they least expected it.

W^e left Wingenund on his way to the Crow camp, revolving as he went various schemes for

the deliverance of his friends. However slight was the faith which he was disposed to place in the honesty of Beshá, he confidently believed that the horse-dealer's self-interest would keep him true, at least for the time, to the party whence the greater rewards and presents might be expected. He knew also that Bending-willow was kindly disposed towards the prisoners, and would do all that was in her power towards engaging her impatient and hot-headed husband to favour their release. Nevertheless the game to be played was a difficult one, especially as the consequence of any unsuccessful attempt might prove fatal to them as well as to himself.

So intent was the youth upon these meditations, that he forgot the distance and the difficulties of his circuitous route, his light elastic step bearing him over hill and vale with a speed of which he was scarcely conscious, and long before the sun went down he found himself at the farther extremity of the mountain pass, which has been before mentioned as leading into the valley where the Crows were encamped, from a quarter exactly opposite to that where his own friends were stationed.

As he was about to step across a small rivulet that trickled from the rocks above, lending a greener freshness to the narrow strip of grass through which it flowed, his attention was attracted by a recent footmark upon its margin. Starting with surprise, he stooped to examine it more carefully, it was plain and distinct, so that a less sagacious eye than his might have traced its form and dimensions. A single look satisfied him, and as he rose from his scrutiny, the name of Mahéga escaped from his lips.

Without a moment's hesitation, he resolved to follow the trail of the Osage and observe his movements, conjecturing that these probably boded no good to the Delaware party, although he felt at some loss to imagine what object could lead him to a quarter almost immediately opposite to that where they were encamped.

The task which Wingenund had now undertaken was not an easy one, for the ground was hard and barren, and the short grass partly dried by the mountain winds and partly burnt by the summer sun, scarcely received any impression from the pressure of a foot, and the youth was compelled to pause so frequently in order to examine the scarcely perceptible marks of the trail, that his progress was far from being so rapid as he could have wished. Nevertheless he toiled perseveringly forward, his hopes being every now and then refreshed by finding on the descent of the steep hill-side, an indication of the Osage's tread that he could not mistake.

Wingenund had followed the trail for several hours, when he caught a distant view of a slight column of smoke rising from a dell, the bottom of which was concealed by intervening heights. One of these, more rugged and lofty than the rest, lay at his right hand, and he climbed with some difficulty to the top of it, in hopes of being able thence to descry the spot whence the smoke arose. Neither was he disappointed in this expectation, for on reaching the height, he could see into the deep bosom of the mountain glen, where he clearly discerned a large body of men and horses, assembled round a fire; carefully noting the nature of the intervening ground, he re-descended the hill, and again threw himself

upon the trail of the Osage, which continued, as he expected, to lead him in the direction of the unknown band.

As he advanced he felt the necessity of using the greatest caution lest he should inadvertently come within sight of any scouts or stragglers from the valley below; but fortune and his own acill so far favoured his approach that he reached unperceived a point whence he could more clearly see the circle assembled round the fire, and could distinguish the horses and the men sufficiently to ascertain that they belonged to some mountain tribe bent on a war excursion, as they had with them neither their women nor their lodges. With awakened curiosity and interest, the youth now crept to a spot at a little distance, where a confused pile of huge stones, here and there overgrown with stunted shrubs, offered a sheltered retreat, whence, without being himself seen, he could observe all that passed below. In making his way to the place he was somewhat surprised to find what might almost be called a beaten path, upon which the recent tracks of men and horses, as well as of bison, were clearly discernible.

He had scarcely time to conceal himself, when he perceived two men coming directly towards his hiding-place, in one of whom he recognised the Osage chief, while the other belonged apparently to some tribe of Indians that he had never seen before. They came slowly up the path before-mentioned, stopping almost at every step, and conversing in the language of signs, by which means their expressions of mutual friendship were as intelligible to the quick-witted youth as they were to each other. The stranger was a fine-looking Indian, and though lower in stature than his gigantic companion, had the appearance of great muscular strength, and his dress betokened, according to Indian notions of magnificence, a chief of high degree. His black hair was clubbed behind his head, and fastened with several painted feathers bound with fillets of ermine; his hunting-shirt was of the skin of the mountain goat, and both it and his deerskin leggins were ornamented with porcupine quills, and fringed with the scalp-locks of enemies slain in battle; he carried in his hand a long lance, also decorated with scalp-locks, and at his back hung a quiver made from the skin of the panther, in which bristled a score of arrows beautifully tipped with sharp flint, and attached to it by a leather thong, was a bow so short, that it looked more like the plaything of a boy than the deadly weapon of a warrior.

Wingenund wondered to what tribe the stranger might belong; and as the two Indians seated themselves upon a fragment of rock only a few yards from the recess in which he was ensconced, he trusted that some signal would pass by which his curiosity might be afterwards satisfied; at all events, it seemed clear that they were already upon the best terms with each other, for they smiled and grinned, each placing a hand upon the heart of the other, after which Mahega extended his arms like a flying bird, and then passed his right hand with a rapid movement round his own scalp; from which sign the youth instantly knew that their plot was to attack and kill the Upepokas.

"Double-tongued cowardly snake!" said Wingenund to himself, "he made a league with

the Dahcotabs to destroy his Lenape friends, and now he makes one with a stranger tribe to destroy those with whom he eats and smokes."

That the youth rightly conjectured the object of the interview he could no longer doubt, when Mahega, pointing directly to the valley where the Crows were encamped, repeated again the signals for attack and slaughter. Not a word passed during this time, excepting when the stranger drew from under his hunting shirt a small whistle, made apparently either from a bone or a reed, and quaintly ornamented with stained quills and the down from the breast of some mountain bird; having applied this to his lips, he drew from it a peculiar sound, not remarkable for its shrillness, but different from any tone that Wingenund remembered to have heard before.

After two or three attempts, Mahega succeeded in sounding it correctly; and nodding intelligently to the stranger, concealed it carefully in his belt; they then exchanged the names or war-cry by which they were to recognize each other, Mahega teaching his new friend to say "*Washashe*," and learning in return to pronounce *Kain-na*," which he repeated three or four times so distinctly, that Wingenund caught and remembered it. These preparatory civilities having passed, they proceeded to the interchange of presents, by which their alliance was to be cemented.

Mahega drew from his girdle a pistol, which he gave, together with a small leather pouch containing lead and powder, to the stranger chief, who received it with an air so puzzled and mysterious, that Mahega could scarcely refrain from smiling. He turned the pistol over and over, looking down the barrel, and examining the lock with a curiosity that he cared not to conceal; he pointed it, however, towards a mark in an adjoining rock, and made a sound with his lips, which was intended to imitate its report, repeating at the same time the word "*sachsi-nama*," as if to show that the name and use of the weapon were not strange to him, although he might never have seen one before. Mahega then proceeded to show him how to use it, making signs that with it he might kill all his enemies; and upon the stranger expressing a wish to see an instance of its power, he placed a thin flat stone at the distance of a few yards, and split it in two at the first shot; after which he reloaded it, showing at the same time the use of the priming-pan and trigger.

It was not without a look of gratified pride that he placed the pistol in his belt, repeating again and again, "*sachsi-nama*," "*nahtovi-nama*." He then unslung the short bow that hung at his back, and presented it, with the panther-skin quiver full of arrows, to the Osage chief, who received the gift with every appearance of satisfaction, and they parted, the former returning towards the encampment of his tribe, after he had told Mahega that the name of the bow was "*nutai-nama*."*

* Of all the Indian nations who inhabit the wild regions near the base of the Rocky Mountain range, the most fierce and powerful are the Black-feet. Few, if any, white men have penetrated into the heart of their country, and returned to tell their tale. Very little is known, therefore, either of their customs or language; and it may not be uninteresting for the reader to be informed, that every particular mentioned respecting them in this volume was obtained direct from a French trader, who had been per

For some time after the departure of his new arrow, the Osage remained upon his seat examining the bow, which at first sight he had considered a mere toy, but which he found, to his astonishment, required all his force to draw it to its full power. Being formed of bone, strengthened throughout with sinew, it was stiff and elastic to an extraordinary degree; and, although not more than three feet in length, would drive an arrow as far as an ordinary six-foot bow.

When he had sufficiently examined his new acquisition, it occurred to the chief that he could not, without risk of detection, carry it into the Crow camp. He resolved, therefore, to hide it in a dry cleft of the rock, and take it out again after the issue of his plot should be decided.

This resolution threatened to bring about an unexpected catastrophe, as it happened that he approached the very recess in which Wingenund was stationed. Drawing the knife from his belt, the youth stood in the inmost corner of the cavern, ready, as soon as discovery became inevitable, to spring upon his powerful enemy; but fate had otherwise decreed, and the Osage passed on to a higher and narrower cleft, where he deposited the quiver and the bow, carefully closing the aperture with moss and lichen.

It was not until he had gone some distance on his homeward way, that Wingenund emerged from his hiding-place, and, having possessed himself of the quiver and bow, returned slowly upon the Osage's trail towards the Upsaroka camp, proving as he went the surprising strength of the weapon, and admiring the straightness and beauty of the war-arrows with which the quiver was supplied.*

Following unperceived, and at some distance, the steps of the Osage, he found that the latter took a shorter, though a somewhat steeper and more rugged, way than that by which he had come; so that very little more than two hours of brisk walking brought him within sight of the watch-fires of the Upsaroka camp, just as day closed, and their light began to shine more brightly through the valley. Availing himself of the shelter of a stunted pine, the youth lay down for some time, and did not re-enter the camp until late at night, when he made his way without interruption to Besha's tent, giving to the outposts by whom he was challenged the countersign taught him by the horse-dealer.

On the following morning, before sunrise, Besha was aroused by Wingenund, who told

him that he had news of great importance to communicate to the Crow chiefs, and that no time should be lost before they were summoned to council. The horse-dealer rubbed his eyes, as he wakened by degrees, and listened to this intelligence, which he suspected at first to be some trick on the part of the youth for the liberation of his friends; but there was an earnest simplicity in his manner that carried conviction with it; and Besha endeavoured, as he threw on his hunting-shirt, and fastened his belt, to learn from the youth the nature and purport of his intelligence. The latter seemed, however, to be in no very communicative mood; he merely replied, "Wingenund speaks not the Upsaroka tongue; let Besha repeat to the council word after word what he hears, that will be enough; he will serve both the Crows and the Delawares, and will obtain thanks and presents from both. Let Mahéga, too, be called to attend the council."

The horse-dealer having departed upon his errand, Wingenund found an opportunity to detail briefly to Paul Müller and Ethelston the discovery that he had made on the preceding evening; but it may well be imagined that he could obtain from neither any information respecting the mountain tribe with whom the Osage was carrying on his treacherous intrigue.

"Let my son boldly speak the truth," said the Missionary, "and leave the result to God."

"Wingenund never told a lie," replied the young Delaware; and the bright, fearless expression of his countenance warranted the proud assertion.

"How many are there in our crowded cities and churches," said the Missionary looking after the youth as he re-entered the horse-dealer's lodge, "who dare echo that speech! yet methinks, as far as memory and conscience serve him, he has said no more than the truth. I have known him from his childhood, and believe him to be as much a stranger to falsehood as to fear."

"They are cousins-german, my worthy friend," said Ethelston, "and generally dwell together! I wonder not at the affection which Reginald bears to that youth; nature has stamped upon his countenance all the high and generous qualities that endear man to his brother. Let us endeavour to be present at the council which is now assembling; we have been such quiet prisoners, that perhaps our guards will allow us to be spectators on this occasion."

Besha happening to pass at this moment, obtained for them the desired permission, which was the more readily granted that the Crow sentries themselves were desirous of seeing what was going forward, and knew that no danger could be apprehended from the two unarmed captives. The spectacle that met their view when they issued from the lodge was striking and picturesque; runners had been sent throughout the camp, and all the principal chiefs, braves, and medicine-men were already assembled in a semicircle, the concave centre of which was formed by the lodge of White-Bull and his father, the latter of whom had put on for the occasion a magnificent head-dress of painted eagle-feathers, which betokened his rank as head-chief of the band. The horse-dealer stood in front of his own lodge to the left, and frequent were the glances directed to him from all quarters, it

mitted to marry a Black-foot wife, and had resided nineteen years among them. The construction of their language is very remarkable, and some account of it would doubtless be gladly received by philologists; but such a subject cannot be treated in a work like the present. With respect to the words referred to in the text, it will be seen that they show the synthetic nature of the language, "náma" being the root, and signifying a *weapon*. Hence came "sukináma," *rifle*; literally, "heavy-weapon;" "saksináma," *pistol*; literally, "light-weapon;" and "nahovináma," *wonderful, or medicine-weapon*; and "nitánáma," literally, *useless-weapon*; which latter name has probably been given to the bow since the Black-feet have learnt the superior efficacy of fire-arms.

* It may not be generally known to European readers that the arrows used by the western Indians are of two sorts. The *Avating-arrow*, which has a head tapering in the form of an acute lozenge, and firmly secured to the shaft, so as to be easily withdrawn from a wound, and the *war-arrow*, sometimes poisoned, but always barbed like a fish-hook, and having its head so slightly fastened to the shaft, as to remain infixd in the wound when the wood is pulled out.

having been generally understood that the council was summoned to consider matters brought forward by him. Behind him stood Wingenund, wrapped in a loose blanket, which partially concealed his features and covered entirely the rest of his person; on the opposite wing of the circle, and at a distance of twenty-five or thirty yards, stood Mahéga, his gigantic stature shown off to the best advantage by the warlike dress which he had put on complete for the solemn occasion, his neck and arms being covered with beads of various colours, and his fingers playing unconsciously with the weighty iron-pointed mace or war-club which had slain so many of those whose scalp-locks now fringed his leathern shirt and hose. The warriors and other Indians of inferior degree stood in the back-ground, and some, anxious to get a better view of what was going forward, had perched themselves upon the adjoining rocks and cliffs, where their dusky forms, dimly seen through the mists which were now vanishing before the beams of the rising sun, gave a wild and picturesque effect to the scene.

Nearly half an hour was consumed by the soothsayers, or medicine-men, in going through their formal mummeries, to ascertain whether the hour and the occasion were favourable for the proposed business; and it was not until the medicine-pipe had been passed round, and the chief functionary had turned gravely to the north, south, east, and west, blowing to each quarter successively a whiff of medicine-smoke, that he gave his permission for the council to proceed with its deliberations.

During all this time a profound silence reigned throughout the camp, the women suspending their scolding, chattering, and domestic avocations, and even the children peeping, half-frightened, from behind their mothers, or stealing away to some spot where they might laugh and play without fear of being whipped for disturbing the solemnities.

The venerable father of White-Bull now returned the great pipe to the medicine-men, saying, in a voice distinctly audible throughout the circle, "Besha has called the chiefs and braves of the Upsaroka together; they are come—their ears are open—let the one-eyed man, who brings horses from the far prairies, speak with a single tongue."

Thus called upon, the horse-dealer stepped forward, saying, "Besha is neither wise in council, nor a chief among warriors; he has travelled far among the eastern tribes, and he knows their tongues; he stands here to give out of his mouth what goes in at his ear. Let the Upsaroka warriors listen; they are not fools; they will soon know if lies are told to them. Let them look at this youth; his blanket is that of Besha's slave; he is not what he seems; he is a son of the Lenapé, a friend of the whites; yet he is come alone into the camp to show to the Upsaroka that a snake is crawling among their lodges."

A murmur ran through the assembly as Besha pronounced these words, and pointed to Wingenund, who, throwing the blanket into the hollow of his left arm, advanced to the front, and, with a slight inclination to the old chief, awaited his permission to proceed.

The youth, the graceful form, the open coun-

tenance, and the dignified bearing of Wingenund as he stood forward in the assembled circle, prepossessed the Crows strongly in his favour; and they awaited, with excited curiosity, the intelligence that he had to communicate; but their chief did not appear disposed to gratify their impatience, for after whispering a few words to a messenger who stood beside him, he relapsed into silence, scanning with a fixed gaze the countenance of the young Delaware. The latter bore the scrutiny with modest, yet undisturbed composure, and not a voice was raised in the council until the return of the messenger, conducting a Crow doctor or conjuror, somewhat advanced in years, who took his station by the chief, and gave a silent assent to the whispered orders that he received.

It may well be imagined with what mingled feelings of surprise and indignation the haughty Osage beheld the young Delaware thus standing forward in the midst of the council-circle; that his presence boded no good to himself he well knew; but how and wherefore he came, and why he, belonging as he did to a hostile band, was thus permitted to appear before the assembly of Crow warriors, he was quite at a loss to understand. His suspense, however, was not destined to be of long duration; for, as soon as Besha, in obedience to a signal from the chief, had desired Wingenund to speak what he had to say, the youth came another step forward, and said, in a clear voice—

"There is a snake among the lodges of the Upsaroka—a hidden snake, that will bite before its rattle is heard."

The Crows looked from one to the other as Besha translated this sentence, and the old conjuror gave a slight nod to the chief, indicating that the youth's meaning was rightly given. It may be as well to inform the reader, that the said conjuror had in early life been taken prisoner by the Pawnees, with a party of whom he had been conveyed to a great council held with the Indian agents at St. Charles's, in Missouri, respecting the cession and appropriation of territory. Several of the Western Delawares had been present at this meeting, which was protracted for many weeks, and the Crow prisoner had picked up a smattering of their tongue, which, however slight it might be, had occasioned him to be sent for on this occasion to check any propensity for untruth that might be entertained by the horse-dealer. Whether the latter was influenced by these, or by other motives, he rendered faithfully the conversation that ensued, and therefore it is not necessary to notice further the part played by the interpreter.

"Who is it that speaks?" demanded the old chief, with dignity; "the Crows open not their ears to the idle words of strangers."

"Then let them shut their ears," replied the youth, boldly. "Before another sun has set, they will wish they had listened to the words of Wingenund!"

"Who is Wingenund! Is he not an enemy? have not his people shed Upsaroka blood? why then should they believe his words?"

"Wingenund is the son of a Lenapé chief. For a thousand summers his fathers have hunted over forest and plain beyond the Great River. Wingenund has heard of their deeds, and he will not stain his lips with a lie. The Lenapé

have taken Crow scalps in defence of their own; Wingenund will not deny it; but he came here to serve his white friends, not to hurt the Upsaroka."

On hearing this bold reply, White-Bull bent his brow fiercely upon the speaker; but the youth met his eye with a look of bright untroubled confidence, while he quietly awaited the chief's further interrogation.

"Let the son of the Lenapé speak, but let him beware; if his tongue is forked, the Upsaroka knives will cut it out from his head."

"Wingenund is not a woman, that he should be frightened with big words. When he speaks, the truth comes from his lips; and if he chooses to be silent, the Upsaroka knives cannot make him speak," replied the youth, with a look of lofty scorn.

"Is it so? we shall see," cried White-Bull, springing forward, at the same time drawing his knife, with which he struck full at the naked breast of the youth. Not a muscle moved in the form or countenance of Wingenund; his eye remained steadily fixed on that of the Crow, and he did not even raise in his defence the arm over which his blanket was suspended. Nothing could have saved him from instant death, had not White-Bull himself arrested the blow just as it was falling, so that the point of the knife scratched, but did not penetrate the skin. Wingenund smiled, and the Crow warrior, partly ashamed of his own ebullition of temper, and partly in admiration of the cool courage of the young Delaware, said to his father, "Let him speak; there are no lies upon his tongue."

The old man looked for a moment sternly at his son, as if he would have reproved him for his violence, in interrupting the business of the council, but apparently he thought it better to let it pass; and turning toward Wingenund, he said, in a milder tone than he had yet used, "Let the young stranger speak, if he will; his words will not be blown away: if he has seen a snake, let him show it, and the chiefs of the Upsaroka will owe him a debt."

Thus appealed to, Wingenund, slowly raising the forefinger of his right hand, pointed it full upon Mahéga, saying, in a loud voice, "There is the snake! Fed by the hand of the Upsaroka, clad in their gifts, warmed by their fire, he now tries to bite them, and give them over to their enemies, even as his black heart and forked tongue have before destroyed those whom we called brothers."

It is beyond the power of words to paint the rage of the conscious Osage, on hearing this charge; he concealed it, however, by a strong effort, under a show of just indignation, exclaiming aloud, "The Upsaroka warriors are not fools, that they should believe the idle words of a stranger boy, a spy who stole into their camp by night, and now tickles their ears with lies."

"The young Lenapé must tell more," said the old chief, gravely, "before the Upsaroka can believe bad things of a warrior who has smoked and fought with them, and has taken the scalps of their enemies."

Thus called upon, Wingenund proceeded to relate distinctly the circumstances narrated in the last chapter. His tale was so clearly told; his description of the locality so accurate, that

the attention of the whole council was riveted, and they listened with the most profound attention. A cloud gathered upon the brow of White-Bull, and the gigantic frame of Mahéga swelled with a tempest of suppressed passion. Independently of the dangers that now threatened him, his proud spirit chafed at the thought of being thus tracked, discovered, exposed, and disgraced by a boy, and his fury was heightened by observing the bright eye of the Delaware youth fixed upon him with a steady, searching gaze, indicative at once of conscious truth and triumph. Still he resolved to hold out to the last; he trusted that after the great services he had rendered in battle to the Crows, they would at least believe his word before that of an unknown youth, who came amongst them under such suspicious circumstances. These reflections passing rapidly through his mind, restored his disturbed self-possession, and enabled him to curl his haughty features into an expression of sneering contempt,

Great was the excitement among the Crows as Wingenund described, with unerring minuteness and accuracy, the dress and equipments of the stranger with whom Mahéga had held the interview, and there was a dead silence in the council when the interpreter was ordered to inquire whether he knew to what tribe the strange Indian belonged.

"Wingenund knows not," he replied; "but he heard the name that was taught to the Osage as the battle-cry of his new allies."

"*E-chi-pé-tá*!" shouted the impetuous White-Bull, who had already recognised in the youth's description one of the warriors of the Black-feet, the hereditary enemies of his tribe.

"It was not so," replied Wingenund gravely. "*Ka-in-na** was the name; it was twice spoken."

A deep murmur ran round the assembly, White-Bull exchanged a significant glance with the nearest of his braves, and again a profound silence reigned throughout the assembly.

Mahéga now felt that the crisis of his fate was at hand, and that everything must depend on his being able to throw discredit on the tale of Wingenund. This was not, however, an easy task, for he suspected Besha of a secret leaning to the Delaware side, while the fierce and lowering looks of the bystanders showed him how little was wanting to make the smothered flame burst forth.

These indications did not escape the aged chief, who spoke a few words in a serious and warning tone, the purport of which was to remind them that the present council was sacred to the Medicine, and was not to be desecrated by any violence or shedding of blood. He concluded by saying, "Let the Washashe speak for himself, and let Besha give his words truly, if he does not wish to have his ears cut off!"

Thus admonished, the horse-dealer lent all his attention to the Osage, who came forward

* The name by which the Black-feet are generally known among the Crows is "Echipeta." In their own tongue they call themselves *Siknikaga*; both words having the signification of Black-feet. They are divided into three bands, the largest of which is called by the generic name above mentioned, as being that of the tribe; the other two bands are called "Piecan" or "Piegan" (the meaning of which word is not known to the author) and *Ka-in-na* or "Bloody-men," which last are held to be the most fierce and formidable of the three.

to address the council with an imposing dignity of manner that almost made the most suspicious of his hearers doubt the truth of the accusations brought against him.

Being now in front of the semicircle, which was not more than twenty yards in width, he was directly opposite to Wingenund, who stood forward a few feet in advance of its other wing. The contrast offered by the stature and bearing of the accuser and the accused, the slight, active frame, the youth and grace of the one, and the haughty air and gigantic bulk of the other, struck Ethelston so forcibly that he could not forbear whispering to Paul Müller, "Worthy Father, does not the scene recall to mind the meeting between the Hebrew shepherd and the Giant of Gath?"

"It does, my son, and I misjudge the looks of the Osage if they part hence without the shedding of blood. I have long studied his countenance, and, however skilfully he has subdued its expression, I can trace the full storm of passions raging within his breast."

Further discourse was prevented by the commencement of the Osage's speech, which he delivered with a tone and gesture of indignation, suitable to one who declared himself injured and belied.

He began by recapitulating the services that he had rendered to the Crows, the faithful warriors that he had lost in their cause, and the valuable presents concealed in the cache, to which he was even now conducting them; on the other hand, he painted the injuries they had received from the Lenapé, who had come into their country in league with the white-skins, the bane of their tribe and race, that their hands were still wet with Upsaroka blood; and "whose is the forked tongue," said he, "that is to cover with lies and dirt the fame of the great chief of the Washashe, the sworn brother of the Upsaroka? Who, but a boy, a stranger, a liar, and a spy, telling his idle dreams to the council to break the friendship of warriors whom his cowardly tribe, and their pale-faced allies, dared not meet in the field!"

During the whole of this tirade, which was delivered with much vehemence and gesticulation, Wingenund stood motionless as a statue, his calm eye fixed upon the excited countenance of his opponent with an undisguised expression of contempt.

Receiving no reply, Mahéga continued: "Chiefs and brothers, you are wise in council—men of experience; your ears will not be tickled with the idle songs of this false-tongued singing-bird; a messenger who brings such news to the great council of the Upsaroka—who tells them that their brother who has fought by their side, and smoked at their fire, is a forked snake, he must bring something better able to convince them than the cunning words coming from his own lying lips!"

These words, supported by the commanding tone assumed by the Osage, were not without their effect upon the minds of that fierce and deeply-interested assemblage.

Wingenund waited until the speech of his antagonist had been translated to them, when he replied, with unmoved composure, "If the Crow warriors require better witness than words, it is not difficult to find—they have already been

told that the Kain-na stranger gave to Mahéga a present of a bow and arrows, which he hid in the rocks; Wingenund took them out, and here they are."

As the youth spoke he dropped the blanket that had been thrown over his left arm and shoulder, holding up to the council the bow and arrows, which all present instantly recognised as being made and ornamented by the Black-feet.

"Are the warriors yet convinced," continued the youth, raising his voice, "or do they wish for more? if they do, let them seize the Washashe wolf, they will find in his belt—"

He was not allowed to finish the sentence, the storm that had long been brooding, now burst in all its fury. Mahéga, driven to desperation by the damning evidence brought against him, and reckless of all save the gratification of his fierce revenge, whirled his iron-pointed mace around his head, and launched it with tremendous force at Wingenund.

Never had the latter even for an instant taken his falcon eye off the Osage; but so swift was the motion with which the weapon was thrown, that although he sprung lightly aside to avoid it, the spiked head grazed and laid open his cheek, whence it glanced off, and, striking an unlucky Crow who stood behind him, felled him, with a broken arm, to the ground. Even in the act of stooping to escape the mace, Wingenund fitted an arrow into the Black-foot bow which he held in his hand; and rising quick as thought, let it fly at his gigantic adversary with so true an aim, that it pierced the wind-pipe, and the point came out at the back of his neck, close to the spine. While the Osage, half strangled and paralysed, tugged ineffectually at the fatal shaft, Wingenund leaped upon him with the bound of a tiger, and uttering aloud the war-cry of the Lenapé, buried his knife in the heart of his foe. With one convulsive groan the dying Osage fell heavily to the earth; and ere the bystanders had recovered from their astonishment, his blood-stained scalp hung at the belt of the victorious Delaware.

For a moment all was tumult and confusion; the few remaining Osages made a rush towards Wingenund to avenge the death of their chief, but they were instantly overpowered, and secured with thongs of pliant bark, while White-Bull sprang into the arena of combat, and in a voice of thunder shouted to his warriors to stand back and unstring their bows.

During the brief but decisive conflict the appearance of Wingenund was so much changed, that Ethelston declared to his friend afterwards that he should not have recognised him. The muscles of his active frame swelled with exertion, while the expanded nostril and flashing eye gave to his countenance an expression of fierce excitement, almost amounting to ferocity. Now that the struggle was over, he resumed without an effort, the habitual quiet gentleness of his demeanour, and turning to Besha, said, "Let the Upsaroka chiefs look below the belt of that dead wolf; perhaps they will find the signal whistle of the Kainna."

The horse-dealer stooped; and searching as he was directed, found a small leathern bag, on opening which there fell out, as Wingenund had said, the whistle of the Black-foot chief; a yell

f indignation burst from the assembly, some of the nearest of whom vented their rage by bestowing sundry kicks upon the inanimate remains of the treacherous Osage.

Popularity is a plant that springs up as suddenly, and perishes as rapidly among the tribes of the western wilderness, as among the mobs of Paris or of London; and Wingenund, whose life would scarcely have been safe had he been found an hour earlier in the Crow camp, was now its hero and its idol. To say that the youth was not elated, would be to say that he was not human; for he had avenged the slaughter of his kindred, and had overcome the most powerful and renowned warrior in the Missouri plains, the fell destroyer of the race of Tamenund. But so well had he been trained in the school of self-command, that neither Ethelston, nor Paul Müller, who had known him from his childhood, could trace in his demeanour anything different from its usual quiet modesty; and they waited, with no little impatience, to see what results would ensue from his triumph in respect to their own release.

The Crow chiefs and warriors did not forget, in the excitement of the scene just described, the threatened attack to which the treachery of Mahéga had exposed them; and they now crowded round Wingenund, while White-Bull put many questions to him, through Besha, respecting the position and apparent numbers of the Black-feet, to all which he answered with a precision that increased the high opinion that they already entertained of his quickness and intelligence. White-Bull even condescended so far as to explain to him his own projects for withdrawing his band from the neighbourhood of the formidable Kainna to some more secure position. A slight smile curled the lip of the young Delaware as he said to Besha, "The council of the Crow chief does not seem good to Wingenund; if White-Bull will agree to his terms, he will place the Kainna chief, and half a score of his best warriors as captives in this camp before to-morrow at midday!"

A general murmur of surprise followed these words; and White-Bull, somewhat nettled, inquired what might be the terms proposed.

"They are," said Wingenund, "first, that the two white prisoners shall be immediately restored to their friends; secondly, that the Osages shall be given up to the Lenapé; thirdly, that there shall be peace and friendship between the friends of Wingenund and the Upsaroka until the snow falls again upon the earth."

The leaders having conversed apart for a few minutes, White-Bull said, "If Wingenund fails, and the Kainna take many scalps from the Upsaroka, what will happen then?"

"They will take the scalp of Wingenund too," replied the youth calmly.

Again the Crow chiefs consulted together for some time, and at length they resolved to agree to the terms proposed by Wingenund. The medicine-pipe was brought, and was passed from the chief to him, as well as to Ethelston and the Missionary; after which Wingenund said to White-Bull, "There is no time to be lost; let sixty of the best warriors be chosen, twenty to go with Wingenund, and forty with White-Bull, and let one be found, very large and tall; let him put on the dress of Mahéga;

Wingenund will take the whistle, and all will be ready."

A short time sufficed to collect and marshal the party; and Ethelston was, at his own earnest request, permitted to join the band led by the Delaware youth, being anxious to see the manoeuvres about to take place, and Besha having made himself responsible for his fidelity.

Wingenund led the way at a swift pace, until he gained the summit of the first range of hills; nor did he slacken it until he had crossed the valley beyond, and stood upon the opposite brow of the heights, whence the Black-foot band was visible. Here he concealed and halted his party, until he had crept forward and examined all the range of hills within sight. As soon as he had satisfied himself that all was quiet, he drew his party gently on, and at length succeeded in hiding White-Bull and his forty men behind some rocks in the steepest and narrowest part of the gorge leading down to the glen below. His quick eye had noted the spot before, and a more minute inspection now convinced him that there was no other pass by which the enemy could ascend the height, and that a handful of determined men might defend it against ten times their number.

Having warned White-Bull to keep his own men close, and to stir neither hand nor foot until he heard the Lenapé war-cry, which was the appointed signal, he retreated with his own band of twenty men to the point where the interview between Mahéga and the Black-foot had taken place, which was about forty yards higher up the mountain, and where the gorge was almost as narrow and precipitous as at the pass below. Here he concealed his men among the rocks, and Ethelston primed and loaded three rifles which they had taken from the Osages, and which were now destined for the use of Wingenund and himself.

For several weary hours the youth watched in vain for the approach of the Black-feet; and any nerves less steady than his own, would have been shaken by the remembrance of the disagreeable consequences that might result from the failure of his plot. He lay, however, still and motionless as the stone upon which his elbow rested, until, just as the grey hue of evening was beginning to steal over the landscape, he descried an Indian slowly ascending the steep, followed at a distance by a long line of warriors. A low whistle from Wingenund warned his party to be ready, but he moved not, until the advancing band were sufficiently near for him to recognise in their leader the chief who had conferred with Mahéga on the preceding day.

While they were approaching in careless security, the Crows prepared for the attack, each man being provided with a tough halter of bison-hide, in addition to his usual weapons of bow, knife, and war-club, and the leader of the Black-feet had already passed the lower gorge, (where White-Bull and his party were concealed,) ere he sounded the signal preconcerted with Mahéga. Wingenund immediately replied by a similar sound drawn from the whistle which he had secured, desiring at the same time the Crow who wore the dress of the slain Osage to show himself at the edge of the rock

skirting the pass. The Black-foot chief, completely deceived, toiled lazily up the steep and narrow ascent, beckoning to his men to follow; and just as he reached the upper station Wingenund, seeing that twelve or fourteen of them were now fairly caged between the party below and his own, leapt from his concealment upon the astonished leader of the Black-feet, and dealing him a blow on the head that stunned and disabled him, shouted aloud the war-cry of the Lenapé.

No sooner was the signal uttered, than White-Bull rushed from his ambushade, and seized the pass below; so that the unfortunate Black-feet, enclosed between the two parties, panic-struck by the suddenness of the attack, and the fall of their leader, could neither fight nor fly; and in spite of their desperate, but unavailing attempts at resistance, were all in the course of a few minutes disarmed and securely bound.

Meanwhile the main body of their comrades made a gallant attempt to force the lower pass, but it was so stoutly defended by the Crows, and was in itself so narrow and difficult, that they were soon forced to retire with loss. Neither could those who succeeded to the command bring them again to the attack. The war-cry of the Lenapé had never before been heard in these glens, and the dismayed Black-feet thought that the evil spirits were fighting against them; while to increase their terror, Ethelston and Wingenund fired two of the rifles over their heads, the bullets from which whistled past them, and the echoes of their report, prolonged by the rocks and crags around died away at length like the muttered thunder of a distant storm. Terrified by the suddenness of the attack, and by the noise of the fire arms, ignorant of the number, position, and even of the nation of their unexpected assailants, and fearful that another manœuvre might cut off their retreat, they fled precipitately down the mountain side, and halted not until they brought their tale of disgrace and disaster into the Kainna camp.

In the course of a few hours after the events above narrated, Wingenund and White-Bull stood together before the lodge of the aged chief of the Crows, whom the former addressed as follows:—"My father, see there the Kainna chief, and twelve of his best warriors; they are prisoners; their life hangs upon my father's breath; the promise of Wingenund has not been blown away by the wind."

Besha having duly translated this address, was desired by the old chief (whose astonishment was scarcely exceeded by his delight) to bestow the highest praise that he could express upon the young Delaware's skill and courage; to which effusion of complimentary eloquence he replied, "My father, Wingenund has not seen many summers; he has no skill in speech, nor experience in council; but he knows that the Great Spirit loves a single tongue, and a true heart. Mahéga was cunning as a wolf, swift as a deer, strong as a bison-bull; but there was poison in his heart, and lies dwelt under his tongue, like snakes under a smooth stone. What is the end? The mountain-buzzards pick his bones; and when his children ask,—where is the grave of Mahéga? there shall be none to answer. My father, when the

sun has risen, the treaty shall be made, the pipe of peace shall be smoked, and the Medicine of the White tent shall bring many good things to the Uparoka."

Having thus spoken, Wingenund retired to the lodge of Besha; and the captive Black-feet having been placed under a guard, White-Bull remained in consultation with his father, while the other warriors soon forgot in sleep the fatigues of the past eventful day.

CHAPTER XLIV.

Wingenund and his friends return towards their camp. A serious adventure and a serious argument occur by the way.—Showing, also, how the extremes of grief, surprise, and joy may be crowded into the space of a few minutes.

THE result of the consultation between White-Bull and his father was, that the terms of the treaty made with Wingenund should be strictly observed; but lest the ingenuous reader should be misled into the belief that this resolution was influenced by any considerations of good faith or honesty, it may be as well to inform him that the advantages and disadvantages of the two opposite courses were discussed with the most deliberate calculation, and the path of honour was at length selected upon the following grounds:—

First. It was expedient to make friends with the allied band, inasmuch as the latter were formidable enemies from their courage, skill, and equipment.

Secondly. They had many bales of cloth, blankets, and other goods, of which they would probably make liberal presents to their friends; and

Thirdly. The Crows having just incensed and triumphed over their hereditary foes the Black-feet, they might expect reprisals from the latter; in which event, the alliance of a band commanding upwards of twenty "medicine-fire-weapons," was not to be despised.

Having embraced this resolution, and communicated it by secret messengers to the principal braves and conjurers, the worthy sire and son summoned them to a grand council on the following morning, at which the treaty was ratified in due form; Wingenund, Paul Müller, and Ethelston representing the allied band, and each party loading the other with praises and compliments, until the oily tongue of Besha was almost weary of translating and retranslating their expressions of mutual amity and fidelity.

The four unhappy survivors of Mahéga's band were now brought forward, their arms being securely pinioned behind them, and Besha inquired of Wingenund his wishes concerning them. It needed only a word from his lips, and they would have been stabbed, burnt, or more slowly tortured to death on the spot. The youth looked at them sternly for a moment, and Paul Müller trembled lest the vengeful instinct of his race should guide his decision; but he replied, "Wingenund will take them with him to the Lenapé camp. War-Eagle, Netis, and the Black Father shall hold a council, and what they think best, it shall be done."

Ethelston, Paul Müller, and Wingenund now

his face. I looked round once or twice, and my eye met his; I saw there was mischief, for he looked too good." When I passed to ask you for the cup, I looked again, quickly, but closer, and saw that his hands were free, though he kept them together as before."

Ethelston could not forbear laughing at the youth's notion of the ill-favoured Osage "looking too good," but feeling both amused and interested by his replies, he again said, "I must own my admiration of your quick-sightedness, for doubtless the Osage tried to make the expression of his face deceive you."

"He has not the face of an Indian warrior," said the youth, scornfully. "When a deed is to be done or concealed, let my brother try and read it in the face of War-Eagle, or any great chief of the Lenapé! As well might he strive to count the stones in the deepest channel of the great Muddy River,* or the stars of heaven in a cloudy night!"

The party had now struck a broad trail, leading across the valley, and up the opposite height, in the direction of the Delaware camp; the Osage prisoners were therefore sent to the front, and ordered to march forward on the trail, by which means Wingenund enjoyed the advantage of watching their movements, while he continued to converse with his friends.

"I own," said Ethelston, "that I had not before considered a command over the muscles of the countenance as being a matter of so much importance in the character of an Indian warrior."

"Nevertheless the youth is right in what he says," replied Paul Müller. "Where cunning and artifice are so often resorted to, a natural and unconcerned air of candour is an admirable shield of defence: the quickness of sight which you lately observed in Wingenund, is a hereditary quality in his race. The grandfather Tamenund was so celebrated for it, that he was called by a name signifying, 'The man who has eyes in his back:' he was killed only twenty years ago, during the fierce irruption made by a band of the five nations into the valley of Wyoming, to which the old man had retired in the hope of closing his eyes in peace."

"I have heard of that tragedy," said Ethelston; "indeed, it occurred while I was at school on the banks of the Muskingum; and often, as the boys went or returned, they used to frighten each other with cries of 'The Indians!' but I have since been much absent from my own country, and never rightly understood who were the actors in that scene of terror, and what were the tribes usually known by the name of the Six Nations, for so I have always heard them called."

"There were in fact only five," replied the

Missionary; "for although the Tns-caroras joined the confederation, they did not originally belong to it. These five are known among white men by the following names: the Mohawks, Oneidas, Cayugas, Onondagas, and Senecas; and it was a band of the latter that made the irruption into the valley of Wyoming. I dare say that Wingenund knows more of them than I do, for he often heard Tamenund speak of them, and he knew their history like the traditions of his own tribe."

"Wingenund has not forgotten," replied the youth, "what his grandfather taught him concerning the Five Nations. The names spoken by the Black Father are those commonly given them; but they call themselves otherwise."

"Tell me, Wingenund," said Ethelston, "the names by which they are known among themselves?"

"The Mohawks are called Coningonah; the Oneidas, Oni-eut-kah—or, 'The people of the standing-stone;' the Cayugas, Senanda Wanandu-nah—"The people of the great pipe;" the Onondagas, Nundagekah—"People of the small hill;" the Senecas, Nundaw-gah—"People of the big hill." But the council name of the last is different."

"What do you mean by the council name?"

"Many of the nations have more than one name; and the council name is never spoken except by the chiefs and wise men in council; the women and boys seldom know it; and, if they do, they must not speak it."

"Did Tamenund tell you the council name of the Senecas?"

"Yes; it is Oni-hoout—"Those who shut the door;" because the Senecas live the furthest to the southwest, and guard the others from the approach of their enemies."*

"It always appeared to me," said Ethelston, turning to the Missionary, "that the variety and arbitrary alteration of Indian names present an insuperable barrier in the way of any inquiry into their national or local history."

"Certainly, my son; the difficulty is great, and proceeds from various causes:—First, because it is frequently, perhaps generally, the case among Indian nations, that the son takes the name of the mother, and not, as with us, that of the father. Secondly, there often are, as you have just learnt from Wingenund, two or three names by which the same person or tribe is designated. Thirdly, nothing is more common than for a warrior to receive a new name from any daring or remarkable feat that he may have performed, in which case his former name is dropped, and soon forgotten: and, lastly, it must be remembered, that we, Americans, Germans, and English, have obtained the greater part of our Indian nomenclature, both

* The Missouri is here alluded to, the ancient name of which, "Pektanoud," signifies "muddy water," in the language of the Illinois, once a most powerful tribe, dwelling near its confluence with the Mississippi. They have since given a name to one of the states of the Union, but not one of the tribe survives at this day. Some antiquarians think that they were formerly a branch of the great nation of the Delawares (a supposition confirmed by the resemblance of their name, Il-lenni, to that of the Lenni—Lenapé); one half of which remained on the great prairies bordering the Mississippi, while the other half overran, and finally occupied, the greater portion of country between the Ohio and the Atlantic—See *Cherokee* &c.

* These, and many other particulars respecting the Six Nations, the author had from the lips of a veteran, who was carried off as a child by the Senecas when they sacked Wyoming. He was adopted into their tribe, and lived with them the greater part of his life, during a portion of which he acted for them in the capacity of interpreter and Indian agent; afterwards he retired to spend a vigorous and green old age in the western part of the state of New York. He always spoke with affectionate enthusiasm of his adopted kindred, and it was easy to see that the white man's blood in his veins circulated through an Indian heart. Those who wish to know more of the early history of the Five Nations, are referred to the accurate and interesting account given of them by Colden

as to persons and places, from the French; who, in the various capacities of possessors, adventurers, missionaries, voyageurs, hunters, and interpreters, have overrun almost the whole of this continent before us."

"Is it, then, your opinion that the French travellers and writers from whom these names have been chiefly derived, have been very careless and inaccurate in their transcription of them?"

"Extremely so. When they first reached and descended the Mississippi, they called it the 'Colbert;' afterwards on finding what a magnificent river it became when it received the waters of the Missouri, they called it 'La rivière St. Louis,' by which name it was known for many years, until insensibly it recovered its Indian appellation. When the adventurers came to any unknown tribe, they called them by some name descriptive of the accidental circumstances under which they first saw them, and these names they have ever since retained. Thus, the Winnebagoes in the north happened, when first visited, to be drying fish in their camp, and thence obtained the pleasant name by which they are now known, 'Les Puans!' Another band, some of whom had accidentally been scorched, by the prairie and underwood near their encampment taking fire, have ever since been called 'Les Bois-brulés;' another, 'Les Gros Ventres.*' The Dahcotah nation they have called 'Les Sioux;' the Aricara, 'Les Ris;' and so forth, until it is difficult, if not impossible, to recognize any of the original Indian names under their French disguise."

"I grant this," said Ethelston. "Yet we must not forget that the English have in several instances laid themselves open to the same charge; otherwise the great nation to which our young friend belongs would not have been called after a Norman baron! But you will surely allow that the early French missionaries in North America were men of great piety, learning, and enterprise?"

"It is true, my son, many of them were so; and none can feel more grateful than I do to such of them as laboured sincerely in the service of the Gospel. Yet I am bound to say, that in the best authorised account which they sent to France from Natchez of the surrounding country,† there is so much pedantry, prejudice, and fancy, mingled with highly interesting information, that the book cannot be quoted as one possessing historical authority. A writer who gravely infers that the Mississippi Indians came from the north-eastern straits, from the identity of the Choctaws with the people of Kamchaktá (or Royaume des Chactas), must expect that some of his other arguments and speculations should be received with diffidence.—But see, we have reached the summit of this range, and Wingenund's sparkling eye is already fixed upon the tent of Prairie-bird."

"There it is!" said the youth; "They have moved it since I came away, and placed it on that point nearer the stream."

Little did he suspect what had occurred during his brief absence, as, with a foot light and elastic as his heart, he put himself at the head

of his little party, and led the way swiftly towards the camp.

As the party drew near the camp they fell in with the out-piquet on guard in that quarter, consisting of one of the Delaware braves and two of his men, to whom Wingenund entrusted his Osage prisoners, adding, "Give them water and food, but let them not escape."

The brave look full in the face of the youth, then his eye roved from the scalp at his belt to the pinioned Osages, and a grim smile played across his features; but they almost instantly relapsed into the grave and gloomy expression that they had before worn; not another word was spoken, and the three passed on towards the white tent. As they drew near, they saw a group of hunters, among whom were Pierre and Bearskin, sitting round a smouldering fire, some smoking, and others engaged in mending their moccasins or cleaning their pistols and rifles. There was neither joke nor song amongst them; and although they started up to welcome their rescued and returning friends, the latter perceived that something was wrong, and it was with aching and foreboding hearts that they returned the friendly greeting, and passed onward towards the tent, before which they saw Reginald and Baptiste in earnest conversation.

Reginald no sooner saw them, than he sprang forward to embrace Ethelston, exclaiming, "God be praised for this great and unexpected comfort!"

Ethelston looked in his friend's face; and its expression confirming his apprehensions, his lip grew pale and trembled; he gasped for breath, as, pressing Reginald's hand within his own, he said, "Speak—speak! tell me what has happened!" then pointing to the tent, he added, "Is she safe?—is she well?"

"She is safe—she is well!" replied Reginald; "Nevertheless—"

Ethelston heard no more, but a deep groan relieved the oppression of his heart, as he ejaculated, "Blessed be the God of Mercies!" and covering his face with his hands, stood for a moment in silence.

Reginald was surprised at this extraordinary emotion in his friend, usually so composed and calm, and at the deep interest that he took in one whom, although betrothed to his intended brother-in-law, he had not yet seen. But he added, gravely, "God knows, my dear friend, that my gratitude is not less fervent than yours. Precious as her life is, it has however been ransomed at a price dearer to me than aught else on earth besides herself. Wingenund," he continued, addressing the youth and affectionately taking his hand, "you are the son of a race of heroes; is your heart firm? are you prepared to suffer the griefs that the Great Spirit thinks fit to send!"

The youth raised his dark eyes to the speaker's face; and subduing by a powerful effort the prescient agony of his soul, he said in a low tone, "Let Netis speak on; the ears of Wingenund are ready to hear what the Great Spirit has sent."

"Dear Wingenund, alas! War-Eagle, our beloved brother is—"

"Dead!" interrupted the youth letting the butt of his rifle fall heavily to the ground.

* The Minnetarees.

† The celebrated 'Lettres Edifiantes.'

"Nay, not yet dead, perhaps worse than dead; for he is hurt beyond all hope of cure, yet suffers torture such as none but himself could endure without complaint."

It was fearful for those who stood by to witness the agonising struggle of emotions that convulsed the frame of the young Delaware on receiving this announcement; for War-Eagle had been to him not only a brother, but father, companion, and friend, the object on whom all the affections of his young heart had been concentrated with an intensity almost idolatrous; yet even in the extremity of anguish he forgot not the rude yet high philosophy of his race and nature; he could not bear that any human eye should witness his weakness, or that any white man should be able to say that Wingenund, the last of the race of Tamenund, had succumbed to suffering. Terrible was the internal conflict; and while it was yet uncertain how it might end, his hand accidentally rested upon his belt, and his fingers closed upon the scalp of Mañéga; instantly, as if by magic, the grief of the loving brother was crushed by the stoic pride of the Indian warrior.

"War-Eagle is not dead; his eyes shall look upon the scalp of his great enemy slain by the hand which he first taught to use a bow; and when he goes to the hunting-fields of the brave, our fathers may ask him, 'Where is the scalp of the destroyer of our race?'" Such were the thoughts that shot like wild-fire through the brain and through the breast of the young Delaware, as, with a countenance almost haughty in its expression, he drew up his graceful form to its full height, saying, "Where is War-Eagle? Wingenund would see him. Let the Black Father go too; perhaps his healing skill might avail."

"I will not deceive you, dear Wingenund; no human skill can avail our departing friend. He is now within the tent; Prairie-bird watched with him all the night; she spoke to him often words from God's own book, and they seemed to comfort him, for he smiled, and said he would gladly hear more. She has retired to take a few hours' sleep, then she will return and resume her sad but endearing task."

"Wingenund will go to him; but first let Nettis say whence the wounds of War-Eagle came. Have enemies been near the camp?"

With the eloquence of deep feeling Reginald briefly related the circumstances attending War-Eagle's devoted and heroic defence of Prairie-bird from the bears.

Ethelston and Paul Müller listened with suspended breath, and as he concluded exclaimed together, "Noble, brave, and generous War-Eagle!" while the youth, pressing his lips together as if steeling his breast against softer impressions, said, in a low tone, "'Twas well done; few are the warriors whose single knife has reached the heart of a grisly bear. Let us go on to the tent."

Reginald led the way, and, lifting the flap, entered, followed by Ethelston, Wingenund, and Paul Müller.

The chief was seated in the centre, propped by bales of cloth and fur; his sunken eye was closed from sleeplessness and exhaustion, and a blanket loosely thrown over his shoulders,

covered the emaciated remains of his once powerful and athletic frame. At his side lay his favourite pipe, his war-club, knife, and rifle; while the faithful Lita, stretched at his feet, strove in vain to restore their natural warmth, by applying to them hot stones enveloped in the shreds of a blanket, which she had torn up for the purpose. The entrance of the party was not unmarked by the wounded chief, and a smile passed over his wasted features when he unclosed his eyes, and recognised Wingenund and the two others whom he had rescued from the Crows.

"The Black Father is welcome," he said, in a faint but cheerful voice, "and so is the friend of Nettis; and War-Eagle is glad to see the face of his brother Wingenund."

We have seen how the youth had, by a desperate effort, nerved himself to bear, without giving way, the description of his brother's wounds and hopeless condition; yet, when the feeble tones of that loved voice thrilled upon his ear, when his eye fell upon the wasted frame, and when he saw written upon that noble countenance proofs not to be mistaken, of torture endured, and death approaching, the string which had refused to be relaxed started asunder, and he fell senseless to the ground, while a stream of blood gushed from his mouth.

Half-raising himself by the aid of his yet unwounded arm, War-Eagle made a vain effort to move towards his young brother, and his eye shone with something of its former eager lustre, as he said, in a voice louder than he was deemed capable of uttering, "Let the Black Father lend his aid and skill to the youth; he is the last leaf on the Unámi branch; dear is his blood to the Lenapé."

"Dearer to none than to me," said the Missionary, raising and supporting the unconscious youth, "for to him I owe my liberty, perhaps my life. 'Tis only the rupture of a small blood-vessel; fear not for him, my brave friend, he will soon be better."

While Paul Müller, assisted by one of the Delawares who stood at the entrance of the tent, carried the youth into the open air, and employed the restoratives which his experience suggested, the chief mused upon the words which he had last heard, and inquired, addressing himself to Reginald, "What said the Black Father of his life and liberty being given by Wingenund?"

"Tell the Chief, Ethelston, what has befallen, and how you and Paul Müller were rescued by Wingenund. In my deep anxiety for my suffering friend, I was satisfied with seeing that you had returned in safety, and never inquired how you escaped."

Ethelston drew near to the wounded chief, so that he might distinctly hear every syllable spoken, and said, "War-Eagle, as surely as Prairie-bird owes her life and safety to your devoted courage, so surely do the Father and I owe our lives and liberty to that of Wingenund. Can you listen now, and follow me while I tell you all that has happened?"

The chief gave a silent nod of assent, and Ethelston proceeded, in the simple language of true feeling, to relate to him the events recorded in the last chapter. At the commencement of the narrative the chief, expecting, probably,

that the escape had been effected by some successful disguise or stratagem, closed his eyes, as if oppressed by the torturing pains that shot through his frame; but he opened them with awakened interest when the scene of the council was described, and at the mention of Mahéga's name he ejaculated "Ha!" his countenance assumed a fierce expression, and his hand unconsciously grasped the war-club that lay beside him.

Reginald listened with deep interest, and even Lita, who had hitherto appeared insensible to everything except the sufferings of her beloved lord, threw back the long hair from her eyes, marvelling what this might be that so excited and revived him; but when Ethelston related the catastrophe, how Mahéga had thrown his club, slightly grazing the youth, and how the latter had, in presence of the assembled Crows, killed and scalped the great Osage, the breast of the Delaware warrior heaved with proud emotions, which quelled for the moment all sense of the pains that racked his frame; his eye lightened with the fire of other days, and, waving the war-club over his head, he shouted, for the last time, the war-cry of his tribe.

As the chief fell back exhausted upon his rude pillow, the gentle voice of Prairie-bird was heard from the adjoining compartment of the tent, calling Lita to explain the meaning of the loud and unexpected cry by which she had been aroused from her slumber. Lita withdrew; and, while her mistress made her rapid and silent toilet, informed her of the safe return of the Black Father and Wingenund, and that the latter having been seized with a sudden illness, the friend of Reginald had remained by the chief, and had communicated some intelligence, which seemed to affect him with the most extravagant joy and excitement.

So anxious was the maiden to see her beloved preceptor, and so hastily did she fold the kerchief in the form of a turban round her head, that several of her dark tresses escaped from beneath it, and fell over her neck. The first dress that came to her hand was one made from a deep-blue Mexican shawl, of ample dimensions, given to her by the Missionary. Fastening this round her slender waist with an Indian girdle, and a pair of moccasins upon her delicate feet, she went forth, catching up as she left the tent a scarf, which she threw carelessly over her shoulders. Greeting War-Eagle hastily, but affectionately, as she passed, she flew with a glowing cheek and beating heart to the spot where the Missionary still bent with anxious solicitude over the reviving form of Wingenund.

"My father—my dear father!" she exclaimed, seizing his hand; "God be praised for thy safe return!"

The venerable man embraced her tenderly, and, after contemplating for a moment her countenance beaming with filial affection, he placed his outspread hands upon her head, saying, with impressive solemnity, "May the blessing of God rest upon thee, my beloved child, and upon all near and dear to thee, for ever!"

Prairie-bird bowed her head meekly while breathing a silent amen to the holy man's benediction, and then turned to inquire of her young father how he now felt, and of Paul Müller in consequence of his sudden illness.

Wingenund was sufficiently recovered to speak to her gratefully in reply, and to press the hand which she held out to him, but he was much reduced by loss of blood, and the Missionary putting his finger to his lips enjoined him quiet and silence for the present. He continued, however, in a low voice to explain to her the strange events that had lately occurred, and how he and the friend of her betrothed owed to the heroism of Wingenund their life and liberty.

While the maiden listened with absorbed attention, every passage in the brief but eventful tale was legible on her eloquent countenance. As Reginald stood at a little distance gazing earnestly upon its changeful loveliness, he was startled by a suppressed ejaculation from some one at his side, at the same time that his arm was seized and pressed with almost convulsive force. He turned and saw his friend Ethelston, who, finding that War-Eagle had fallen into a tranquil sleep, had stolen out of the tent to the side of Reginald, where he first caught a sight of the maiden as she listened to the Missionary's narrative. Reginald again observed with astonishment that his friend, usually so calm, trembled from head to foot; his eye rested upon the group with a preternatural fixedness, and his lips moved inaudibly like those of a man scarcely recovered from a trance. "Gracious heaven! what can have happened! Edward, you are not surely ill! that would indeed fill the cup of our trials to the brim. Speak to me, let me hear your voice, for your looks alarm me."

Ethelston made no reply, but he pointed with his finger towards Prairie-bird, and two or three large tear-drops rolled down his cheek.

While this was passing, Paul Müller had brought his tale to a conclusion, and his eye happening to light upon Ethelston, he continued (still addressing Prairie-bird), "And now, my dear child, it only remains for me to tell you the cause of our beloved young brother's weakened condition. The extremes of joy and of anguish will sometimes sweep before them the mightiest bulwarks that can be raised in the heart of man by his own unaided strength. Wingenund opposed to the stroke of affliction sent from on high not the meek, trusting endurance of Christian resignation, but the haughty resistance of human pride. Already he sees and repents his error, and the mist is clearing away from his eyes; but you, my dear child, have been better taught; you have learnt, in all trials and in all emergencies, to throw yourself upon the mercy of your heavenly Father, and to place your whole trust in His gracious promises of protection. We are more apt to forget this duty when our cup overflows with joy than when his chastening hand is upon us; but it should not be so. Promise me, then, promise me, my beloved child, that in weal or in woe, in the rapture of joy as in the extremity of sorrow, you will strive to remember and practise it."

Awed by the unusual solemnity of his manner, the maiden bowed her head, and said, "I promise."

Scarcely had she said these words when Reginald came forward, leading his friend Ethelston, who had by a strong effort recovered from his extreme agitation, and regained something of his usual composure. "Prairie-bird," said Reginald, "I wish to make known to you, my most

faithful companion, my tried and attached friend Ethelston. You must love him now for my sake; when you know him, you will do so for his own own."

Leaning on the Missionary's arm, the maiden raised herself from her stooping posture to greet the friend of her betrothed. "I have heard much——" she said, with her sweet natural dignity of manner; but she suddenly stopped, starting as if she had seen a ghost, and clinging closer to Paul Muller's arm, while her earnest gaze encountered the eyes of Ethelston fixed upon her with an expression that seemed to shake the nerves and fibres of her heart. To Reginald their silence and agitation was an incomprehensible mystery; not so to the Missionary, who still supported Prairie-bird, and whispered to her as she advanced a step nearer to the stranger, "Your promise." She understood him, for he heard her breathe the Almighty's name, as Ethelston also advanced a step towards her; and again their looks dwelt upon each other with a fixed intensity that spoke of thoughts too crowded, and confused, and mysterious for expression. At length Ethelston, whose strong and well-balanced mind had triumphed over the first shock of emotion, addressed the maiden, saying, "Have the latter years been so happily spent that they have quite banished from the mind of Prairie-bird the memory of early days?"

At the sound of his voice the maiden started as if she had received an electric shock; her bosom heaved with agitation, and her eyes filled with tears.

Again the Missionary whispered, "Your promise!" while Ethelston continued, "Has she forgotten her own little garden with the sundial! and poor Mary who nursed, and dressed, and taught her to read! Has she forgotten the great bible full of prints, of which she was so fond; and the green lane that led to Mooshanne! Has Evy forgotten her Edward?"

"'Tis he—'tis he! 'tis Eddy! my own, my long-lost brother!" cried the maiden aloud, as she threw herself into his arms; and looking up into his face, she felt his cheek as if to assure herself that all was not a dream, and poured out her grateful heart in tears upon his bosom. She did remember her promise, and even in the first tumult of her happiness, she sought and derived from Him to whom she owed it, strength to endure its sudden and overwhelming excess.

"'Tis even, so," said the Missionary, grasping the astonished Reginald's arm, "for some time I had suspected that such was the case; Prairie-bird, my beloved pupil, and your betrothed bride, is no other than Evelyn Ethelston, the sister of your friend. My suspicions were confirmed and almost reduced to certainty, during the first conversations that I held with him in St. Louis; for he, being several years older than you, remembered many of the circumstances attending the disappearance and supposed destruction of his little sister by the Indians, when his father's house was ravaged and burnt. I foresaw that they must meet when he left the settlements in search of you, and though I prepared him for the interview, I thought it better to say nothing to her or to you, but to leave the recognition to the powerful voice of Nature. You see the result in that fra-

ternal embrace; and I have in a little bag, given to me by Tamenund, when at the point of death, proofs of her identity that would convince a sceptic, were you disposed to be one; the cover of a child's spelling book, in which her name is written at length (possibly by Ethelston) and a little kerchief with the initials E. E. in the corner, both of which were in her hand when she was carried off by the Indians who spared and preserved her!"

While the Missionary felt beneath the folds of his dark serge robe, for the bag which he had always carefully kept suspended by a ribbon from his neck, Reginald's memory was busy in recalling a thousand indistinct recollections of early days, and in comparing them with those of a more recent date.

"Well do I remember," he exclaimed, "missing my sweet little playmate in childhood! and how all allusion to the terrible calamity that befel our nearest neighbour and friend, was forbid in our family! Scarcely ever, even in later years, have I touched upon the subject with Ethelston, for I saw that it gave him pain, and brought a cloud over his brow. Now, I can understand the wild and troubled expression that came across her countenance when she first saw me near the Osage camp, and first heard my voice, and how she started, and afterwards recovered herself, when I told her of Mooshanne! How blind have I now been to everything save her endearing qualities, and the ten thousand graces that wait upon her angelic form! See how like they are, now that a tide of feeling is poured into the countenance of my steady and composed friend! Jealous as I am of her time, and of every grain of her affection, I must not grudge them a few minutes of undisturbed intercourse after a separation of so many years! Come, worthy Father, let us employ ourselves in tending and ministering to War-Eagle and Wingenund, and let us not forget that to them, next to Heaven, we are indebted for the life and happiness of every single member of our miraculously re-united circle."

"You have a warm and a kindly heart, my young friend," said the Missionary, "and that is a blessing without which all the other blessings of Heaven may fall like showers upon the Lybian desert. I know how you must long to pour out your feelings of affection on this occasion to your friend, and to your betrothed; but, believe me, you will not have done amiss by following the first promptings of your heart. Let us, as you propose, endeavour to soothe and comfort the sufferers. Wingenund is now sufficiently recovered to listen while you relate him these strange occurrences; only caution him not to speak too much at present. I will return to the side of War-Eagle, and although it be too late now for us to attempt any remedy for his bodily pains, who shall limit the power of the Almighty, or circumscribe the operation of his hands! Who knows whether He may not think fit, even at the eleventh hour, to touch that stern and obdurate heart with a coal from his altar? And, oh! my dear young friend, if such be his blessed purpose, I would not forego the privilege of being the humble instrument effecting it, for all the wealth, the honours, the happiness, that earth can bestow."

Reginald looked after the worthy Missionary until he disappeared within the tent; then, sighing heavily, he said to himself, "If zeal, honesty, and true piety can render any human means available, assuredly that excellent and holy man's attempt will not be made in vain; and yet I fear that nothing short of a miracle can soften or subdue the stern pride of War-Eagle's spirit. How deeply anxious do I feel for the issue! for I cannot forget that it was in defence of Prairie-bird that he incurred this fearful torture, ending in an untimely death! His life sacrificed that mine might be happy with her! Where, where, my generous Indian brother, shall I find, among the cities and crowded haunts of civilized men, truth, self-denial, and devoted affection like thine! At least I will strive to fulfil the wish that I know to be nearest thy heart, by cherishing in my bosom's core thy beloved brother Wingenund!"

Thus meditating, Reginald sat down by the young Delaware, and strove, by awakening his interest in the strange events lately brought to light respecting Prairie-bird, to wean him from the deep dejection caused by his brother's hopeless plight.

CHAPTER XLV.

Containing a treaty between the Crows and Delawares, and the death of an Indian chief.

It is unnecessary to describe at length the occupations of the party during the remainder of this eventful day; how the re-united brother and sister called up a thousand long-stored, endearing remembrances; how they looked upon the childish relics preserved by the Missionary; and how, after interchanging a rapid but interesting sketch of each other's history, they turned again to share with him and with Reginald the melancholy and affecting duty of attending upon the dying chieftain. His sufferings were now less acute, but mortification had extended itself rapidly, and threatened hourly to terminate them altogether, by seizing upon the vitals. His mind seemed tranquil and collected as ever, only the watchful Missionary, observing that he listened more attentively to the voice of Prairie-bird than to any other, he yielded his place beside the dying man to her, entreating her to spare no efforts that might lead him, by the appointed path, to the Fountain of Mercy.

Willingly did the maiden resume the task on which she had been employed during the greater part of the preceding night; and after praying fervently for a blessing on her labours, she proceeded to explain to him again, in his own language, some of the simplest and most affecting truths of the gospel dispensation.

What an interesting spectacle for the contemplation of a Christian philosopher! A heathen warrior, whose youth had been matured with tales of fierce reprisal and revenge, whose path in life had been marked with blood, war being at once his pleasure and his pride, stretched now upon the ground, still in the prime of manhood, yet with shortening breath and ebbing strength, listening with deep attention to the words of hope and consolation pronounced by the lips of her who had been, through life, the secretly treasured idol of his heart. Perhaps

this earthly love, purified as it had long been from passion, and ennobled by the sacrifice that he had made to friendship, was the channel through which the mysterious influences of the Divine Spirit were appointed to flow; for his eager ear lost not a word of what she uttered, and his heart was softened to receive from her lips truths against which, if delivered by another, its early prejudices might have rebelled.

Partly by the religious creed of his race, and partly by former conversations with herself and the Missionary, he was already impressed with a just view of the principal attributes of Deity—his omnipotence, goodness, and eternity. The chief endeavour of Prairie-bird was now to convince him that the God of the Christians addressed the same word, the same promises and invitations, to the Indians as to them, and that they also were included in the vast and mysterious scheme of redemption; for this purpose she translated for him, into the Delaware tongue, some of those magnificent passages in Isaiah wherein the Almighty, after declaring this unity and irresistible power, sends forth his gracious promises to the uttermost parts of the earth, to the isles, to the wilderness, to the inhabitants of the mountains, and those that dwell among the rocks, and concludes with the assurance, "I will bring the blind by a way that they knew not; I will lead them in paths that they have not known. I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight; these things will I do unto them, and not forsake them."

War-Eagle listened attentively, and gave the whole strength of his mind to the consideration of the subject propounded; some of these truths he had heard before, but they had taken no fixed root, and had rather been dismissed unheeded, than weighed and rejected. Now they presented themselves under a very different aspect; for they were pressed upon him with the most affectionate earnestness, by the one whom he looked up to as the most gifted and the most guileless of human beings; and the Black Father also, for whom he entertained the highest esteem and regard, had told him repeatedly that every truth, everything necessary for happiness after death, was written in that book from which she was now reading; that it was, in short, the written command of Him whom he had from his youth addressed as the Great Spirit.

Deeply moved by these reflections (aided as they may perhaps have been by the operations of a mightier influence), the chief propounded to his young instructress several inquiries, which it rejoiced her to hear, as they indicated a softened and teachable spirit. Neither were they difficult for her to answer, as she was familiar with almost every page of the volume before her, and thus knew where to seek at once a solution of every doubt and difficulty that occurred to her simple-minded and ingenuous patient.

While she was engaged in this interesting and truly Christian task, Reginald, Ethelston, and the Missionary sat with Wingenund, and strove to soothe and tranquillise the agitation into which the late disaster had thrown him. Although somewhat weakened by loss of blood, he had recovered his faculties both of body and mind; but all the well-meant endeavours of his friends to raise him from the deep depression of spirits into which he had fallen were exerted in

vain. He replied gently, and without petulance, to various questions that they put to him, and then sank again into desponding gloom, musing over the fading fortunes of his family and of his tribe—now about to lose him who was the pride, the support, and the glory of both.

After several unsuccessful attempts, Ethelston touched at length upon a topic which had in some degree the effect of arresting his attention and engaging the more active powers of his mind; for on reminding the youth that the Crows were to visit the camp on the morrow to interchange presents and conclude the treaty of peace, Wingenund proposed to Reginald that he should summon Baptiste and Pierre, and concert, with their advice, the course that it might be advisable to pursue.

While they were employed in considering and discussing deliberately the various plans proposed, Paul Müller and Prairie-bird continued sometimes together, and sometimes alternately, their attendance upon War-Eagle, whose strength was rapidly declining, although his intellect remained clear and unimpaired. Food he was unable to taste; but the grateful smile with which he received now and then a cup of water from the hand of Prairie-bird touched her sensibly; and there was a serene composure upon his countenance, which encouraged her to hope that his mind was in a peaceful frame, and that thoughts of war and strife were gradually giving place to better and holier meditations.

The sun went down, evening fell, and the darkening hours of night found the maiden still unwearied at her post, seizing, with instinctive tact, every opportunity offered by his inquiries or remarks for quoting to him from the Book of Life some appropriate and consoling truth; nor did she retire to rest until she felt assured that exhausted nature had extended the boon of slumber to her suffering patient.

Not even then did the faithful Lita quit the place that she had chosen at the feet of the warrior whom she had so long worshipped in secret; noticed or unnoticed, thanked or unthanked, whether hungry, or thirsty, or sleepless, all was the same to her. In life her love had been either unknown or despised; and now the last faint glimmerings of hope were to be extinguished, without even the wretched consolation of pity. During the watches of that night there were tears upon the pillow of Prairie-bird; the eyes of Wingenund were sleepless, and his heart loaded with sorrow. Sharp and frequent were the pangs and shooting-pains that broke the rest of the departing Chief; yet was there, perhaps, none amongst them all whose sufferings were not light in comparison with the silent and hopeless anguish of the Comanche girl.

The morning dawned with all the fresh beauty of summer in that mountain region; and, agreeably to the resolution formed at the council held on the preceding evening, the whole party was summoned to parade with their best arms and accoutrements, so as to produce upon the Indians a due impression of their formidable strength, at the same time that various bales were unpacked, from which were selected the presents intended for the principal chiefs and braves.

No great change had taken place in the state

of War-Eagle, but Wingenund had spent an hour with him alone; during which, among other subjects of greater importance, he had mentioned the expected visit of the Crows, and the conditions of the treaty which it was proposed to make with them. To these the Chief had given his assent, and had deputed his young brother to act in his stead; after which he turned again with renewed eagerness and anxiety to the subjects suggested to him by Prairie-bird and the Missionary.

The sun was not very high in the heaven, when the band of Crows were seen descending the hill towards the encampment. They were led by White-Bull, accompanied by Besha, and were only twelve in number, all magnificently clad in dresses of deer-skin, ornamented with coloured feathers, stained quills, scalp-locks, and the other adjuncts of Crow chivalry. Besha apologised for the scantiness of the deputation, stating, that during the past night an attempt had been made by the Blackfeet to rescue their prisoners; and although it had not been successful, the Crows could not venture, in the neighbourhood of such dangerous foes, to weaken the defence of their camp, by sending away a large body of its best warriors. To this a suitable and complimentary reply having been made, the business of the day commenced by presenting food to the Upsaroka guests.

A circle having been made, the white hunters were ranged on one side of it, and the Delawares on the other, the former being all armed with rifles and pistols, and hunting-knives, presented a very warlike appearance; while the sinewy and weather-beaten frames of the latter, armed as they were with rifle, war-club, and scalp-knife, inspired the observant leader of the Crows with no wish to bring his band into hostile collision with such a party. In the centre were seated Reginald Brandon, Wingenund, and Ethelston, Pierre having taken his place near the latter, and Baptiste occupying his usual station beside his young master, and leaning upon his enormous hatchet. If the intentions of White-Bull were treacherous, he found no greater encouragement to his hopes from a survey of the leaders, men of powerful form, and grave, determined aspect, with the exception of Wingenund, whose youth and slight figure might have led a stranger to fear him less as an opponent. He had, however, given such proof of his skill, courage, and activity in Indian warfare, that the Crows did not look upon him with less respect than upon the more experienced men by whom he was surrounded.

When the Upsaroka deputation had finished the portion of bison-meat set before them, Reginald gave them a treat, such as they had never before enjoyed, in the shape of a tin-cup full of coffee, sweetened with sugar, which they passed round, and tasted at first with some reluctance, owing to its dark colour, taking it for "Great Medicine." After sipping it once or twice, however, they seemed to find it more palatable, and drank all that was offered to them, and then the pipe was lighted and smoked with due solemnity.

When these preliminaries were concluded, the business of the day was entered upon, and was conducted with equal caution and distrust

on both sides; Besha being, of course, the interpreter, and moulding the respective communications in the manner most likely, according to his views, to ensure the continuance of the truce agreed upon; because he had been most distinctly warned by Wingenund, that he would receive no present until all the terms of the treaty were duly fulfilled, and that then he might expect one liberal enough to adorn the wigwam of a chief. The crafty horse-dealer had, at the same time, contrived to persuade the Crows that the white men were secretly disinclined to the treaty, and that they could only be induced to observe it by his own cunning and contrivance.

This being the relative position of the parties, it may well be imagined that the diplomatic arrangements were neither very long nor difficult, and it was finally agreed that the Crows should, when called upon, supply the party with a trusty guide, who should lead them eastward by the route on which they would find the easiest travelling and the best supply of bison; that an alliance for mutual defence should exist between the parties so long as they were within the boundaries of the Crow country, but that they should never encamp nearer to each other than at a distance of twice the long-flight of an arrow; that so soon as they should emerge from the defiles of the mountains, the Crows should supply their allies with twenty horses, some of those which they had brought from the settlements being travel-worn and exhausted; and that Besha was to have free leave to come and go from one encampment to the other at all hours of the day or night, in the event of any communication being necessary.

The allied band agreed, in consideration of the above conditions, to present the Crows with a certain number of bales of cloth, a score of blankets, and an ample supply of beads, paint, and knives; one-third of the amount to be paid on the delivery of the horses, and the remainder when the parties separated on the Great Prairie, at the eastern boundary of the Upsaroka country.

These terms having been written down by Reginald, he read them slowly one after the other, Wingenund repeating them to Besha, and he again translating them to White-Bull, who nodded his approbation as they were successively recapitulated, after which Reginald and Ethelston having signed their names in pencil, desired Besha and White-Bull to affix their mark.

The former did so without hesitation, but the latter made all kinds of excuses, and looked extremely puzzled, whispering his doubts and fears to his interpreter, who, being a reckless fellow, and, having seen more of the world, could scarce forbear laughing in his face.

In truth the Crow chief, though brave and daring in the field, was not above the superstitions current in his tribe, and he entertained a kind of vague notion that, by putting his mark upon the paper, he brought himself under the power of the white-man's medicine.

Nevertheless, he was at length persuaded, and drew upon the paper, with a hand not unskilful, the broad forehead and projecting horns of a bison's head, which design represented his consent to the treaty.

No sooner was the business concluded than the presents were brought forth, and distributed according to the terms prescribed, Reginald adding for the chief a hair-brush, in the back of which a small mirror was set. Never had such a curiosity been seen in the Crow country, and White-Bull turned it over and over in his hand, contemplating it and himself in it, with undisguised satisfaction, while Pierre whispered to Baptiste, "if Madame Bending-willow is in favour, she will have it before to-morrow!"

The Crows now took their leave, amid many protestations of friendship on both sides, and returned with all speed towards their own encampment, White-Bull's mind being divided between delight at the possession of his brush, and dread at the mysterious dangers he might have incurred by putting his mark upon the white-man's paper.

The departure of their wild allies left the party at the camp leisure to return to their ordinary avocations, and to the sad recollection of their Chief's condition; indeed, a very short time elapsed before he sent a message by Paul Müller desiring that they would all come to him without delay.

The tone of deep, yet composed sadness, in which it was delivered, announced to most of those who heard it that War-Eagle was drawing near to his end; and Reginald, passing his arm within that of Wingenund, whispered to him as he went such words of sympathy as he thought most like to soothe and console him.

"Dear Netis," replied the youth, in a tone of the deepest melancholy, "you are very good, but there is no happiness more for Wingenund!"

"Say not so, my young brother; you are still in the early spring of life, and I hope, when these present sorrows are past, you will yet enjoy a long and happy day of summer."

"Wingenund's spring and summer are both gone! but he does not complain; it is the will of the Great Spirit, and Wingenund knows that what He does is right."

As he said these words they reached the tent, and the day being extremely fine the poles of that compartment were taken up, and the canvass folded back, at the request of the Chief, that he might once more look upon the sun, and feel the fresh mountain breeze upon his cheek.

Lita had retired into the inner tent, and Prairie-bird was seated at his side, a cup of water being the only source of relief to which she from time to time had recourse to cool his lips and recruit his ebbing strength.

The whole party being gathered round him, Wingenund, Reginald, and Ethelston somewhat in advance of the rest, he addressed the former in a low but distinct voice, saying, "War-Eagle is going on the dark path, from which he will not return; Wingenund will be the chief of the Lenapé band; has he anything to say while War-Eagle is yet Chief?"

"He has," replied the youth in a voice tremulous from emotion; "a treaty has been made with the Upsaroka, does War-Eagle think it good?" He then proceeded to enumerate its several terms and conditions.

"It is good," said the Chief, after a few moments reflection; "only let Netis and Winge

nund remember that the Upsaroka are double-tongued; they hate the Blackfeet, and will be glad to spend my brother's powder and blood in destroying their enemies. Let my brothers keep near the home-path, and not wander from it to please the Upsaroka. Is there more that my brother wishes to say?"

"There is my brother. Here are the four Osage captives taken among the Upsaroka. Their deeds of blood are known to War-Eagle; let him say what shall be done with them."

"Let them stand forward," said the Chief, raising himself with difficulty from the blanket-cushion against which he had been reclining.

They were accordingly brought to the front of the circle, and stood awaiting their doom with the fierce determined air of warriors who knew and feared it not. The eldest among them was a fine powerful man, who bore about him the marks of many a fray, and had been one of the leading braves who followed the fortunes of Mahéga. He it was who acted as spokesman in the dialogue that ensued.

War-Eagle. "Have the Washashe anything to say that their lives should not be given to the slow fire?"

Osage. "The warriors of the Washashe talk with their hands, when their hands are not tied. They are not famous for their tongues."

W. "Yet with their tongues they spoke smooth words to the Lenapé; they called them brother; they ate, hunted, fought, and smoked with them, and then joined the Dahcotahs, to kill the women and children of their friends. If the tongues of the Washashe are not famous, they are forked."

O. "Mahéga was the war-chief of his tribe; when he went upon the war-path, the Washashe followed. He is gone to the hunting-fields of the braves, and they are not afraid to follow him. When War-Eagle took his rifle and his club, and went out upon the war-path by night, his warriors followed in silence. Who among them said, 'Where does War-Eagle go?'"

W. "War-Eagle never raised his rifle at a friend; he never called out his braves to burn the wigwam of his brother; there was never a scalp of woman or child taken by his hand. When he struck, it was at an open foe, or to save or avenge a friend," he added, in a subdued tone; "and yet there is too much blood on the hands of War-Eagle; the Great Spirit is angry with him for it."

The Osage made no reply. The Missionary interchanged a whispered word with Prairie-bird, and the chief continued, addressing chiefly the Delawares in their own language. "My brothers, we often pray to the Great Spirit to forgive what we have done that is wrong. The Black Father and Olitipa have told War-Eagle the answer that He gives; it is written in the great book, in which there are no lies, 'The Great Spirit will forgive us, if we forgive our brother; if we refuse to forgive our brother, the Great Spirit will refuse to forgive us.' War-Eagle has done many things wrong; he hopes the Great Spirit will forgive him. Shall he now kill the Washashe?" He then turned to the prisoners, and said, "Let their hands be cut, and let them return to their own people to tell them that the Lenapé hurt not women nor children, nor men whose hands are tied." Olitipa

has read from the book, that such is the will of the Great Spirit, whom the white men call by the name of God, and the heart of War-Eagle tells him that it is true."

It is doubtful whether this speech caused greater surprise among his own followers, or among the Osages whom it restored to life and liberty. Both, however, heard it with the absence of outward emotion which characterizes the red-skin race in North America; so that Ethelston, who did not understand a word of the Delaware tongue, was perfectly unconscious of anything having been said that might materially affect the fortunes of the prisoners; and he was in momentary expectation of seeing them led away to suffer, according to the laws of Indian retribution, the deserved penalty of their cruelty and treachery.

While Pierre was informing him of what had occurred, the Osage spokesman resolved apparently to try the patience of the expiring Chief to the uttermost, and said to him, with a sneer, "War-Eagle is very good to the Washashe; he knows that they have neither food nor arms; there is not one knife among the four. They are among the mountains, a whole moon's journey from their village, surrounded by war-parties of the Upsaroka and Blackfeet, and on their return-path must pass the hunting-grounds of the Shiennes, the Kiowás, the Pánis, and the Mahas. War-Eagle would rather that they were starved, and their bones gnawed by the wolves, than see them die like warriors, and laugh at the Lenapé in their death."

Paul Müller looked anxiously at the Chief, to mark what effect would be produced by this ungrateful and intemperate speech; and his apprehensions were much relieved when he heard War-Eagle reply, in a calm and unmoved tone, "There is no wonder that the Washashe think others are like themselves, false-hearted and double-tongued. Had the Lenapé intended that the Washashe should be killed, they would have spared the Upsaroka and the wolves the task. War-Eagle intends that they should live to be ashamed of their bad deeds. Wingenund will see that they enter safely on the home-path. Now let them go; their words are bitter, and they can neither speak nor believe the truth. War-Eagle has no more time to waste with them."

As he uttered this reproof in a contemptuous, rather than an angry tone, the Chief fell back much exhausted upon his cushion, and the leading Osage was about to make some violent reply, when Pierre, taking him by the arm, hurried him and his companions to the outer edge of the circle, saying to him, as he went, "Peace, fool! Is thy thick head so fond of trusting a Lenapé tomahawk, that thou cast not hold thy tongue, when thy saucy wagging of it might cost thy life! Peace, I say, or, in spite of the Chief's pardon, I will have thee and thy comrades tied down again like fresh caught colts."

Having spoken words to this effect to the reckless and grumbling Osage, Pierre re-entered the circle gathered round the Chief, and found, on his return, that a general silence prevailed. Wingenund was sitting upon the ground, close to his brother, listening with the deepest attention to the injunctions and counsel which the latter was delivering, in a voice that became

every moment more feeble and indistinct. None present could overhear what passed; but, at the conclusion, the two brothers sat for a few seconds in silence, each pressing his clenched hand upon the heart of the other, after which Wingenund retired a few paces back, while the Chief, collecting his remaining strength, said aloud to his devoted followers, "War-Eagle is going to the land where his fathers dwell; he is sorry to leave his brothers, but it is the will of the Great Spirit, who is the Master of Life;* and when He speaks, the Lenapé are silent, and obey. When War-Eagle is gone, it is his wish that Wingenund should be chief of the band; the blood of Tamenund warms his heart, and though he has not seen many summers, his eyes have not been shut, nor have his ears been closed against the counsel of wise men. My brothers, you have the care of a great treasure, the care of Olitipa, the beloved daughter of Tamenund, the sister who has cleared away the cloud that hid the sun from War-Eagle, and the thorns that beset his path in the dark valley. My brothers, let not one of you leave her until she is safe at the white man's boundary; and if you love War-Eagle, you will also love and obey Wingenund, and Netis his adopted brother."

A deep suppressed murmur was the only reply made by the gloomy warriors around; but War-Eagle knew its import, and read its confirmation on the determined countenances of those who had so often followed him to strife and victory.

The mortal agony was at hand, and the Chief, feeling its approach, looked suddenly round as if he missed some one who should be there; his utterance was scarcely articulate, but Prairie-bird caught the intended sound of Lita's name, and flying into the tent, speedily returned, bringing with her the weeping girl. Again he contrived to make Prairie-bird understand his wish, that an armet of beads that he wore should be taken off and hung round Lita's neck; the Chief smiled and said, "Lita has been faithful to Olitipa and very good to War-Eagle; the Great Spirit will reward her."

The destroyer was now rapidly tightening his fell coils round the vital organs, but the Chief still retained sufficient strength to press the hand of each of his sorrowing friends in succession against that generous heart which must so soon cease to beat. Wingenund was the last, and as he stooped over his brother, whispered to him a word that reached the ear of Prairie-bird, and while it richly rewarded her pious and affectionate toil, lighted up at the same time the countenance of the dying man with a

smile of triumph that bid defiance to the pangs of the grisly King of Terrors. From the time that he received his fatal wounds, not a groan nor murmur of complaint had escaped him, and when he resigned his parting breath, it was with the peaceful tranquillity of childhood falling asleep.

"My children," said the Missionary, solemnly, "War-Eagle, the son of Tamenund, is no more! In life none walked more uprightly than he, according to the light that was given to him! He gave up his life to save that of another, and after enduring grievous pains with the heroism of an Indian warrior, he died with a full hope and trust in the redeeming mercy of his God. Peace be with his soul; and may we all rejoice him hereafter in the land where separation and sorrow will be unknown!"

CHAPTER XLVI.

War-Eagle's Funeral.—The Party commence their homeward Journey.—Basha exerts his diplomatic Talents for the last Time, and receives several Rewards, with some of which he would willingly have dispensed.

It may well be imagined what a gloom was cast over the whole party by the death of the Delaware leader; not only among those who, like Reginald, Wingenund, and Prairie-bird, mourned for him as for a departed brother, but even among the rough hunters and woodsmen, to whom he had endeared himself no less by his dauntless courage than by a thousand acts of kindness and generosity. As for his own trusty Lenapé warriors, their spirit seemed entirely broken; too proud to weep or lament, they walked to and fro by the spot where his remains still rested, casting upon the dark cloth by which they were covered desponding and melancholy looks; and when Baptiste, whom they esteemed as the long-tried friend of their late Chief, tried to offer a few words of consolation, hinting also at the virtues and qualities of the surviving brother, they shook their heads and returned to cherish their grief, like the wife of Phinehas, who, when she heard that her husband and her father-in-law were dead, and the Ark captured, regarded not the consolation of her new-born child, but called it Ichabod, saying "The glory is departed from Israel."

"Ethelston," said Reginald to his friend, "methinks the sooner we strike our camp and move from this sad spot the better; it is necessary, from the progress that mortification has made in the frame of our lamented friend, that he should be buried immediately. Let us speak to Wingenund, and see whether he wishes it performed according to our customs or according to those of his own people; for in this we ought not to dictate to him."

Having joined the youth, whom they found standing in an attitude of dejection at no great distance, Reginald, after a few words of kindly sympathy, proposed to him the subject under discussion. To the surprise of both, they found him quite prepared for it. "Yes," he said; "War-Eagle said to Wingenund what he wished, and it shall be done this day. First let us obey his commands about the Washashe; let them be called before the tent, and let the hunters and the Lenapé be summoned so."

This was soon done, and the party being assembled, the Osages were once more brought forward, their limbs having been freed from the

* In the greater number of the Indian languages known on the North American continent, the Supreme Being is designated by a name bearing one of the three following significations:

1. "Great, or Good Spirit;" such is the "Manitou," "Manitto," "Kitchi-Manitou," &c., of the Delawares, Chippeways, Sâks, Potawatomis, and most of the Algonkian tribes.

2. "The Wonderful, or Wonderful Spirit," by which name He is designated among most of the tribes resident on the banks of the Missouri: e. g. "Walcondah" by the Joes and Osageaws, "Wabestanea" by the Dacotahs, "Ma-na-kôpa" by the Minnesterees, &c.

3. "Master of Life," which is the designation of the same by which the Almighty is recognised among the Pawnees, and many other numerous and powerful tribes. The subject is too comprehensive to be more than briefly alluded to in this place.

things by which they had been bound; and the general stock of meat, fresh as well as dried, was also, by desire of Wingenund, placed before the tent. These preliminaries being completed, the young chief addressed them as follows: "Washashe, it is known to you that War-Eagle, forgiving your bad deeds, gave you your lives—the Lenapé respect the wishes of their great Chief, and will not send you away with empty hands." He then desired that a fair proportion of meat, a rifle, with a reasonable supply of ammunition, a knife, and a small package of Indian presents should be given to each of the Osages. These orders having been punctually, though reluctantly, obeyed by one of the Delaware warriors, Wingenund continued, "If the Washashe fear to enter upon the long home-path with so few men, they may camp under the shelter of the Lenapé fires—they cannot be called brothers, but no harm shall be done to them."

"The Washashe," replied the powerful Indian who has before been mentioned as the spokesman of the Osages, and who now grasped his restored rifle with an air of fierce exultation, "the Washashe have no fear—they will go upon the path alone—they will not dwell a night by the fires of the Lenapé camp. Wingenund is a young chief, and the Lenapé need not be ashamed when they speak his name; his words and his years are few, but his deeds will be told where the council of warriors meet. His hand is open, but it is red with the blood of their great chief; the Washashe thank him, but they cannot call the Lenapé brothers. The Washashe have no more to say; before the night falls, their feet will be far on the homeward path."

So saying, the grim warrior stalked away with his three companions, the assembled party looking after them in silence, until their forms were lost behind a rock that projected into the valley.

"Proud and thankless scoundrels," muttered Baptiste, half aloud, to the hunter who stood nearest to him. "Had my opinion been taken, they should have been flogged with cow-hides out of the camp, and they might have found their way as they could to their cut-throat friends the Dahcotahs! 'Twas always so with War-Eagle, and will be the same with Wingenund! When the skrimmage was over, and his blood was cool, there was no more cruelty in his nature than there is in that of a Philadelphy Quaker."

Wingenund having spoken for a few minutes with the Missionary, a party of half a dozen men were desired by the latter to dig a grave for the deceased Chief under a scathed and picturesque pine that stood alone on a small natural mound near the river. It was a spot that seemed to have been framed by the hand of the Creator for a sepulchre, rising as it did in the centre of a wild and unfrequented vale, surrounded on all sides by precipitous rocks, beyond which rose in the distance the snow-clad summits of the gigantic mountain-range—the fittest natural emblem of Eternity; while, round the base of the mound, flowed the bubbling stream, a memento, no less apt, of the changeable and fleeting nature of all the things belonging to this earthly scene.

The descending sun was just beginning to gild the peaks of the Western Andes when the party assembled to pay the last tribute of affectionate regard to the mortal remains of their late

leader. Prairie-bird and her faithful Lita attended, both having their faces veiled by a shawl, and the former supported by her newly-restored brother; nor was there one of the party absent from the mournful ceremony, which was commenced (as soon as the body, still enveloped and bound in dark cloth, was placed near the grave) by a brief address from Wingenund, in which he said,

"My brothers, know that War-Eagle was a great chief; that the blood of many warriors ran in his veins. The enemies of the Lenapé were his enemies, and their friends his friends. When their warriors went forth to battle, he was not the last; and when they returned, his war-club could tell a tale." A deep murmur of assent was uttered by the Delawares, and Wingenund continued: "War-Eagle loved the Lenapé from his childhood; and in his last moments he prayed to the Great Spirit for their happiness. He also told Wingenund that Ollitpa and the Black Father had read to him many wonderful things from the Great Spirit's Book; that he had thought much of them, and found them very good and very true. They had made his heart so glad, that he wished Wingenund and his Lenapé brothers to hear them, that they might learn how to please the Great Spirit, and to obey his will. Wingenund promised War-Eagle that, when the Black Father told them the commands of the Great Spirit written in the book, the ears of the Lenapé should be open to listen to the words of his wisdom, and to let his counsel guide their feet. My brothers, such were the wishes of War-Eagle, great chief of the Unami band of the Ancient People. Wingenund has told them truly, and he intends to obey them himself; his years are yet too few that he should advise others; let each of my brothers think of these things wisely, and act as the Great Spirit shall incline his heart."

A long and profound silence followed this speech; after which Paul Müller, approaching the mound, desired that the body might be lowered into the grave. When this was done, he addressed first the Delawares, setting forth the virtues of the deceased chieftain, and laying the greatest stress upon those which were of a more mild and peaceful character. He touched also most feelingly upon the occasion on which he had received the injuries from which he died, assuring the Delawares that no length of time, nor changes of life, would ever efface from the memory of Prairie-bird, or those to whom she was so dear, the devoted heroism of her deliverer. "But, my beloved brothers," said he, in conclusion, "great as was the gift that he gave to her, even his life for hers, he received from her a gift much greater; for it is my humble hope and belief that, through her entreaty and prayer, his eyes were open to see things that he had never seen before; and, having once seen their riches and their beauty, he desired that you, my brothers, should see them too. He learned what, I fear, you cannot yet understand—that it is the will of the Great Spirit that we should observe and study his works, and copy them. Is it true, my friends? Is there sense in my words?"

He paused for a reply. The elder Delawares looked at each other, and then, as if by mutual consent, nodded their assent.

The Missionary continued: "Well, then, the Great Spirit is merciful and just, kind and forgiving, loving peace and hating strife. How

to we try to please him? By hating peace, and being swift to shed blood; by revenging where we ought to forgive, and dealing harshly by those on whom we ought to have mercy. The Osages who are just gone are wicked men; they have been guilty of treachery and cruelty, and you are disappointed that you were not permitted to kill them, and that Wingenund sent them away unhurt. They have been wicked, far more wicked, towards the Great Spirit; they have disobeyed His commands, despised His laws, destroyed the creatures of His hand, and have insulted Him and braved His anger for weeks, and months, and years! How has he treated them? He has given them water from His clouds, and has brought the herds of bison to their hunting-ground, and has given the sun to warm them by day, and the moon and stars to light their path by night! And if even now one of them—nay, the very worst among them, were to have his heart softened, and to turn to the Great Spirit, and say, 'My Father in heaven, I am sorry for all the wrong that I have done, O forgive and guide me, for I wish to do so no more!' it is written in that book by the hand of the Great Spirit himself, that He would forgive that sorrowful man, and bless him, and turn the bitterness of his heart into gladness and joy sweeter than honey! These things, my dear brothers, are not learned in a day; but, I thank God that by His blessing, and the affectionate and patient labours of Ollitpa, the eyes of War-Eagle were opened to see them; and he desired that those whom he most loved should see and feel them like himself. We will now take our last farewell of him on earth, after the manner of those who love, fear, and obey the word of the Father of us all."

Having thus spoken, the worthy Missionary knelt by the side of the newly-filled grave, and concluded the solemnities of the occasion by an affecting prayer in the English tongue; Reginald, Ethelston, and all the hunters and woodsmen, kneeling uncovered, and finally joining in that perfect model of supplication taught by the Redeemer himself to those who, in whatever age or clime, are called by His name.

Having paid these last honours to their departed friend, the leaders of the party withdrew to make the proposed arrangements for striking the camp on the following morning, and for setting the line and order of march.

The Delawares lingered for some time, as if unwilling to leave the remains of their beloved Chief, and at length slowly retired, one by one, until there remained only our old friend Baptiste and a veteran Delawate, who, from his feats of hardihood, and the stern fierceness of his nature, was generally known by the name of Stony-heart.

"Grande-Hâche," said the latter, addressing his companion, "it may be all very good what the Black Father says, but Stony-heart does not understand it. When War-Eagle said that the Lenapé should not kill those who had taken the scalps of their warriors or of their women, the Mad Spirit must have got into his brain! Stony-heart has seen many winters, and has heard the talk of the wise men in council, but he never heard such words as these!"

It must be confessed that Baptiste was not in his heart a very strong advocate for the doctrine of forgiveness; we have already seen in a former chapter, that he was rather disposed to favour the Indian law of retaliation; he answered, however, on this occasion cautiously,

"Stony-heart speaks true; yet he must remember that War-Eagle only desired that his Lenapé brothers should hear what the Black Father had to say on this matter; they can then decide whether his words are idle or not. It will be easier for him to persuade the young than men who like us have known for forty winters that the custom of the woods, and of the prairie, is life for life, and scalp for scalp!"

"It will," rejoined the other; "and Grande-Hâche will see that no good will follow from having spared the lives of those four Washashe dogs!"

With this prophetic observation, Stony-heart rejoined his comrades, and Baptiste joined the small group assembled before the door of the tent.

On the following morning the party began their homeward march, Wingenund leading the way, followed by his Delawares, and accompanied by Besha and the Crow guide, who had been sent for by a runner before daybreak. The packed mules and horses were placed in the centre under the special charge of Monsieur Perrot, whose fund of good-humour and resource had never failed him, and who now performed the office of a muleteer with the same readiness with which he fulfilled the respective duties of valet to Reginald, and cook, messman, and buffoon to the whole party. The rear was brought up by Ethelston and Reginald, the latter still keeping his post at the bridle of Nekimi, the line of march being closed by Baptiste and some of the most experienced hunters, while Pierre was sent forward to aid Wingenund, he being the most skilful and practised in the peculiar difficulties of the dangerous region which they were now about to traverse.

For several days all went on as well as could be expected. The heat was intense, and water was sometimes scarce; several of the mules and pack-horses dropped down from exhaustion, and were left behind; the stock of provisions was somewhat short, but the party twice fell in with a small herd of buffalo, from which they procured a tolerable supply; and, at camping time, they all assembled round the fire in front of Prairie-bird's tent, and, after their frugal evening meal, wore away the time with conversation suited to the different groups into which the party divided itself, some talking over former campaigns, others cracking their jokes and enjoying the laugh which invariably followed Perrot's determined attempts to explain himself in the Delaware tongue, while Reginald, Ethelston, and Prairie-bird lived over again the days of their childhood, or recounted to each other some of the most interesting incidents of the intervening years.

All remarked the changed aspect and increased gravity of Wingenund; his manner was indeed gentle and quiet as before, but the death of his brother, and the responsibility now entrusted to him, added to other serious matters which occupied his mind, seemed in him to have annihilated the interval between early youth and ripened manhood. First to rise before daybreak, and last to lie down at night, he seemed unconscious of fatigue, and resolved that on this occasion at least, the Delawares should not from his neglect be reminded of the loss that they had so lately sustained. At night he visited the sentries and saw that every one was at his allotted post, and on the march, whenever the nature of the ground rendered precaution necessary scouts were sent

forward to examine it, and to guard against ambush or surprise. Every evening he joined the little party before the tent, and never left it without wishing his sister (as he still called Prairie-bird) a night of rest, and asking a blessing from the lips of the Black Father.

The Crows behaved upon this occasion better than had been expected of them, camping always at a certain distance from the allied party, and observing faithfully the other conditions of the treaty. The Guide whom they had supplied led the way towards the Great Prairie, by a valley considerably to the northward of that by which they had entered the mountain region, and Pierre soon perceived that its eastern termination was at a spot that was easily recognised, by all experienced trappers, as the "Devil's Kettle," owing to the steam that ascended from a hot-spring, celebrated for its medicinal qualities among the neighbouring tribes.

Here the fresh horses promised by the Crows were supplied, and an equal number of those exhausted and incapable of further travel were left behind. Nekimi alone of the whole quadruped band, seemed insensible alike to the scantiness of pasture, and the heat and fatigue of the journey. The fair burthen that he bore was as that of a feather compared to the powerful frame of his former rider when armed and equipped, and the noble animal seemed desirous of expressing his gratitude for the change by rubbing his forehead against Reginald as he walked before him, or nibbling out of his hand a few young shoots of alder or willow that he was now and then fortunate enough to cut by the half-dried bed of some mountain stream.

In this way they travelled forward without accident or adventure, until they reached the banks of a river of considerable size, which Pierre conjectured to be the head-water of the southern-fork of the Neosho, or the Platte, and here they were to complete the terms of the treaty, and bid adieu to their Upsaroka friends, the opposite bank of the river not being considered within the limits of their hunting ground.

The ceremonials observed upon this occasion were much the same as the preceding, with the exception that Bending-willow paid a visit to Prairie-bird, received from her several presents, drank a cup of the wonderful black liquor, of which her husband had told her, namely, coffee sweetened with sugar, and told her fair hostess that his affections had not as yet strayed to any other of his spouses—a fact the truth of which was attested by her displaying, with the most ostentatious coquetry, the mirror-backed brush, of which he was more proud than of anything that he possessed.

Besha made himself wonderfully busy during the payment of the presents due to the Crows; and in one or two instances when the latter claimed more than was recorded in Reginald's memorandum, he stoutly maintained that the white men were right, and recommended the Crows to withdraw their pretensions; in so doing he did not neglect to whisper every now and then to Baptiste or Pierre, a hint that he intended to be paid for his disinterested support.

All this was not lost upon White-Bull, who, although he could not understand a word of what passed, felt, nevertheless, convinced that the interpreter was playing some under-game. He said nothing, however, and the distribution was satisfactorily completed, Wingeneund and Reginald adding gratuitously several presents for the

chiefs beyond those promised in the treaty. Besha, to the surprise of many of the Crows who knew his avaricious disposition, went away, apparently well satisfied, with nothing more than a blanket and a knife; but they did not know that he had privately whispered to Baptiste that he would come by night to fetch away his stipulated share of the presents (and that too a lion's share), as the Crows might be jealous if they saw them, and might take them from him.

The two parties having taken their final leave of each other, the task of guide devolved upon Pierre, who resolved not to cross the Platte that evening, it being now rather late, but to encamp where they were, while the Crows returned some dozen miles upon their trail before they encamped for the night. They had seen enough of the effective force and discipline of the allied band to deter them from attacking it, and prudently resolved to return to their own country with the goods which they had already acquired without loss or risk; although it becomes us, as veracious historians, to state (however little credit the statement may reflect upon White-Bull) that it had been, from the first, his intention to attack and plunder the party, had their carelessness or neglect afforded him an opportunity of doing so with impunity.

Besha having ascertained the spot selected for the Crow encampment, lingered behind their line of march, accompanied by the lad before-mentioned as being his constant attendant, whom he left concealed, with two of his horses, behind a small hillock beside the trail, desiring him there to await his return. In order to avoid suspicion, he continued in the company of White-Bull until it was dusk, and did not leave the camp until an hour later, when he threw a large dark-coloured blanket over his shoulders, and slipping away unperceived, rejoined the lad left in charge of the horses.

Mounting one himself, he desired his companion to follow on the other, and trotted briskly forward, under the partial light of a young moon, over the ground which he had carefully noted during the day, until he reached a spot where the trail approached within a hundred yards of the banks of the Platte, and where a few alder bushes offered convenient shelter for the horses. Here the lad was again desired to await his master's return; and as the dew began to fall heavy, he was not sorry that the latter left with him the large dark-coloured blanket above-mentioned.

Besha now pursued his way on foot; and on reaching the outposts of the allied band found, as had been preconcerted, two of the Delawares bearing several large packages, containing the presents and goods that he had earned in his mixed capacity of diplomatic agent and interpreter. The packages being inconvenient for the horse-dealer to carry alone, both on account of their weight and number, he prevailed upon one of the Delawares to assist him in carrying them to the spot where he had left the horses. It was only by offering the Indian, who was no other than Stony-heart, a little bag full of excellent kinné-kinnik for his pipe, that he prevailed upon him to undertake this task. But the materials for smoking had become scarce, and it was an indulgence from which, when within reach, Stony-heart could not refrain; he accordingly sent back his companion, and, telling him that he would return in the course of an hour or two, set forth with the horse-dealer on the trail.

We must now see how it fared with the lad

left in charge of the horses, who, being tired with the day's march, fastened the end of their long halters to his arm, and wrapping himself in the blanket, laid down upon the grass, and soon fell into a comfortable doze. One of the horses, probably disliking this unusual separation from those with which it was accustomed at this hour to feed, neighed several times aloud, for which disturbance of his slumber it received a pull of the halter, and a muttered execration from the youth, when he again fell into a state of unconsciousness.

Now it so happened that the neighing of the horse reached other ears at no great distance, being those of no less a person than the Osage, who, with his three companions, was on his homeward way, and had on the preceding day stolen an old canoe that they found on the bank of the river; and after patching up a few rents and holes, had embarked in it to save themselves a portion of their long foot journey. They had seen from a distance the moving bands of the white men and of the Crows, and had hauled their canoe under some alder bushes on the bank, in order to consult and determine whether they should drop further down the river during the night, or leaving it, strike a more southerly course.

While holding this consultation, the neighing of Besha's horse caught the quick ear of their leader; he listened—and hearing it repeated, crept towards the spot, followed by his three companions. As soon as the uncertain light of the moon enabled him to distinguish the two pack-horses fastened to the sleeping lad, he again crept noiselessly forward, and springing upon him, enveloped him in his own blanket, stuffing the corner of it into his mouth, so that he could neither struggle nor make any noise.

Leaving one of his men in charge of the horses, he carried the youth swiftly to the water's edge, where he securely pinioned and gagged him, not, however, before he had recognised by the moonlight the countenance of Besha's attendant. The Osage's plan was soon formed; for he rightly conjectured that the horse-dealer was gone upon some errand, from which he would not return empty handed; and he also owed the horse-dealer a grudge for having, as he supposed, favoured Wingenud in that eventful scene which terminated Mahéga's life.

Stripping the youth of his dark blanket and of the broad-brimmed hat of Mexican grass that he wore, the Osage put them on himself; and taking his seat by the same bush, he held the halters of the horses, and partially concealing his face in one of the folds of the blanket, awaited in this disguise the return of the horse-dealer, while his three companions concealed themselves behind the adjacent bushes.

They had not been very long ensconced before Besha appeared, followed by the doughty Stony-heart, who muttered to himself as he came that he would not carry such a load so far again for all the kinne-kinnik in the camp. The horse-dealer as he drew near gave the usual signal-whistle for his attendant; and finding that it was unanswered, looked towards the spot, where he descried the sumbering figure in the slouched hat and dark blanket; while one of his pack-horses, lately cast loose, seemed to be deliberately walking off to seek better pasture. Hastily throwing his own package to the ground, he went to secure the stray animal, calling at the same time to Stony-heart,

"Kick that sleepy dog till he wakens, that he may come and assist me with these packs."

The Delaware, who was not a man of many words, proceeded forthwith to execute this order, and, without putting down his heavy load, bestowed a sound kick upon the reclining figure, which, to his infinite surprise, started instantly to its feet in the shape of a powerful man, who threw him, encumbered as he was, upon the ground, and successfully resisted all his violent efforts to extricate himself. While one of the Osages came to assist in securing the fallen Delaware, the other two seized the unlucky horse-dealer, just as he was mounting in the hope of saving himself by flight.

So successfully had the Osages planned and executed this manœuvre, that in less than five minutes their last two prisoners were laid bound and pinioned together with the first in the canoe, where the captured bales and presents were also stowed away, and while one of the Osages took the horses to a ford not far distant, which had been recently crossed by a large herd of bison, the remaining three, with their prisoners, paddled across the river, and then noiselessly along the opposite bank, until they had reached a deep and winding creek, which fell into the main river, and which they had noticed by daylight as affording convenient fuel and shelter. Having pursued their way up the creek until they considered themselves safe from pursuit, and their fire from the observation of either encampment, they gathered and lighted a goodly pile of dry alder-wood, and proceeded deliberately to unpack and examine the bales and packages, throwing their three pinioned captives roughly on one side, as being so much live lumber unworthy of their notice.

The plunder that they found themselves thus suddenly possessed of exceeded their utmost expectations; and as it contained, among other things, a package of excellent dried meat and the kinne-kinnik, from which poor Stony-heart had expected so much gratification, they ate copiously of the former, and smoked copiously of the latter, until they were in the highest possible state of Osage enjoyment.

It was not long before they were joined by their comrade with the horses, who received, as soon as he had fastened the latter, his due share both of the provisions and the plunder; after which they ungagged the prisoners, at the same time giving them to understand that if they made the least noise they would be put to death immediately. Indeed, whether they were noisy or quiet, it seemed by no means improbable that such might be their fate, for two of the Osages strongly urged the necessity for so doing, under the plea of self-preservation. The leader seemed, however, to be of a different opinion, and he had already established a kind of prescriptive right of command over his comrades.

Having thrown some dry sticks upon the fire to make it blaze, he drew Stony-heart towards the light, and as it fell upon his countenance enabled him to recognise in his prisoner one of the chief warriors of the Delaware band.

"Is Stony-heart become a mule," said he with a grin, "that he carries bales and blankets upon his back?"

To this taunt Stony-heart did not deign to reply, and a brief conversation ensued among the Osages; after which their leader came again to him, and having searched his dress, satisfied himself that the Delaware had no other arms

with him than a knife and a small pistol concealed in his belt. The former he left untouched, but the latter he dipped in the creek until it was thoroughly soaked, and then returned it to the owner, whom, having now released from his hands, he thus addressed:

"Stony-heart may return to his people; he is free; and he may tell Wingenund that the Washashe know how to repay a good deed, as well as to revenge a bad one. Stony-heart may go!"

The Delaware waited no second bidding, but returned with all haste towards his camp, being obliged to swim the river, and muttering to himself, after he had crossed it, "I told Baptiste that no good could ever come of sparing the lives of those Washashe dogs!" such being the only gratitude that he either felt or expressed for the clemency that he had just experienced at their hands!

Soon after his departure, the Osages turned their attention to Besha, sternly questioning him as to the part he had taken in their late chief's dispute with Wingenund; and in spite of all his protestations of impartiality and innocence, they stripped him of every article of clothing save his moccasins, and gave him a most severe flogging with a laryette of bull's-hide, after which they decamped, leaving him still pinioned, and writhing with pain, while they carried with them his attendant, whom they compelled to load and arrange the packs upon the horses, and to lead the latter for the first dozen miles of their route; after which they permitted him to return to release his master, who crawled back with difficulty, before daylight, to the Crow camp, having reaped the reward of his intrigues, cunning, and avarice, in the loss of all his presents, two of his best horses, and a flogging, from the effects of which he suffered for a long time.

CHAPTER XLVII.

The Scene is shifted to the Banks of the Muskingum, and Prairie-bird returns to the Home of her Childhood.

ABOUT two months after the events related in the preceding chapters, there was an unusual stir and bustle in the town of Marietta, and half a score of its principal inhabitants were assembled in front of David Muir's house, to witness the landing of the crew and passengers belonging to a large boat that had just arrived at the wooden pier which projected into the river.

Foremost of a busy group at the water's edge was the sturdy form of Gregson the mate, whose orders respecting the bringing-to, and making fast, were implicitly obeyed; and when at length she was securely moored alongside the pier, numerous and hearty were the greetings between those who stepped ashore from her, and the friends from whom they had been so long severed.

"Bearskin, how are you? my old fresh-water porpoise!" said the mate, squeezing the hard hand of the Mississippi boatman. "How fares it, messmate?"

"All right now, my hearty; but we've had some foul weather since I saw you last."

"Ay, I see!" said the mate, observing the scars upon his old companion's face and forehead; "you've been snagged, and damaged your figure-head a bit: never mind that; we'll have all that yam out by-and-by over a bottle of David's best. See, here he comes to welcome you yourself!"

Leaving David Muir and Bearskin to their mutual greetings, the mate returned to the water-side and lent his powerful assistance to the landing of the cargo of the heavily-laden boat; and certainly, a more strange or heterogeneous mixture of animate and inanimate stock never came out of any vessel since the disembarkation from the ark. Skins, furs, bows, rifles, moccasins, and Indian curiosities of every description, were piled near the bows, while in the after-part were stowed provisions of all kinds, and kegs, which were by no means so full as they were when the boat left St. Louis.

The appearance, language, and costume of the crew would baffle any attempt at description, inasmuch as each sunburnt, unshaved individual composing it, had equipped and attired himself according to his own fancy, and according to the contents of his remaining wardrobe after a long sojourn in the western wilderness and when it is remembered that these hardy fellows were from all the varied clans and nations found between the sources and the mouth of the "Father of Waters," it is not surprising that their mingled jargon should have struck upon the ear like the dialects of Babel in the day of its confusion. There were half-breed Creeks and Cherokees; Canadians, some with no little admixture of Chippeway blood; others, proud of their pure French descent: there were also some of the rough boatmen, who had already migrated to the banks of the Great River, where it washes the western boundaries of what are now the States of Kentucky and Illinois; and a raw-boned, sinewy fellow, who acted as a sort of second mate, was giving instructions in broad Scotch, to a dark-eyed and diminutive individual, who replied to him in bad Spanish. Above the din of all these multifarious tongues, was heard the shrill and incessant voice of Monsieur Perrot, who was labouring with indefatigable zeal to collect his master's baggage, and to put it safely ashore.

This he was at length enabled to effect with the aid of David Muir and the mate; after which the articles destined for Mooshanne were piled in readiness for the wagon which was to convey them, and the remainder found their way by degrees to their respective destinations.

When at last the good-humoured valet found himself comfortably seated in the merchant's parlour with the worthy man himself, Dame Christie, Jessie, and the mate, for his audience, and a bottle of madeira, with some fried ham and fresh eggs upon the table, he gave a sigh, the importance of which was lost upon none of those present, and he looked from one to the other with the conscious superiority of a man who knows how much he has to tell.

It is not our province to follow him through the "hair-breadth 'scapes," the "moving accidents by flood and field," with which he set his astonished hearers "all agape;" the only portion of his narrative which it concerns us to know, is that which referred to the movements of Reginald Brandon and the remainder of his party, who might, according to Monsieur Perrot's account, be almost daily expected at Mooshanne, as they had left St. Louis and crossed its ferry with tent, baggage, and a large cavalcade, on the day of his embarkation in the great "Bat-teau."

It was so long since Monsieur Perrot had tasted any liquid with a flavour like that of the merchant's madeira, that he sipped and talked,

talked and sipped, without noting the lapse of time, and the evening was already far advanced before he thought of rising to take his departure for Mooshaane; even then, David Muir pressed him so strongly to remain with him over-night, and continue his journey on the following morning, that Monsieur Perrot found himself quite unable to resist accepting the invitation; especially as he thought that another day or two might probably elapse before the return of Reginald; and, moreover, the bright eyes of Jessie Muir looked a thousand times brighter from the contrast that her beauty afforded to the swart dusky complexions by which he had so lately been surrounded.

Leaving the merry Frenchman and his still wondering auditors in David's parlour, we will proceed without delay to Mooshaane, where it happened that, about four o'clock on the same afternoon, a single horseman sprang from the animal that, to judge from its appearance, had carried him far and fast, and, having rung the door-bell, waited not for any one to answer it, but walked straight into the vestibule.

The bell was still ringing when the door of the drawing-room was slightly opened that the blue eyes of Lucy might herself reconnoitre the new comer; the next moment saw her in her brother's arms.

"Dear, dear Reginald! 'tis he, 'tis he, indeed!" and she drew him into the room that her father might share her rapturous joy.

While the Colonel pressed his son to his heart in a fond paternal embrace, Lucy ran up stairs to prepare the more delicate nerves of her invalid mother for the shock of happiness that awaited her.

Scarcely were these first affectionate greetings exchanged, ere Lucy inquired with expectant eagerness, "When will they arrive?—how far off are they, Reginald?"

"They cannot now be long; I think within a couple of hours they must be here. If I mistake not, Lucy, there is one of the party who begrudged me not a little my office of *avant-courier*."

Lucy blushed "celestial rosy red, love's proper hue," as she felt how her heart leaped within her to meet the one to whom her brother referred; and she hastened away to conceal her mingled confusion and happiness, in the thousand little details of preparation for her expected guests.

It may be as well here to mention, that immediately on reaching St. Louis, Reginald had dispatched a messenger on horseback to his father with a letter, containing the outline of the events connected with his western expedition, and informing him of the rescue of Prairie-bird, and of the attachment that existed between her and himself. He spoke not of her parentage, further than to say that she had been carried off in childhood from her own family, who were of a lineage and descent altogether unexceptionable; and he entreated and conjured his father not to entertain, nor pronounce any objection to his proposed alliance, until he had an opportunity of seeing, hearing, and judging for himself.

Reginald had also insisted upon Ethelston's abstaining from this topic in any letter that he might wish to send from St. Louis, and the Colonel had thought it advisable to say nothing to Lucy of her brother's attachment, while there remained a doubt of its being such as he could approve or sanction; so that he had only informed her that the party would bring back with

them Prairie-bird, whom the young Delaware had mentioned so often as his sister, but who was, in fact, the daughter of English parents, of the highest respectability; and that she would be accompanied by Paul Müller, a missionary, whose reputation for piety and learning was extensively spread, and who had been, since her residence with the Indians, her instructor and adopted father.

Lucy's curiosity to see Prairie-bird had been, since the arrival of her brother's letter, extraordinarily excited. Sometimes she fancied her a half-wild, half-civilized being clad in a dress of skins, and speaking broken English. Then again she was puzzled at the remembrance of the affectionate reverence, almost amounting to worship, with which Wingenund had spoken of her, and again her calculation was at fault. Under these doubts and perplexities, she consulted Aunt Mary, and with her aid and concurrence had prepared for her expected guest a room upon the ground floor, that looked upon her own flower-garden. Its furniture was simple, but exceedingly pretty, being a kind of representation of a tent, of an octagon shape, and hung with a delicate-coloured pink chintz.

The view from the windows was lovely; for although the flowery parterres had lost their brightest summer hues, a few roses still lingered among them, contrasting with the thousand autumnal colours that decked the shady mass of distant forests, between which and the flower-garden was seen here and there, through a leafy vista, the winding course of the Muskingum. Lucy had decked the interior of the room with all those nameless comforts and luxuries that betoken woman's affectionate care; several shelves were covered with well-selected books, and two china baskets upon the table were filled with such flowers as the indefatigable Aunt Mary had placed there, unconscious for whom she gathered them.

As soon as Reginald had enjoyed a short interview with his mother, whose health, though still delicate, had somewhat improved since he had last seen her, Lucy entered, and taking him by the arm, said, "Come, Reginald, you must inspect my preparations. See, this is your own room, which you will find rather more gay than when you left it, as Aunt Mary would have it new-papered. That beyond is destined, as before, for Ed—for Ethelston."

"Has Aunt Mary thought it requisite to new-paper that, too, or did it occur to Miss Lucy without her aunt's suggestion?"

Lucy punished him with a slight pinch on the arm; and then, leading him down the stairs to the tent apartment, said to him, "Now, sir, I will show you what I have prepared for your Indian lady; this is Prairie-bird's room."

The tell-tale blood rushed into Reginald's bronzed and sunburned cheek, as he stood within the room destined to contain his heart's treasure; thoughts far too sweet, and deep, and swift for words, mingled the past and the future in a delicious dream, as bending over his sister he kissed her fair forehead, and pressed her in silence to his heart.

With the intuitive quickness of sympathy, Lucy read in that expressive silence the secret of her brother's breast; and looking up to him, half reproachfully, she said, "Reginald, could not you have trusted your Lucy so far, as to tell her that Prairie-bird would have a dearer title to her affections than that of being Wingenund's

sister, or the child of the Missionary's adoption?"

"Dear Lucy!" replied her brother, with an impressive earnestness, that reassured while it awed her, "there has been so much of the mysterious and merciful working of Providence in the history of Prairie-bird, that I am sure you will forgive me when I ask you to wait a few hours before all is explained to you. Meanwhile, receive her, for these few hours, as a guest; if at the end of them you do not love her as a sister, my prophetic spirit errs widely of its mark."

Lucy saw well how deeply her brother's feelings were moved, and she prayed inwardly that her expected guest might fulfil his prophecy. It must be owned, however, that there lurked a doubt in her heart whether it could be possible that a girl reared in an Indian camp could be to her a sister, or could be worthy of that brother, whom her fond partiality clothed with attributes beyond those which belong to ordinary mortals. Her affection for Reginald would not permit her to let him perceive these doubts; but fearful of betraying them by her manner, she left him in the room destined for Prairie-bird, while she hastened to aid the indefatigable Aunt Mary in some of the other preparations that were going forward; the Colonel having given orders that the whole party, of whatever rank or station, should be hospitably entertained.

Reginald was no sooner left alone, than casting his eyes around the room, a sudden idea occurred to him of preparing an agreeable surprise for his betrothed on her entrance to her new domicile. He remembered having seen below, in the drawing-room, a Spanish guitar, which he lost no time in securing; and having taken it from the case, he ascertained that it was a very fine instrument, and that the strings were in very tolerable order. He now laid it upon the sofa-table in her room, placing beside it a slip of paper which he took from his pocket, and which seemed, from its soiled and crumpled condition, to have suffered not a little from the various wettings to which, during the past months of travel, it had been exposed. Still he lingered in the room, noting with satisfaction the various trifling luxuries and comforts which his sister had prepared for Prairie-bird, when suddenly he caught the sound of a bugle-note, in which he instantly recognised the signal to be given by Baptiste of the party's approach.

How did his heart beat within him as he flew to welcome them; yet were its throbbing pulsations like the quiet of sleep compared to those of the maiden, who now drew near the home of her infancy. Ethelston had leaped to the ground, and half supported her in the saddle with one hand, while with the other he checked Nekimi, whose impatient neigh betrayed his remembrance of the corn-bin, and the well-known stall.

"Edward—Edward, I cannot go through this!" said the half-fainting girl. "My thoughts are all confused—my brain turns round—see, there is the house! I cannot remember it. O, stay a minute—only one minute, that I may recover myself!"

"Dear Evy!" said her brother, looking up while she leaned affectionately upon his shoulder, "it is natural that your thoughts should be mingled and confused, but let them not be gloomy now! The house is so changed within the last ten years, that had you built it yourself you could not recognise it in its present state. Al-

ready I can distinguish dear Aunt Mary's white cap and apron; and Lucy, longing to embrace a sister; the grey locks of the stately Colonel, and one beside him, who will not be the last to welcome Prairie-bird!"

"I can distinguish nothing, Edward; there is a mist before my eyes; but it is a mist of love and happiness unspeakable!"

"Courage, dear Evy!" said her brother in a cheering tone; "let them not think that Prairie-bird draws near with slow, unwilling step, and that her heart regrets the change from the prairie to the scenes of her childhood, and the home of her choice!"

"Edward!" said his sister reproachfully, while a tear started in her eye, and the blood mounted to her temples; then shaking back the dark locks from her glowing cheeks, as if she would thereby shake off the temporary weakness by which she had been overcome, she added, "Remount your horse; we have yet some hundred feet to go; if Prairie-bird draws near with slow, unwilling step, it shall be Nekimi's fault, and not her own!"

So saying, she shook the loosened rein upon the neck of the fiery steed, which bounding forward with a spring that would have unseated a less practised rider, bore her swiftly to the door, where he stopped, obedient to her delicate hand, and champed, and frothed, and snorted, as if proud alike of his burden, and of his own matchless symmetry of form.

Never had her radiant beauty so thrilled through Reginald's every nerve as at this moment, when, lightly touching his proffered arm, she sprang to the ground; her cheek glowing with agitation, and her eye moistened by contending emotions, she interchanged with him one silent look of conscious love, and then turned, with gentle grace, to receive the greeting of Colonel Brandon.

We have before said that he had been far from pleased with the contemplated alliance of his son, and had made up his mind to receive Prairie-bird with cold and studied courtesy, nor to treat her otherwise than as an ordinary guest; until he should have satisfied himself respecting her birth and connexions; but, in spite of himself, these resolutions vanished before the irresistible attractions of her manner and bearing, so that instead of only extending his hand as he had proposed, he imprinted a parental kiss upon her forehead, saying,

"Welcome, heartily and truly welcome to Mooshanne!"

She tried to speak, but she looked on the half-remembered features of Reginald's father, and her collected strength began to fail. At this moment she was greeted by Lucy, whom she already knew to be the chosen of her brother's heart.

"Prairie-bird must learn to love her sister!" whispered she, folding her in an affectionate embrace.

"Learn, Lucy!" replied Prairie-bird, whose tears could no longer be controlled. "Learn I can a few years have so changed our faces and our hearts, that Lucy and Evy must now learn to love each other!"

Before the astonished girl could reply, Aunt Mary, darting forward with frantic haste, exclaimed, "What voice is that?" Then catching Prairie-bird by the arm, examined with wild intensity every line of her countenance. As she looked, the tears gathered in her own eyes, her frame trembled with agitation, and she fell upon

her neck, saying, "'Tis she—'tis my poor brother's long-lost child!"

Lucy's heart told her that it was so indeed: Colonel Brandon was overcome with astonishment; but he read in the looks of Reginald and Ethelston that the lost treasure was restored; and as memory retraced in the features of Prairie-bird those of his attached and lamented friend, he, too, was unmanned; and grasping Ethelston's hand, wrung it with an emotion beyond the power of words.

The news spread like wild-fire throughout the house that Captain Ethelston's sister was returned; and Lucy was obliged to run with all speed to her mother's room to prevent a sudden shock of joy that might affect her weakly nerves. Is it possible to describe, or imagine the transports of the succeeding hour in that happy circle! or the caresses showered upon Prairie-bird! What word would the pen or tongue employ? "Congratulations!" As well might one attempt to represent Niagara by the water poured from a pitcher!

We will trust that hour to the reader's heart, and will suppose it past, and that Lucy, with still tearful eyes, and her arm still round her recovered sister's neck, was leading her from the room where she had just knelt to receive Mrs. Brandon's maternal kiss, when, in passing a half-open door, Lucy said, "Evy, that is your brother's room; but he is not in it, he is still on the lawn."

"Oh! I must look into Edward's room," exclaimed Prairie-bird; and opening the door, she entered, followed by Lucy. A rifle, a fowling-piece, and a fishing-rod stood in one corner; over them were ranged several pair of pistols, and two or three cutlasses, apparently of foreign workmanship; in the opposite corner, near the window, was a globe, by the side of which stood a case filled with naval charts; on the other side of the room was ranged a row of shelves well stored with books, and the writing-table in the centre was covered with papers all neatly tied and docketed, as he had left them at his last departure.

Prairie-bird's eye wandered with a certain degree of interest over all these indications of her brother's habits until it rested upon a small portrait hung over the chimney-piece. It represented a man of middle age and stature, and, although the painting was scarcely above mediocrity as a work of art, the expression of the countenance was strikingly open and benevolent. Prairie-bird gazed upon it until she thought that the mild orbs upon the inanimate canvas returned her affectionate gaze. With clasped hands and beating heart, she stood awhile silent, and then sinking on her knees, without removing her eyes from the object upon which they rested, she murmured, in a whisper scarcely audible, "My Father!"

It was indeed the portrait of his lamented friend that Colonel Brandon had kindly placed in Ethelston's room, a circumstance which had escaped Lucy's memory at the moment of her entering it.

Stooping over her kneeling companion, she kissed her forehead, saying, "Evy, I will leave you for a few minutes to commune with the memory of the honoured dead; you will find me in the vestibule below." So saying, she gently closed the door, and left the room.

In less than a quarter of an hour Prairie-bird rejoined her friend, and though the traces of re-

cent emotion were still to be observed, she had recovered her composure, and her countenance wore an expression of grateful happiness.

"Come, Evy," said her young hostess, "I must now show you your own room; the cage is not half pretty enough for so sweet a bird, but it opens upon the flower-garden, so you can escape when you will, and your dear good Paul Müller is your next neighbour."

An exclamation of delight broke from the lips of Prairie-bird as she entered and looked round the tented apartment, and all its little comforts prepared by Lucy's taste and affection. Fortunately, the day was beautiful, and the casement windows being wide open, her eye caught, beyond the flower-garden, a view of the distant mass of forest, with its thousand varied autumnal tints, reposing in the golden light of the declining sun.

"Oh, it is too, too beautiful!" said Prairie-bird, throwing her arms around Lucy's neck; "I can scarcely believe that this is not all a dream!"

"There have indeed been some fairies here, or some such beings as dwell in dreams, Evy," said Lucy, whose eye fell upon the guitar lying on the table, "for I left this room a short time ago, and this instrument was not here then. Who can have brought it?—can you play upon it, Evy?"

"A little," replied Prairie-bird, colouring.

"And see," continued Lucy, "here is a scrap of paper beside it, so soiled and dirty that I should have put it in the fire had I seen it before; do you know the hand-writing, Evy?"

As Lucy said this she looked archly up in her friend's face, now glowing with a rosy blush.

"Well, you need not answer, for methinks I know it myself; may I unfold the paper, and read its contents? What, no answer yet; then I must take your silence for consent."

Thus saying, she opened the paper, while Prairie-bird, blushing still more deeply, glanced at it with longing but half-averted eyes.

"Verses, I declare!" exclaimed Lucy. "Why, Evy, what magic art have you employed to transform my Nimrod brother, the wild huntsman of the west, the tamer of horses, and the slayer of deer, into a poet?"

She then proceeded to read in a voice of deep feeling, the following stanzas, which, although without any pretensions to poetical merit in themselves, found such acceptance with their present warm-hearted and partial judges, that, at the conclusion of their perusal, the two girls fell upon each other's neck, and remained locked in a silent and affectionate embrace.

On overhearing Prairie-bird's Evening Hymn, "HALLOWED BE THY NAME."

Yes, hallowed be His Holy Name,
Who formed thee what thou art!
Whose breath inspired the heav'nly flame
Now kindled in thy heart!
Whose love o'erflowing in thy breast
These vocal raptures stirred—
Whose angels hover round thy nest,
Thou orphan Prairie-bird!

Methinks, I see that guardian throng
Still mirrored in thy face!
Thy voice hath stol'n their angel-song,
Thy form their angel-grace—
Oh breathe once more that plaintive strain,
Whose every tone and word,
Deep-treasured in my heart and brain
Shall dwell, sweet Prairie-bird!

R. B.

Delaware and Osage Camp, Tuesday night.

On the following day the family party at Mooshaunne were assembled at luncheon under a large tree, on the banks of the Muskingum, from beneath the shade of which the gables and irregular chimneys of the house were seen through occasional openings in Lucy's shrubbery; while the deep river flowed silently onward, bearing away in its tranquil course the early tribute of autumn showered upon it by the light breath of the western wind.

Already had Prairie-bird visited the spot where her father's house had stood, the site of which was only to be recognized by a few heaps of stones and blackened timbers, over which the luxuriant mosses and lichens, with which that region abounds, had long since cast their mantle of green, while a few apple, plum, and peach trees, unprotected by hedge or fence, still showed "where once the garden smiled."

Colonel Brandon had not thought it advisable to rebuild either the house or the offices after their destruction by the savages, but had contented himself with a careful administration of his late friend's property, leaving it to his son Edward to choose a site for his residence at a later period. Neither must it be supposed that our heroine had omitted to pay a morning visit to Nekimi, who now knew her voice, and obeyed her call like an affectionate and faithful dog. As soon as she came to the stable, into which he had been turned without halter or fastening of any kind, the generous animal, after saluting her with a neigh of recognition, rubbed his broad forehead against her shoulder, and playfully nibbled the grains of the head of maize which she held out to him; but even that he did not venture to do until he had acquired a claim to it by holding one of his feet up and pawing with it until she let it rest in her delicate hand. It must assuredly have been by mere accident that Reginald entered while she was thus employed, and reminded her how he had, with prescient hope, foretold this very scene amongst the rocky cliffs of the far distant Andes. Well did Prairie-bird remember the spot, and every syllable of that prophecy; neither did she affect to have forgotten it, but with a sweet blush held out one hand to her lover, while the other still played with the alien tresses of Nekimi's mane.

What a delightful occupation is it to caress a dumb favourite by the side of one beloved, when the words of endearing tenderness lavished on the unconscious pet are the outpourings of a heart sensitively shrinking from addressing them directly to their real object! and if it be true that many a sleek and glossy spaniel has thus received the caress intended for its owner, how much more natural was it that Reginald and Prairie-bird should find pleasure in bestowing their caresses on a noble animal endeared to them by so many associations; for while she remembered how often Nekimi had borne him in the chase and in the fight, he was not likely to forget with how true and unwearied a step the faithful steed had carried his betrothed over many hundred miles of mountain and of prairie; and even now, as her hand rested in his, both by a conscious sympathy thought of Nekimi's former generous lord, and breathed a sigh over War-Eagle's untimely fate.

To return to our party assembled round the luncheon table under the venerable tree. The first tumult of joy had subsided, and was succeeded by a feeling of more assured happiness, "a sober certainty of waking bliss," which per-

vaded every breast. Aunt Mary contemplated her lovely niece with looks of the fondest affection, recalling in her sweet smile and in the expression of her features the beloved brother, whose loss she had with deep but chastened grief for many years deplored; for a few minutes there was a general silence; one of those pauses in which each member of the party pondered, as if by a common sympathy, on the wonderful events which had led to their reunion, Lucy was the first to break it.

"Reginald," said she, "you related to us yesterday evening the commencement of your homeward journey, and how the Delaware called 'Stony-heart' was permitted by the Osages to return unhurt to your camp: you must resume the thread of your tale where you left it, and tell us especially how and where you parted from dear Wingenund, to whom we all owe a debt of gratitude greater than we can ever pay."

"That do we indeed, Lucy," replied her brother earnestly; "fortunate too is it that deeds of generous self-devotion like those done by Wingenund reward themselves, and that a debt of gratitude to one whom we love is a treasure, not a load upon the breast. You remember how a writer, who used to be a favourite with you, has expressed it:

"A grateful mind
By owing owes not, but still pays, at once
Indebted and discharged."

"What a beautiful thought!" exclaimed Prairie-bird eagerly; "tell me the book wherein I may find it written. Such a lovely flower as that cannot surely grow alone; there must be others of similar beauty near it."

"There are, indeed; fresh, fragrant, and abundant as on a western prairie in June; 'Paradise Lost' is the garden wherein they grow; many of the descriptions contained in it are among the most beautiful in our language; I hope ere long to read them to and with you, dearest," he added in a whisper, intended for her ear alone; "there are some lines descriptive of Eve as she first appeared to Adam, which always seemed to me exaggerated until you taught my eye to see and my heart to feel their truth."

With a deep blush Prairie-bird cast her dark eyes upon the ground, while Reginald continued aloud, again addressing himself to Lucy:

"Our own adventures after we crossed the Platte river are scarcely worth relating; for, although we had a few alarms from wandering parties of Pawnees, Omahaws, and Dahcotahs, our band was too strong and too well armed to fear anything from their open attack; and the ever-watchful care and sagacity of Wingenund left them no chance of surprising us.

"The warlike spirit and experience of his noble brother seemed to have descended, like Elijah's mantle, upon the youth; and feeling the responsibility that attached to him as leader of the party, he allowed himself little rest either by day or by night, setting the watches himself, and visiting them repeatedly at intervals to ascertain that they were on the alert. He always came to our camp-fire in the evening, and I observed that he daily became more interested in the conversation of our worthy friend the Missionary, and more anxious to understand the principles and truths of Christianity; in so doing he was not only following the bent of his own amiable and gentle disposition, but he felt a secret pleasure in the remembrance that he

was fulfilling the last wishes of his dying brother. I dare say Paul Müller would now tell you that he would be thankful indeed if the average of professing Christians understood and practised the precepts of their creed as faithfully as Wingenund."

"That would I in truth, my son," replied the Missionary; "nevertheless I cannot claim the honour of having been the instrument of the conversion of the Delaware youth or his brother; it was effected, under the blessing of Heaven, by the patient, zealous, and affectionate exertion of Prairie-bird."

"Nay, my dear father, you do yourself grievous wrong in so speaking," said Prairie-bird, reproachfully; "and even were it as you say, to whom do I owe everything that I know? whom have I to thank that I was not left in the dark and hapless condition of the females by whom I have so long been surrounded?"

The tears gathered in her eyes as she spoke, and she pressed affectionately to her lips the hand which her adopted father extended to her.

"Yes, my sister speaks only the truth," said Ethelston, addressing the Missionary in a voice of deep emotion; "we all feel how far beyond the power of words we are indebted to you for all that you have done for her, and we only trust that some opportunity may be afforded us of showing a deep, sincere, and permanent gratitude that we are unable to express."

Colonel Brandon, and every one of the family circle, rose as by a common impulse, and one by one confirmed, by a silent pressure of the hand, the sentiment expressed by Ethelston. The venerable man, uncovering his head, and allowing the breeze to waive to and fro his silver locks, looked for a minute upon the kindred group before him, and thus addressed them:

"Think you not, my friends, that this scene, these happy faces, and this happy home, might well reward any degree or duration of earthly toil? But toil there has been none, for the teaching and nurture of this sweet child has been from the first a labour of love; and the only pain or regret that she has ever caused me, is that which I now feel, when I recollect that I must resign her into the hands of her natural guardians, and return to my appointed task, the occasional troubles of which will not any more be sweetened by her presence, nor its vexations be soothed by her affection. Such, however, is the will of Him whom I serve, and far be it from me to repine."

"Nay," interrupted Reginald, eagerly, "you will not leave us yet. After the fatigues and trials of this summer, you will surely give yourself some repose."

"My son, I would gladly dwell awhile in this pleasant and happy abode; but I must not leave Wingenund to contend unaided against the difficulties by which his present path will be beset, the doubts and temptations which may assail him from within, and the sneers or scorn he may experience from the more proud and violent spirits of his tribe."

"There is, however, one service that you have promised to render before you take your departure from Mooshanne. Perhaps there are others here beside myself who will urge you to its faithful performance."

This bold speech threw the whole party into

momentary confusion. Prairie-bird, pretending to whisper to the Missionary, hid her blushing face upon his shoulder; the conscious eyes of Ethelston and Lucy met; while Aunt Mary bestowed upon Colonel Brandon one of those knowing smiles with which elderly ladies usually think fit to accompany matrimonial allusions.

The awkwardness was of short duration, for the mutual feelings of the parties betrothed were no secret to any present; and Reginald was not of a disposition to endure unnecessary delays, so he drew Prairie-bird with gentle force towards her brother, and still retaining her hand in his own, he said, "Ethelston, will you, as guardian of your sister, consent to my retaining this fair hand? Beware how you reply, lest I should use my influence against you in a request which you may make to my father."

Had Ethelston, been ignorant of his sister's feelings, he might have read them in the expression of her blushing countenance; but being already in full possession of them, and meeting a smile of approval from Colonel Brandon, he placed his sister's hand within that of Reginald, saying, "Take her, Reginald, and be to her as a husband, true, faithful, and affectionate, as you have been to me as a friend."

It will not be supposed that Ethelston waited long for the consent of either her father or brother to his union with Lucy; and Paul Müller agreed to remain at Mooshanne one week, at the end of which time the double ceremony was to take place.

While these interesting arrangements were in progress, the noise of wheels, and the tramp of many horses, announced the approach of a large party; upon which Colonel Brandon, accompanied by the Missionary and Aunt Mary, went to see who the new comers might be, leaving the two young couples to follow at their leisure. The Colonel was not long kept in suspense as to the quality of his visitors, for before reaching the house, he heard the broad accent of David Muir's voice addressing Reginald's attendant.

"Thank ye, thank ye, Maister Parrot," for so did he pronounce the Frenchman's name; "if ye'll just haud the uncanny beast by the head, Jessie can step on the wheel an' be doon in a crack. There, I tauld ye so; it's a' right noo; and Jessie, lass, ye need na' look sae frightened, for your new gown's nae rumpled, an Hairy will tak' the bit parcel into the house for ye."

"Indeed, father, I am not frightened," said Jessie, settling the side curls under her bonnet upon her glowing cheek, and giving the parcel to Henry Gregson, whose hands had for the moment encircled her waist as she jumped from the wheel to the ground. Several vehicles of various descriptions followed, containing the spoils and baggage brought back from the prairies, together with Pierre, Bearskin, and all the members of the party who had accompanied Reginald and Ethelston, and who now came to offer their congratulation on the events attending their safe return; for the story of the wonderful restoration of Ethelston's sister to her family had already spread throughout the neighbourhood, receiving as it went various additions and embellishments from the lovers of the marvellous.

Meanwhile, Jessie Muir had gathered from Monsieur Perrot sufficient information respecting the true state of affairs, to set her mind at rest with respect to Reginald Brandon's intentions; and encouraged by the interest which the Colonel and Lucy had always taken in her prospects, she felt a secret assurance that they would prove powerful auxiliaries in advocating the cause of Harry Gregson, and reconciling her parents to his suit. Neither was she mistaken in her calculation, for while the preparation for the entertainment of the numerous guests was going forward, Colonel Brandon, after a brief consultation with Ethelston, called David Muir aside, and opened to him the subject of the youth's attachment to his daughter.

It is difficult to say whether the surprise, or the wrath of the merchant were the greater on hearing this intelligence, which was not only a death-blow to his own ambitious hopes, but was, in his estimation, an act of unpardonable presumption on the part of young Gregson.

"Colonel, ye're surely no in earnest! it's no possible! Jessie, come here, ye hizzie!" said he, stamping with anger, and raising his voice to a louder pitch.

It happened that Jessie, being engaged in conversation with Monsieur Perrot, did not hear his call, and the Colonel took the opportunity of leading him a little further from the house, and entreating his calm attention to the explanations which he had to give. David walked on in silence, his face still red with anger, and his heart secretly trembling within him when he thought of his next interview with Dame Christie.

The Colonel, who knew both the weak and the good points of his companion's character, dexterously availing himself of both, effected in a few minutes a considerable change in his views and feelings on the subject. He represented to him that Ethelston would now have a house and establishment of his own; that his property was already very considerable, and, with prudent management, would receive gradual augmentation; and that, from his attachment to Gregson, it was his intention to make the honest mate's son the managing agent of his concerns; to facilitate which purpose he, Colonel Brandon, proposed to advance a few thousand dollars, and to establish the young man in a suitable house in Marietta.

"David," continued the Colonel, "you and I have long been acquainted; and I do not think you ever yet knew me to give you counsel likely to injure your welfare or your prospects, and you may trust me that I would not willingly do so now. The young people are attached to each other; they may certainly be separated by force; but their hearts are already united. Harry is an honest, industrious, enterprising lad; he will start in the world with fair prospects; every year will lend him experience; and as you and I are both of us on the wrong side of fifty, we may be very glad a few summers hence to rest from active business, and to have about us those to whom we can entrust our affairs with well-placed confidence."

There was much in this speech that tended to soothe, as well as to convince, the merchant. He was gratified by the familiar and friendly expressions employed by the Colonel, while his shrewd understanding took in at a rapid glance

the prospective advantages that might accrue to the agent managing the extensive affairs of the families of Brandon and Ethelston; added to this, he was at heart a fond and affectionate father; and the symptoms of irritation began to disappear from his countenance; yet he scarcely knew how to reply, and before even he meant to speak, the name of his gude-wife escaped from his lips.

"Leave me to manage Dame Christie," said the Colonel, smiling. "Ethelston shall go into Marietta himself, and break the subject to her, founding his request upon his regard for the elder Gregson, who has served under him so faithfully ever since his boyhood. Come, my good friend, let us join the party: I do not press you for any reply now; but if you should detect a stolen glance of affection between the young people, do not be angry with Jessie, but think of the day when you first went forth, dressed in your best, to win a smile from Dame Christie."

"Ah, Colonel, ye're speakin' of auld lang syne now!" said the merchant, whose ill-humour was no longer proof against the friendly suggestions of his patron, though he muttered to himself, in an undertone, as they returned towards the house, "I ken now why Maister Hairy was aye sae fond o' the store, when the ither lads were fain to win' awa to hunt in the woods, or to fish in the river! Weel a weel, he's a douce callant, an' the lassie might aiblins gae farther an' fare waur!"

The preparations for the entertainment were still in progress, under the superintendence of Aunt Mary and Monsieur Perrot, the latter having already doffed his travelling attire, and assumed, in his jacket of snowy white, the command of the kitchen, when Harry Gregson, who had opened the Marietta post-bag, put a letter into the hands of Reginald Brandon, which he instantly knew, by the bold, careless handwriting, to be from his uncle Marmaduke. He broke the seal, and read as follows:—

"Shirley Hall, July 15.

"DEAR REGINALD,

"I have very lately received your letter, announcing your intention of making a hunting excursion in the west, in pursuit of bears, elk, wolves, Indians, and other wild beasts. I hope you'll come safe back, with a score or two of their outlandish brushes. After you left me, I began to feel very uncomfortable, and did not know what was the matter, for I was cold by night, and sulky and out of sorts by day. Parson Williams took me in hand; but though we drank many a bottle of old port together, and played drafts, and attended several road-meetings (which you know was an amusement I had never tried before), it was all no use, and I began to think that I was on a down-hill road to the next world; but, somehow or other, it happened that I dropped in now and then to the parsonage, and whenever I had talked half an hour with Margaret, (you remember Margaret, the parson's daughter,) I felt in a better humour with myself and all the world. So matters went on, until one day I mustered courage to ask her to come up to the hall, and change her name to Shirley. She did so, and you old uncle writes with the halter round his neck. When I married, Perkins came down from

London (the son of my father's solicitor) with a dozen boxes of parchment, in a post-chaise; and made me sign my name at least a score of times; after which I desired him to draw up two more deeds for my pleasure. These were for transferring to yourself, and to your sister, a legacy left me a few years ago by an old relation whom I had never seen, and whose money I did not want. The amount is forty thousand pounds; so there will be twenty thousand pounds a-piece for you, and you may set to work and clear (as you used to call it) an estate as big as the old county of Warwick. I explained what I was about to Meg, telling her, at the same time, that it was a debt that I owed you in conscience, having considered you for so many years as my heir, until her glaring black eyes made a fool of me, and threatened me with the prospect of brats of my own. For this she pulled my ears twice; first, for calling her Meg instead of Greta, by which name she was known at the parsonage; and secondly, for talking about the brats, a subject which always makes her cheeks redden. But I had no idea of putting the reins into her hand so early in the day, and I told her outright, that the first boy should be called Reginald, to please me; and the second might be called Greta, to please her; and the third might be called Marmaduke, to please the family; on which, without waiting to hear any more, she bolted, and left me master of the field. I have just mentioned this, in order that you, if ever you get into a similar scrape, may know how to behave yourself. Mr. Perkins has completed his deeds of assignment, and has received my instructions to transfer the money to America by the next vessel, in bills upon Messrs. Powell and Co. of Philadelphia; and though I have more than once found you as proud and as straight-laced as a turkey-cock where money was concerned, I know that you dare not, you dog!—I say you dare not refuse, either for yourself or your sister, this token of the affectionate regard of your uncle,

"MARMADUKE SHIRLEY."

The flush that came over Reginald's open countenance as he read this epistle from his eccentric but warm-hearted relative, did not escape the watchful eye of Lucy, who was standing near him, and she anxiously inquired whether it contained any unpleasant intelligence.

"Read it, Lucy, and judge for yourself," he replied, while he went to communicate its contents to Colonel Brandon.

We will leave to the reader's imagination the mirth and festivity that reigned at Mooshanne during that happy evening; how Pierre, Baptiste, and Bearskin talked over their adventures of ancient and of recent date; how David Muir's grey eye twinkled when he detected Jessie exchanging a stolen glance with Harry Gregson; how the cheers rang through the forest when the Colonel proposed the health of Prairie-bird, the long-lost child of his dearest friend, the bride of his only son; and how Aunt Mary's sweetmeats and preserves adorned her snowy table-cloth; and how Monsieur Ferrot had contrived, as if by magic, to load the hospitable board with every swimming, flying, and running eatable creature to be found in the neighbourhood, dressed in every known variety of form.

The healths of Ethelston and Colonel Brandon had not been forgotten; and the latter, observing a shade of melancholy upon his son's brow, said to him aloud, "Reginald, you have not yet given your friends a toast, they claim it of you now."

Thus addressed, Reginald, reading in the dark eyes of his betrothed, feelings kindred to his own, said in a voice of deep and undiagnosed emotion, "My friends, you will not blame me if I interrupt for a moment the current of your mirth, but it would be doing equal injustice, I am sure, to your feelings and to my own, were we to part without a tribute to the memory of one, now no more, to whose self-devoted heroism Ethelston owes the life of a sister, and I the dearest treasure I possess on earth: The memory of my Indian brother, War-Eagle, late Chief of the Delawares!"

The party rose in silence, every head was uncovered, a tear trembled on the long lashes of Prairie-bird's downcast eye, and Baptiste muttered to himself, yet loud enough to be heard by all present, as he reversed his glass, "Here's to the memory of the boldest hand, the fleetest foot, and the truest heart among the sons of the Lenapé!"

As the day was now drawing to a close, David Muir returned to Marietta, Ethelston having promised to pay a visit to Dame Christie on the following day. The Merchant was so elated by the day's festivities, that he winked his grey twinkling eye at Jessie, forgetting at the moment that she knew nothing of the conversation that had passed between the Colonel and himself; and when the youth in escorting them homeward, warned David of sundry holes and stumps upon the road, thereby enabling them to avoid them, he poked his elbow into Jessie's side, saying, "He's a canny lad, you Hairy Gregson; what think ye, Jessie?" She thought that her father was crazy, but she said nothing; and a certain vague sensation of hope came over her, that all was going more smoothly for her wishes than she had dared to expect.

For the ensuing week the whole village of Marietta was enlivened by the preparations for the two-fold wedding at Mooshanne; silks, ribbons, and trinkets without end were bought, and there was not a settlement within fifty miles in which the miraculous return of Reginald Brandon's bride was not the theme of discourse and wonder. Paul Müller became in a few days so universally beloved at Mooshanne, that all the members of the family shared in the regret with which Prairie-bird contemplated his approaching departure; and as they became more intimately acquainted with him, and drew from him the various information with which his mind was stored, they no longer marvelled at the education that he had found means, even in the wilderness, to bestow upon his adopted child. Colonel Brandon was extremely desirous to make him some present in token of the gratitude which he in common with all his family, felt towards the worthy Missionary, and spoke more than once with Reginald on the subject: but the latter stopped him, saying, "My dear father, leave us to manage that, we have entered into a secret conspiracy, and must entreat you not to forbid our carrying it into execution."

The Colonel smiled, and promised obedience, knowing that those in whose hands the matter rested, were more familiar with the good man's wants and wishes than he could be himself.

At length the week, long as it may have appeared to Reginald and Ethelston, passed away. The morning which united them to those whom they had respectively loved through so many trials and dangers, arrived; and Paul Müller, having joined the hand of his beloved pupil to the chosen of her heart, prepared to take his leave, when she knelt to him for his blessing. With faltering voice and tearful eyes he gave it; she could not speak, but pointing to a small box that stood upon an adjoining table, with a letter addressed to him beside it, yielded to the gentle force with which her bridegroom drew her from the room.

Taking up the letter, the Missionary read as follows:—

"Oh, my beloved preceptor and father, let me once again thank you for all your goodness and affectionate care! for to you, next to my Father in heaven, do I owe all my present happiness, and all my knowledge of that Saviour who is my everlasting hope and trust. My heart would sink under the thought of being separated from you, if I did not know that you are returned to my dear young brother Wingenund, to guide and assist him in the good path that he has chosen; tell him again and again how dearly we all love him, and that day after day, and night after night, he shall be remembered in his sister's prayers.

"I am sure you will not forsake him, but will give him your advice in teaching his Lenapé brothers, who have laid aside the tomahawk, to cultivate the earth, and to raise corn and other nourishing food for their little ones. You will also continue your favourite and blessed work of sowing among them, and the surrounding tribes, the light of the Gospel. Edward and Reginald tell me that for these objects nearest your heart, gold and silver can be usefully applied, and they desire me to treat your acceptance of this box containing a thousand dollars, one half to be expended as you may think best for spreading Christianity among our Indian brethren, and the other half in seeds, working-tools, and other things necessary for Wingenund and those who dwell with him.

"I hope you will come and see us at least once in every year, to tell us of the health and welfare of Wingenund. If you can bring him with you, the sight of him will make glad our eyes and hearts.

"Farewell, dear father. Forgive the faults in this letter, remembering, that although I have read so much to you and with you, I have had little practice in writing, and neither Reginald nor Edward will alter or correct one word for me; they both smile and say it will do very well; perhaps it may, for, without it, you know already how dearly you are loved and honoured by your affectionate and ever-grateful,

"PRAIRIE-BIRD."

SUPPLEMENTARY CHAPTER.

SUPPOSE the gentle reader to have taken sufficient interest in Prairie-bird to be desirous of learning something of the after fortunes of

herself, and those connected with her, we sub-join a letter which accidentally came into our possession, and which appears to have been written a few years subsequent to the date of the conclusion of the preceding tale.

"St. Louis, June 12th, 18—

"DEAR ETHELSTON,

"I have just returned from my long-promised visit to Wingenund, whose village is situated, as you know, not far from the southern banks of the Missouri, about one hundred miles beyond St. Charles's. I found there our respected and venerable friend Paul Müller, whose intercourse with Wingenund and his band has been for some years almost uninterrupted, and productive of the most striking improvement, both in the village itself, and in the character and manners of its inhabitants. Several small settlements of Delawares are in the neighbourhood, all of whom acknowledge Wingenund as their chief; and most of them have availed themselves, more or less, of the teaching of the exemplary Missionary.

"The village is situated on the side of a hill, gently sloping to the south, along the base of which flows a considerable stream, which, after watering the valley below, falls into the Missouri at a distance of a few miles. The huts, or cottages occupied by the Delawares are built chiefly of wood; and each having a garden attached to it, they present a very neat and comfortable appearance. That of Wingenund is larger than the rest, having on one side a compartment reserved entirely for the use of the Missionary; and on the other a large oblong room, in which are held their devotional meetings; the latter serves also the purpose of a school-room for the education of the children. You would be surprised at the progress made by them, and by many of the adults, in reading, as well as in agriculture and other useful craft; and I must own that when my eye fell upon their ploughs, hammers, saws, chisels, and other utensils, and then rested on the Bibles, a copy of which is in every dwelling, I felt a deep and gratifying conviction, that our annual present to Wingenund has been productive of blessings, quite beyond our most sanguine expectations.

"I need scarcely tell you, that his reception of me was that of a man welcoming a long-absent brother. He fell on my neck, and held me for some time embraced without speaking; and when he inquired about his dear sister Oltipa, his voice resumed the soft, and almost feminine tones that I formerly noticed in it, when he was under the influence of strong emotion. In outward appearance he is much changed since you last saw him, having grown both in breadth and height; indeed, I am not sure whether he is not now almost as fine a specimen of his race as was his noble brother, whom I never can mention or think of without a sign of affectionate regret. Yet in his ordinary bearing, it is evident that Wingenund, from his peaceful habits and avocations, has lost something of that free and fearless air, that distinguished his warrior brother. I have learnt, however, from Baptiste, (who, as you know, insisted upon accompanying me on this expedition,) that the fire of former days is sub-

duced, not extinguished within him, as you will perceive from the following anecdote, picked up by our friend the Guide from some of his old acquaintances in the village.

"It appears that last autumn a band of Indians who had given up their lands somewhere near the head waters of the Illinois river, and were moving westward for a wider range and better hunting-ground, passed through this district; and seeing the peaceful habits and occupations of the Delawares settled hereabouts, thought that they might be injured and plundered with impunity. They accordingly came one night to a small settlement only a few miles from here, and carried off a few score of horses and cattle, burning at the same time the dwelling of one of the Delawares, and killing a young man who attempted to defend his father's property. A messenger having brought this intelligence to Wingenund, he collected a score of his most trusty followers, and taking care that they were well armed, went upon the trail of the marauders. He soon came up with them; and their numbers being more than double his own, they haughtily refused all parley and redress, telling him that if he did not withdraw his band they would destroy it as they had destroyed the young Delaware and his house on the preceding night.

"This insolent speech uttered by the leader of the party, a powerful and athletic Indian, aroused the indignation of Wingenund; his eyes flashed fire, and his followers saw that the warrior spirit of his early days was rekindled within him. Ordering them to unslung and levelled their rifles, but not to fire until he gave the word, he drew near to the leader of the party, and in a stern voice desired him to restore the plunder and give up the murderer of the Delaware youth. The reply was a shout of defiance; and a blow levelled at his head, which he parried with his rifle, and with a heavy stroke from its butt, he levelled his antagonist on the ground; then, swift as a panther's spring, he leaped upon the fallen Indian's chest, and held a dagger to his throat.

"Panicked by the discomfiture of their leader, and by the resolute and determined attitude of the Delawares, the marauders entreated that his life might be spared, promising to give all the redress required; and on the same day Wingenund returned to his village, bringing with him the recovered horses and cattle, and the Indian charged with the murder, whom he would not allow to be punished according to the Delaware notions of retributive justice, but sent him to be tried at a circuit court, then sitting near St. Charles'. This exploit has completely established our young friend's authority among his people, some of whom were, if the truth must be told, rather disposed to despise the peaceful occupations that he encouraged, and even to hint that his intercourse with the Missionary had quenched all manly spirit within him. You will be surprised to hear that he has married Lita, who was for a long while so deeply attached to his brother; even had she been the wife of the latter, this would have been as conformable to Indian as to ancient Jewish usage. She now speaks English intelligibly, and asked me a thousand questions about Prairie-bird. Fortu-

nately, she had chosen a subject of which I could never weary; and I willingly replied to all her inquiries; when I told her that her former mistress and favourite had now three little ones, the eldest of whom was able to run about from morning till night, and the youngest named Wingenund, after her husband, tears of joy and of awakened remembrance started in her eyes.

"I understood her silent emotion, and loved her for it. How changed is her countenance from the expression it wore when I first saw it! Then it was at one moment wild and sad, like that of a captive pining for freedom; at the next, dark and piercing, like that of the daughter of some haughty chief. Now you may read upon her face the gentle feelings of the placid and contented wife.

"When I left the village, Wingenund accompanied me for many miles; twice he stopped to take leave of me, when some still unsatisfied inquiry respecting your Lucy, or Prairie-bird, rose to his lips, and again he moved on; I can scarcely remember that he uttered any distinct profession of his affection for any of us, and yet I saw that his heart was full; and what a heart it is, dear Edward! fear, and falsehood, and self are all alike strangers there! When at length we parted, he pressed me in silence against his breast, wrung the hand of Baptiste, and turned away with so rapid a stride, that one who knew him not would have thought we had parted in anger.

"On reaching the summit of a hill whence I could command a view of the track that I had followed, I unslung my telescope, and, carefully surveying the prairie to the westward, I could distinguish, at a distance of several miles, Wingenund seated under a stunted oak with his face buried in his hands, and in an attitude of deep dejection. I could scarcely repress a rising tear, for that youth has inherited all the affection that I felt for him to whom I owe my Evelyn's life!

"Harry Gregson and his wife are very comfortably settled here, and appear to be thriving in their worldly concerns. I have been several times to his counting-house, and, from the returns which he showed me, your investments in the fur-trade, as well as in land, seemed to have been most successful.

"Jessie's looks are not quite so youthful as they were when she was the belle of Marietta, but she has the beauty of unflinching good-temper, which we Benedicts prize at a rate unknown to bachelors. Harry has promised to pay us a visit this autumn; he will be delighted with the new house that you have built for his father, since his promotion to the rank of Captain.

"Perrot has found so many 'compatriots' here, that he chatters from morning till night; and his wonderful adventures, by 'flood and field,' both in Europe and the Western Prairies, have rendered him at once the lion and the oracle of the tavern at which we lodge.

"Distribute for me, with impartial justice, a thousand loves among the dear ones in our family circle, and tell Ery that I shall not write again, as I propose to follow my letter in the course of a few days.

"Now and ever your affectionate brother,
"REGINALD BRANDON"



PRAIRIE FLOWER.



THE
PRAIRIE FLOWER;
OR,
ADVENTURES IN THE FAR WEST.

BY EMERSON BENNETT.

AUTHOR OF THE "BANDITS OF THE OSAGE," "THE RENEGADE," "MIKE FINK," "KATE CLARENDON," ETC., ETC.

But O, the blooming prairie,
Here are God's floral bowers,
Of all that he hath made on earth
The loveliest. * * * *
This is the Almighty's garden,
And the mountains, stars, and sea,
Are nought compared in beauty,
With God's garden prairie free.

STRATTON & BARNARD:

CINCINNATI AND ST. LOUIS.

1849.

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THE PRAIRIE FLOWER.

CHAPTER I.

THE PROPOSITION—THE RESOLVE—HO! FOR OREGON.

"Ho! for Oregon—what say you, Frank Leighton?" exclaimed my college chum, Charles Huntly, rushing into my room, nearly out of breath, where I was cosily seated, with my sheep-skin diploma spread before me, engaged in tracing out my legal right to subjoin the magical initials, M. D., to my name. "Come, what say you, Frank?" queried my companion again, as I looked up in some surprise.

"Why, Charley," returned I, "what new notion has taken possession of your brain?"

"Oregon and adventure," he quickly rejoined, with flashing eyes. "You know, Frank, our collegiate course is finished, and we must do something for the remainder of our lives. Now, for myself, I cannot bear the idea of settling down to the dry practice of law, without at least having seen something more of the world; and by all means I would not settle here in the east, where lawyers are as plenty as stubble in a harvested rye-field, and, for the matter of that, to make the comparison good, just about as much needed. You know, Frank, we have often planned together, where we would go, and what we would do, when we should get our liberty; and now the western fever has seized me,

and I am ready to exclaim—ho! for Oregon."

"But, Charley," returned I, "consider; here we are now, snug in old Cambridge, and Oregon is thousands of miles away. It is much easier saying, ho! for Oregon, than it is getting to Oregon. Besides, what should we do when there?"

"Hunt, fish, trap, shoot Indians, any thing, every thing," cried my comrade, enthusiastically, "so we manage to escape ennui, and have plenty of adventure!"

"I must confess" said I, "that I like the idea wonderfully well—but——"

"But me no buts!" exclaimed Huntly; "you will like it—I shall like it—and we will both have such glorious times. College—law—pah! I am heartily sick of hearing of either, and long for those magnificent wilds, where a man may throw about his arms without fear of punching any body in the ribs. So come, Frank, set about matters—settle up your affairs, if you have any, either in money or love—and then follow me. Faith! man, I'll guide you to a real El Dorado, and no mistake."

The words of my companion produced a strong effect upon my naturally restless mind. Nothing that he could have proposed, at that moment, would have suited my inclination better than such a journey of adventure; and no companion would I have chosen in preference to himself. We had been playmates together in infancy,

we had studied together in youth, and, for the last four years, had been chums at old Harvard University—he studying law and I medicine. True, by the strict discipline of the University, we were not entitled to occupy the same apartment, on account of our different studies; but the influence of our connections made us privileged personages; and the professors winked at many things in us, that in others would have been grave offences. The substance of the matter is, we began our studies together, roomed together, and each completed his course at the same time.

From childhood up, I had loved Charles Huntly—or Charley, as I more familiarly termed him—as a brother; and this fraternal feeling I knew he as warmly returned. We walked together, played together, sung together—ever took each other's part on all occasions, whether right or wrong—and, in fact, for our close intimacy, were dubbed the Siamse Twins. We were both only sons of wealthy parents. My father was a wholesale merchant in Boston; so was his; the only difference in their occupations being, that the former dealt in dry goods, the latter in groceries. Now there was another strong tie between young Huntly and myself. He had an only sister—a sweet, modest, affectionate creature, some three years his junior—whom I loved with all the ardent passion of a fiery and impetuous youth; and was, I fancied—though at that time it was fancy only—loved in return. Be that as it might, my passion for his sister he knew and encouraged; and this, as I said before, only added a stronger link to the chain of our friendship.

In age, Charles Huntly was my senior by nearly a year, and was now a little turned of twenty-one. In stature we were much alike—both being about five feet and ten inches, with regular proportions. In complexion we differed materially—he being light, with light curly hair; and I dark, with hair black and straight. In personal appearance, my friend was remarkably handsome and prepossessing. His beauty did not consist in the mere perfection of features—though these were, in general, very fine—so much

as in the play and expression of the whole countenance, where every thought seemed to make an instant and passing impression. His forehead was high and broad, and stamped with intellect, beneath which shone a bright, blue eye, that could sparkle with mirth, or flash with anger, as the case might be. The contour of his face was a something between the Grecian and Anglo-Saxon, though the nose was decidedly of the former cast. His skin—fine, smooth, and almost beardless—gave him an appearance so boyish that I was often mistaken for his senior by several years—a matter which generally irritated him not a little, as he had a strong repugnance to being thought effeminate. His temperament was strongly neryous. At heart he was truly noble and generous; but this, by those who did not know him intimately, was very frequently overlooked in his hot and hasty temper. None was more ready to resent an insult, or redress a wrong; and as he was very tenacious of his own honor, so was he of another's. If you insulted him, you must take the consequences, and they would not be slow to follow, unless ample apology was made, in which case his hand was ever open for friendship. If he did you a wrong, and became convinced of it, he could not rest until he had sued for pardon. He was wild at times in his notions, headstrong, hot-brained, and, in general, a great enthusiast. Whenever any thing new took possession of his mind, it was the great all-in-all for the time being; but was very apt to pass away soon, and be supplied by something equally as great, and equally as evanescent.

Such, as I have just enumerated, were the striking points in the appearance and character of Charles Huntly; and though in the latter we were much alike, yet we seldom quarrelled, and then only to make it up the next time we met.

Now as Charles remarked, in language which I have already quoted, we had often, during our leisure moments, laid out plans of adventure for the future, when our collegiate course should be finished. But the plan of to-day had been always superceded by the one of to-morrow, so

that, unless we resolved on something steadily, it was more than probable that the whole would result, simply, in speculating visions of the brain. The last proposition was, of course, the one which opens this chapter; and which had, perhaps, less weight with me at the moment, from my remembering the failure of all the others. Still, there was one thing in its favor which none of the others had had. We had completed our studies now, and were at liberty, if we resolved on it, to carry our project into immediate execution, before it should become trite; and besides, nothing before had seemed so fully to meet the views of both in every particular. Adventure was our delight in every shape we could find it; as several powerful admonitions and premonitory warnings from our tutors, for various little peccadilloes—such as tying a calf to the bell rope, playing the ghost to old women, upsetting bee-hives, and robbing hen-roosts—might well attest. But there was, notwithstanding, a drawback, which made me hesitate when my friend interrupted me. He was of age, but I was not; and my father might not be willing to give his consent, without which I certainly would not venture. Another: I loved Lilian Huntly; and should I go and leave her, she might get married in my absence—a result which I felt was not to be endured.

While I sat, with my head upon my hand, buried in thought, rapidly running these things over in my mind, my companion stood watching me, as if to gather my decision from the expression of my countenance.

“Well, Frank,” said he, at length, “it seems you have become very studious all at once. How long is it going to take you to decide on accepting so glorious a proposition?”

“How long since the idea of it entered your head?” I inquired.

“Ten, fifteen, ay, (looking at his watch) twenty minutes. I was down for the purpose of getting a hack, to take us over to the city, when the thought came across me like a flash of lightning, and I turned and hurried back, to——”

“See me before you altered your mind,” interrupted I, completing his sentence.

“Confound you, Frank—wait till I have done. I hurried back, I say, to let you share the bright prospect with me.”

“Humph! prospect indeed!” said I, with a laugh, merely for the purpose of annoying him; for I saw, by his whole demeanor, that he was decidedly in earnest. “And a prospect it will ever remain, I am thinking, a long way ahead. You are joking, Charley, are you not?”

“No, by all the bright cupids of fairy-realms, I swear to you, Frank, my dear fellow, I never was so serious about any thing in my life, since the time when I played the ghostly tin-pan drummer to the edification of old Aunt Nabby.”

“But allowing you are in earnest, you have overlooked two important points in asking me to accompany you.”

“Ha! what are they?”

“My father, and Lilian.”

“Tut, tut, tut, Frank—don’t be a fool!”

“That is exactly what I am trying to guard against, Charley. Shall I assist you a little?”

“Pshaw! stuff! nonsense!—what have your father and my sister to do with it!”

“Why, the first might refuse his consent to my going; and the last might consent to have my place filled in my absence.”

“Well,” answered Charley, “as to your father, I will pledge you my word that he will give his consent; and for Lilian, that she will await your return, if it be six years hence.”

“You will!” cried I, jumping up so suddenly as to upset the table on to the toes of my companion; “you will pledge your word to this, Charley!”

“A plague on that table and your great-haste!” muttered Huntly, hobbling about the room, and holding his bruised foot in his hand. “Yes, I will pledge you my honor to both, if you will say the word.”

“Enough! here is my hand on it,” I cried.

Down went the bruised foot, and the next moment I felt the bones of my fingers crack under the powerful pressure of those of my enthusiastic friend.

“Now, Frank,” he almost shouted, ca-



PRAIRIE FLOWER.

sionately. "I thought you were cold-hearted, because you called me friend. But I was mistaken, I see! I was expecting a warmer term; but I had forgotten it was not your place to use it first. Lillian, dear Lillian—permit me so to call you—I am about to go far away; and God only knows when, if ever, I shall return. Pardon me, then, if I improve the present moments, and speak the sentiments of my heart. I have known you, Lillian, from a child; but I have known you only to love and adore. You have been the ideal of my boyish dreams, either sleeping or waking. The perfection of divine beauty, with me, has had but one standard—your own sweet, faultless face and form. Every happy thought of my existence, has some how had a connection with yourself. I could not picture happiness, without drawing you in glowing colors, the foremost and principal figure. I have thought of you by day, dreamed of you by night, for many years—have longed to be near you, have worshipped you in secret, and yet have never dared to tell you so till now. Whenever tempted to do wrong, your lovely face has been my Mentor, to chide and restrain me. I have loved you, Lillian—deeply, passionately, devotedly loved you, with the first, undefiled love of an ardent temperament—as I never can love another. I am about to leave, and I tell you this, and only ask if I am loved in return.—Speak! let your sweet lips confirm what your looks have spoken, and I am the happiest of human beings!"

I ceased, and paused for an answer.—While speaking, the head of the fair being at whose feet I kneeled, gradually, unconsciously as it were, sunk upon my shoulder, where it now reposed in all its loveliness. She raised her face, crimson with blushes and wet with tears. Her hand, still held in mine, trembled—and her lips, as she essayed to speak.

"O, Francis!" she at length articulated—then there came a silence.

"Say on, Lillian, and make me happy!"

"No, no!" she said, quickly, looking hurriedly around her, as if fearful of the presence of another. "No, no, Francis—not now—some other time."

"But you forget, dear Lillian, that I am about to leave you—that there may never be a time like the present! Only say you love me, fair one, and it is all I ask."

"But—but——" she stammered, and then paused.

"Ha! then I have after all mistaken friendship for love!" I returned, quickly, starting abruptly to my feet, and feeling some slight symptoms of indignation.

Again her soft, reproachful eye met mine, and every angry impulse vanished before its heavenly ray.

"You mistake me, Francis," she said. "I—I——" another pause.

Again was I at her feet, ashamed of my hasty display of jealous temper.

"The word is trembling upon your lips, Lillian," I exclaimed; "speak it, and——"

At this moment, to my astonishment and chagrin, the door suddenly opened, and an elegantly dressed gentleman, some five or six years my senior, highly perfumed with the oil of roses and musk, took one step over the threshold, and then, perceiving me, drew quickly back, evidently as much surprised and embarrassed as myself.—Meantime, I had sprung to my feet, with a whirlpool of feelings in my breast impossible to be described—the predominant of which were anger, mortification and jealousy. Lillian, too, had started up, and turned toward the stranger (stranger to me) with an embarrassed air.

"I crave pardon," said the intruder, coloring, "for my seeming rudeness, in appearing thus unannounced. I found the outer door ajar, and made bold to step within, without ringing, not thinking to meet with any here save the regular members of the family."

"Then you must either be a constant visitor, or no gentleman, to take even that liberty," I rejoined, in a sarcastic tone of some warmth.

The face of the intruder became as scarlet at my words, and his eyes flashed indignantly, as he replied, in a sharp, pointed tone:

"I *am* a regular visitor here, sir! but *your* face is new to me."

"Indeed!" I rejoined, with an expression

of contempt, turning my eyes upon Lilian, as if for an explanation.

She was trembling with embarrassment, and her features alternately flushing and paling, like the rapid playings of an *aurore borealis*. She hastened to speak, to cover her confusion, and prevent, if possible, any further unpleasant remarks.

"This—this—is Mr. Wharton, Francis," she stammered; "a gentleman who calls here occasionally. Mr. Whar—Wharton, Mr. Leighton, an old friend of mine."

Of course the rules of good breeding required us to bow on being thus formally introduced to each other; and this we did, but very stiffly, and with an air of secret hate and defiance. That moment we knew ourselves to be rivals, and consequently enemies; for it was impossible there should be any love between us. As for myself, I was powerfully excited, and indignant beyond the bounds of propriety. Hasty, passionate and jealous in my disposition, I was unfit to love any one; for to me,

"Trifles light as air,
Were confirmations strong as proofs of holy writ,"

in consequence of which, I only loved to be miserable, and render the object loved equally so.

I exchanged no more words with Wharton, but turning to Lilian, I said, with all the coolness my boiling blood would allow:

"So, then, the riddle is solved. Had you been frank enough to have informed me that you expected *particular* company to-night, I should certainly, ere this, have ridden you of my presence."

"O, Francis," cried Lilian, with an imploring, reproachful look, from eyes moist with tears; "you are mistaken!—indeed, indeed you are!"

"O, yes, of course," I replied, bitterly, as I coolly drew on my glove, and prepared to take my final leave: "Of course I am, or *was*, mistaken; but I shall not be likely to be again immediately, I presume. Farewell, Miss Huntly!" I continued, coldly, rudely extending to her my gloved hand. "I shall probably never see you again, as I leave at an early hour in the morning."

O, what a look she gave me at that mo-

ment, of sweet, heart-touching, mournful reproach—a look which haunted me for days, for weeks, for months, for years—a look which, were I an artist, would peradventure be found upon every face I painted.

"Francis!" she gasped, and sunk fainting and colorless upon a seat.

This, in spite of my jealous feelings, touched me sensibly, and I was on the point of springing to her aid, when Wharton passed me for the purpose. I could stand no more—the devil was in me—and with a scarcely suppressed imprecation upon my lips, I rushed out of the apartment.

In the hall I met my friend Charles.

"Ha! Frank," he exclaimed, "you seem flurried. What has happened?"

"Ask me no questions," I replied, pointing with my finger to the apartment I had just quitted. "Give my kind regards to your parents, and bid them farewell for me."

"But stay a moment."

"No! I must go;" and I seized my hat, and made for the door.

"All ready for the start in the morning, I suppose, Frank?"

"Ay, for to-night if you choose," I replied, as I hurried down the steps leading to the street.

I paused a moment, as my feet touched the pavement, and, as I did so, heard the voice of Huntly summoning the servants to the aid of his sister. I waited to hear no more, but darted away down the street, like a madman, scarcely knowing, and caring less, whither I went.

Such was my parting with Lilian Huntly.

At last I found my way home, and softly stealing to my chamber, threw myself upon the bed—but not to sleep. I slept none that night. My brain was like a heated furnace. I rolled to and fro in the greatest mental torture I had ever endured.

Morn came at last, and with it Charles Huntly, all prepared for the journey. I eat a morsel, pointed out my trunks, sigh a farewell to my parents, jumped into the carriage, and was whirled away with great rapidity.

Charles looked pale and sad, and was

not loquacious. I wanted him to talk—to speak of Lillian—but he carefully avoided any allusion to her. I was dying to know how he left her, but would not question him on the subject. I inquired how he left the family, however, and he replied:

“Indifferently well.”

“Well,” sighed I, to myself, “she loves another, so why should I care?”

Half past seven, and the rushing, rolling, rumbling cars, were bearing us swiftly away. Fifteen minutes more, and the city of our nativity had faded from our view, perhaps forever.

We were speeding onward—thirty miles per hour—westward ho! for Oregon.

CHAPTER III.

REFLECTIONS—THE GREAT METROPOLIS—
THE WORLD IN MINIATURE—THE NATIONAL THEATRE—ALARM—FIRE—AWFUL PERIL—PROVIDENTIAL ESCAPE, ETC.

Steamboats and railroads! what mighty inventions! With what startling velocity they hurry us along, until even the overcharged mind almost feels it lacks the power to keep pace with their progress. Whoever has passed over the Boston and Providence route to New York, will understand me. One mile post succeeds another with a rapidity almost incredible; and ere he, who travels it for the first time, is aware that half the distance is completed, he finds himself in view of the capital of old Rhode Island.

So it was with myself. I had never been from home, and knew little of the speed with which the adventurer is carried across this mighty continent. I had heard men speak of it, it is true; but I had never realized it till now. Perhaps I was longer on the road than I imagined. When the heart is full, we take but little note of external objects, or the flight of time—which is bearing us to the great ocean of eternity. My mind was oppressed and busy. I was thinking of home, of fond parents I had left behind, and all the joys of childhood, which I could never witness

again. A thousand things, a thousand scenes, which I had never thought of before, now crowded my brain with a vividness that startled me. They were gone now—forever gone! I had bid them a last adieu. With one bold leap, I had thrown off youth and become a man—a man to think and act for myself. My collegiate days, too, were over—days which memory now recalled with sad and painful feelings.

True, my playmate, my fellow student, my chum, my *friend*, was by my side. But he, too, was sad and thoughtful. He, too, was thinking of home and friends, the domestic happy fire-side, and all that he had left behind. His wonted gaiety, his great flow of spirits, his enthusiasm, were gone; and he was silent now—dumb as a carved image in marble.

I gazed upon him, and my thoughts grew heavier, sadder. He was now so like Lillian—sweet, loved, but ah! discarded Lillian! How could I avoid thinking of her, when I gazed upon the pale, sad features of her only brother! I *did* think of her; of how I had left her; and now that miles were gaining between us, I bitterly accused myself of injustice. Why did I leave her so abruptly, and in such a condition? My heart smote me. I had wronged her—wronged her at the moment of parting, and put reparation out of my power. Why had I done so! Why did I not part with her as a friend! If she did not love me, it was not her fault, and I had no right to abuse her. I had acted hastily, imprudently, unjustly. I knew it—I *felt* it—felt it keenly; and, O! what would I not have sacrificed for one, even one, moment with her, to sue for pardon. Alas! alas! my reflections on my conduct had come too late—too late.

Thus I thought, and thus I felt, while time and progress were alike unnoted, uncared for. What cared I now for time!—what cared I now for speed! My mind was a hell of torture almost beyond endurance, and I only sought to escape myself, but sought in vain.

“Passengers for the steamboat,” were the first sounds that aroused me from a painful reverie.

I looked up with a start, and lo! I was

in the heart of the city, and hundreds were round me. The cars had ceased their motion, and one destination was gained. At first I could not credit my senses. There must be some mistake—we were in the wrong city! But I was soon convinced of my error; and found, alas! that all was too truly, too coldly correct; for on the impulse of the moment, I had counted on a return to my native soil, and—and—I will not say what else.

I roused my friend, who also looked wonderingly about him as if suddenly awakened from a dream, and heaved a long, deep sigh—a dirge to buried scenes and friends away. Mechanically we entered a carriage, were hurried to the boat, and soon were gliding over the deep blue waters of Long Island Sound.

Early the next morning I beheld, for the first time, the lofty spires of that great Babylon of America, ycleped New York. What a place of business, bustle, and confusion! What hurrying to and fro! What rushing, scrambling, crowding, each bent on his own selfish end, and caring nothing for his neighbor, but all for his neighbor's purse! How cold the faces of the citizens seem to a stranger! There are no welcome smiles—no kind greetings—all are wrapped up in their own pursuits; and he feels at once, although surrounded by thousands, that he is now indeed alone, without a friend, save such as can be bought.

On the ocean, on the prairie, or in the forest, man is not alone; he does not feel alone; for he is with Nature in all her wildness—in all her beauty; and she ever has a voice, which reaches his inner heart, and, in sweet companionship, whispers him to behold her wonders, and through her look up to the Author of all—her God and his! But in the great city it is different—vastly different. Here all is artificial, studied, and cold; and as we gaze upon the thousands that throng the streets, and mark the selfish expressions on the faces of each, we feel an inward loathing, a disgust for mankind, and long to steal away to some quiet spot and commune with our own thoughts in silence.

Such were my reflections, as the rumbling vehicle whirled me over the pave-

ments to that prince of hotels, (in name and wealth at least) the Astor House.—True, I had been born and brought up in a city; but still these matters had never forced themselves so strongly upon my mind as now. I was a stranger, in a strange city, and, with my otherwise misanthropic feelings, I doubly felt them in all their force.

The window of the apartment assigned me at the Astor House, looked out upon that world-renowned thoroughfare, Broadway. Dinner over, I seated myself at the casement and gazed forth. What a world in miniature was spread before my eyes! What a whirlpool of confusion and excitement! Before me, a little to my left, was the Park—its trees beautifully decorated with the flowers and leaves of spring, and its many winding walks thronged with human beings. From out its center rose the City Hall—the hall of justice. Along one side ran Broadway—along the other, Park Row, but shooting off at an angle from the main thoroughfare of the former—both crowded with carriages of all descriptions, from the splendid vehicle of fashion, with its servants in livery, and its silver-trimmed harness, down to the common dray—crowded with footmen, from the prince to the beggar, all hurrying and jostling together. Here sauntered the lady and gentleman of fashion, robed in the most costly apparel money could procure, bedecked with diamonds and gold, sapphire and ruby; there, side by side, on the same pavement, almost touching them, strolled the poor, forlorn, pale-faced, hollow-eyed mendicant, partially clothed in filthy rags, and perhaps actually dying for a morsel of food. Great Heaven! what a comment on humanity!

I have mentioned only the extremes; but fancy both sexes—of all grades, sizes, and nations between—and you have a picture which no city on the American continent save New York can present.

The evening found my friend and myself at the National Theatre—then new, splendidly decorated, and in successful operation. It was crowded almost to suffocation with the *élite* of the city. Rounded arms and splendid busts, set off with

jewels—rosy cheeks, and sparkling eyes, were displayed on every hand, by the bewitching light of magnificent, glass-tasselled chandeliers. But of these I took little note. My attention was fixed upon the play. It was that impassioned creation of Shakespeare, Romeo and Juliet. My mind was just in a condition to feel the burning words of the lovers in all their force; and I concentrated my whole soul upon it, listened every word, watched every motion, to the exclusion of every thing else. The first and second acts were already over, and the last scene of the third, the parting between the lovers, was on the stage. A breathless silence reigned around. Every eye was fixed upon the players—every head inclined a little forward, to catch the slightest tones of the speakers. Already had the ardent and unfortunate Romeo sighed the tender words:

“Farewell! I will omit no opportunity
That may convey my greetings, love, to thee;”

and the answer of Juliet,

“O, think’st thou, we shall ever meet again?”

was even trembling on her lips—when, suddenly, to the consternation and horror of all, there arose the terrific cry of,

“Fire! fire!—the theatre is on fire!”

Heavens! what a scene ensued—and what feelings came over me! Never shall I forget either. In a moment all was frightful confusion, as each sought to gain the street. Startling shrieks, appalling yells, and hideous groans, resounded on all sides. Hundreds, I might say thousands, rushed pell-mell to the doors, to escape the devouring element, which, already lapping the combustible scenery, was seen shooting upward its lurid tongues, and heard hissing, and snapping, and crackling, in its rapid progress over the devoted building. I grasped the arm of my friend, and cried:

“Rush, Charley, for your life!” and sprang forward.

The next moment I felt myself seized from behind, and the voice of my friend shouted in my ear:

“Hold! Frank—we must save her!”

“Whom?”

“Yonder! See! they have crowded her

back!—and now—great God! she has fallen over into the pit!”

I looked in the direction indicated by the finger of Huntly, and beheld a beautiful female, vainly struggling to reach the door. As he spoke, a sudden rush forward crowded her back to the railing which divided her from the excited mass of beings in the pit. One moment she balanced on the railing, and the next, with a cry of terror, fell on to the heads of those below. At any other time she would have been cared for; but now all were wild with terror, and thought only of themselves; and instead of seeking to aid, they allowed her to sink under their feet. Save my friend and I, no one seemed to heed her. With a cry of horror, I leaped forward to rescue her from a horrible death. But my friend was already before me. One bound, and Charles Huntly was among the wedged mass below, and exerting all his strength to reach the prostrate form of the lady, who was now being trod to death under the feet of the rushing multitude. I would have sprang over the railing myself, but I saw it would be useless; one was better than two; and I paused and watched the progress of my friend with an anxiety better imagined than described.

So dense was the mass, so closely wedged, that for a time all the efforts of Huntly to reach the unfortunate creature were vain; while the glaring light, and the roar of the flames, as they eagerly leaped forward to the dome over head, rendered the scene truly dismal and awful.

At length the crowd grew thinner, as it poured through the open doorway; and renewing his exertions, my friend shortly gained the side of the unknown. He stooped down to raise her, and I trembled for his safety, for I saw numbers fairly pressing upon him. With a Herculean effort, that must have exhausted all his animal powers, I beheld him rise to his feet, with the fair unknown seemingly lifeless in his arms. I uttered a cry of joy, as he staggered towards me with his burthen.

“Quick! quick! this way—give her here!” I shouted, bending over the railing and extending my arms towards her.

Huntly staggered forward, and the next moment my grasp was upon her, and she was in my arms.

"Fly! Frank—fast—for God's sake! and give her air!" gasped Huntly, in a faint, exhausted tone.

I cast one glance at her pale, lovely features, on which were a few spots of blood, from a contusion on the head, and then darted over the benches to the door, bidding my friend follow, but looking not behind.

The boxes were now empty, and the doors but slightly blocked, so that I had little difficulty, to use a stage expression, in making my exit. The street, however, was crowded with those just escaped, and others attracted hither by the alarm of fire. All was excitement and dismay.—Parents were rushing to and fro, seeking their children—children their parents; wives and maidens their husbands and lovers, and vice versa.

I pushed my way through the the crowd as best I could, with my lovely burthen in my arms, and at length reached the opposite side-walk, where I paused to rest, and, if possible, to restore the fair one to consciousness. As I began chafing her temples, I heard a female voice shriek, in agonizing tones:

"Good God! will no one save my child—my only child—my daughter—the idol of my heart!"

I looked around me, and beheld, by the light of the burning building, a middle aged female, richly clad, only a few paces distant, violently wringing her hands, in mental agony, and looking imploringly, first at the already trembling structure, and then into the faces of the by-standers, as if in search of an answer to her heart-rending appeal.

"Oh God! oh God! save her! save her!—she must not, shall not die! I will give a thousand dollars for her life!"

A thought struck me. Perhaps she was the mother of the senseless being I held; and instantly I raised her in my arms and darted forward.

"Is this your daughter, lady?" I cried, as I came up.

She looked wildly about her—one pain-

ful glance—and then, with a shriek, sprang to and threw her arms around the fair creature's neck, and burst into tears.

"God! I thank thee!" were the first articulate words from her now quivering lips. "I have got my daughter again!" and snatching her from my arms, she pressed kiss after kiss upon her lips, with all the wild, passionate fondness of a mother.—"Ha! is she dead?" she cried, with a look of horror, appealing to me.

"Only fainted," was my reply, made at a venture, for I dared not confirm my own fears.

"Yes! yes! God be praised!—I see! I see! She is returning to consciousness. But this blood—this wound!"

"A slight fall," I answered.

"And you, sir—you! I promised a thousand dollars. Here is part, and my card. Call to-night, or to-morrow, at—— (I failed to catch the name) and the balance shall be yours."

"I did not save her for money; in fact, I did not save her at all—it was my friend," I replied, taking from her extended hand the card, but refusing the purse which it also held.

"And where is your friend?" she asked, breathlessly.

Heavens! what a shock her words produced! Where was my friend, indeed! I looked hurriedly around, among the swaying multitude, but saw nothing of Charles Huntly. A terrible thought seized me. Perhaps he had not made his escape! I cast one glance at the burning pile, and, to my consternation, beheld the flames already bursting from the roof. Had he escaped!—and if not—if *not!*—Great God, what a thought! I waited to say, to hear no more, but turned and rushed into the swaying mass, shouting the name of my schoolmate. No answer was returned. I shouted louder—but still heard not his well known voice. Great God! what feelings came over me!—pen cannot describe them. Onward, onward, still I pressed onward, and shouted at every step—but, alas! no answer.

At length I reached the door of the theatre leading to the boxes. It was filled with smoke, passing outward, through

which I could catch glimpses of the devouring flames, and hear their awful roar. One pause—an instant only—and with his name upon my lips, I darted into the shaking building. I gained the boxes, and found the heat of the flames almost unbearable. They had already reached the railing nearest the stage, and over head had eaten through the roof, from which burning cinders were dropping upon the blazing benches in the pit. The smoke was stifling, and I could scarcely breathe. I looked down where I had last seen my friend, and beheld a dark object on the floor. I called Huntly by name in a voice of agony. Methought the object stirred, and I fancied I heard a groan. The next moment I was in the pit, bending over the object. Gracious God! it was Huntly!—From some cause he had not been able to escape. Instantly I raised him in my arms, and, with a tremendous effort, threw him into the boxes. I attempted to follow, but failed. The smoke was proving too much for me, and the heat becoming intense. Again I tried, with like success. I began to feel dizzy, and faint, and thought I was perishing. I sank back and looked up at the roof. I could see it trembling. A few moments, and it would be upon me. God of Heaven! what a death!

At this moment of despair, I felt a current of air rushing in upon me. It revived me, and I made a third attempt to clamber into the boxes. Joy! joy! I succeeded. I caught hold of Charles, and, with my remaining strength, dragged him to the door, and into the open air. Some five or six persons now rushed to my assistance, and in another moment I had gained the opposite side of the street. As I did so, I heard a thundering noise behind me. I turned quickly round, and no pen can describe my feelings when I understood the cause. The roof of the building had fallen in, and bright sheets of flame, and burning cinders, were shooting upward on the dark pall of the arching heavens. I had just escaped with my life; and if ever I uttered a prayer of sincere gratitude to the Author of my being, it was then.

As I stood gazing upon the remainder of the structure, I saw the walls totter;

and ere I had time to move from the spot, the front wall went down, with a thundering sound, and lay a pile of smoking ruins—a part falling in, and a part outward. The heat was now excessive; and as I sought to bear my unconscious friend further from the fire, the side walls plunged inward, leaving only the back wall standing. This now seemed to waver—totter—and then, great Heaven! it fell outward, upon an adjoining building, crushing in the roof, and, as I afterwards learned, killing one of its inmates almost instantly.

By this time Huntly had begun to revive, and in a few minutes he was perfectly restored—the smoke and his exertions, only, having overcome him. He stared around him for a moment in wonder, and then seemed to comprehend all. Grasping my hand, with a nervous pressure, he exclaimed:

“Thank God! we are all saved; though I thought all was over with me. I see, dear Frank, I owe all to you. But the lady, Frank?”

“I left her safe in the arms of her mother.”

“Thank God, again, for that! But who is she? and where does she live?” and I felt the grasp of Charles tighten upon my arm.

“I know neither; but I have her mother’s card here.”

“Quick! quick! give it me!” cried Huntly, with an impatience that surprised me.

But I was mistaken; I had not the card; it was lost; and with it, all clue to the persons in question. With an expression of deep and painful disappointment, my friend turned away.

“But we may yet find them,” I said; “they were here a few minutes since.”

“Where, Frank—where?”

“Yonder;” and I hastened to the spot where I had left them; but to the disappointment of myself, as well as Huntly, they were gone.

I made inquiries of all around, but nobody had seen, or knew any thing of them.

“Always my luck, Frank,” said Huntly, with a sigh; and jumping into a hack, we

were shortly set down at the steps of the Astor.

That night I dreamed of fire—of rescuing Lillian Huntly from the flames.

Early the next morning we were once more upon our long journey—swiftly speeding toward the far, far West.

CHAPTER IV.

THE OHIO—THE HIBERNIAN—ARRIVAL IN CINCINNATI—A FIRE—A FIGHT—NARROW ESCAPE—THE JOURNEY RESUMED.

It was a calm, beautiful day, that found myself and friend on the hurricane deck of a magnificent steamer, and gliding swiftly down the calm, silvery waters of that winding, lovely, and romantic stream, the Ohio, or La Belle Riviere. We had passed through Philadelphia, Baltimore, and Pittsburgh, without stopping, and were now speeding over the waters of this river on our journey to the Far West. Never had I seen a stream before so fascinating in all its attractions. On my right was the State of Ohio—on my left, those of Virginia and Kentucky; and on either hand, beautiful villages, farms, and pleasure grounds, with tree, blade, and flower in the delightful bloom of a pleasant spring.—Here was a hill clothed with trees, reaching even to, overhanging, and mirroring their green forms in the glassy tide; there a smiling plain, stretching gracefully away from the river's bank, teeming with the growing products of the husbandman; while yonder a beautiful lawn, anon a village, or a pleasant farm house—rendered the whole scene picturesque and lovely beyond description.

The longer I gazed, the more I felt my spirits revive, until I began to resume something of the joyousness of by-gone days. A similar effect I could perceive was beginning to tell upon my friend.—The first keen pang of leaving home was becoming deadened. We were now in a part of the world abounding with every thing delightful, and felt that our adventures had really begun. We thought of

home and friends occasionally, it is true; but then it was only occasionally; and mingling with our feelings, were thoughts of the present and glorious anticipations for the future. We were strong, in the very prime of life, and bound on a journey of adventure, where every thing being entirely new, was calculated to withdraw our minds from the scenes we had bid adieu. The future is always bright to the imagination of the young and inexperienced; and we looked forward with delight to scenes on and beyond the broad and mighty prairies of the west.

"Well, Frank," said Huntly, at length, with something of his former light-hearted air, "what think you of this?"

"It is superlatively beautiful," I exclaimed, with enthusiasm.

"I agree with you there, Frank," he replied; "but then this will all sink into insignificance, when we come to behold what lies beyond the bounds of civilization. O, I am in raptures with my journey. What a beautiful land is this west! I do not wonder that emigration sets hithward, for it seems the Paradise of earth."

"Ay, it does indeed."

"But I say, Frank, there is one thing we have overlooked."

"Well, Charley, what is it?"

"Why, we must engage a servant to look after our baggage; and so let us employ one with whom we can have a little sport. I am dying for a hearty laugh."

"But that may not be so easy to do," said I.

"Pahaw! don't you believe a word of it. Now I have been standing here for the last ten minutes, laying my plans, and if you have no objection, I will try and put them in operation."

"None at all," I returned; "but let me hear them first."

"Do you see that fellow yonder, Frank?" pointing to a rather green-looking specimen of the Emerald Isle.

"I do. Well?"

"Well, I am going to try him; so come along and see the result;" and with this Huntly strode to the stern of the boat, where the son of Erin was standing, with his arms crossed on his back, gazing

around him with an air of wondering curiosity.

He was a rare specimen of a Paddy, and bore all the marks of fresh importation. His coat was a wool-mixed gray, with bright metal buttons, and very short skirts. His pants were made of a greenish fustian, the upper portion of which barely united with a very short vest. Heavy brogans encased his feet, and a hat, with a rim of an inch in width, all the worse for wear, beneath which his sandy hair came low upon his brow, covered his head. A large mouth, pug nose, ruddy cheeks, and bright, cunning gray eyes, denoted him daring, witty, and humorous. In fact, he was Paddy throughout, dress and all; and being a strong, hearty fellow, was just the one to suit us.

"Well, Pat, a handsome country this," said Huntly, in a familiar tone, as he came up to him.

"Troth, now, ye may well say that same, your honor, barring the name o' Pat, which isn't mine at all, at all, but simply Teddy O'Lagherty jist," replied the Hibernian, with great volubility, in the real, rolling Irish brogue, touching his hat respectfully.

"Beg pardon, Teddy—though I suppose it makes little difference to you what name you get?"

"Difference, is it, ye're spaking of! To the devil wid ye now, for taking me for a spalpeen! D'ye be afther thinking, now, I don't want the name that me mother's grandfather, that was a relation to her, barring that he wasn't her grandfather at all, but only her daddy, give me!"

"O, well, then, never mind—I will call you Teddy," said Charles, laughing, and winking at me. "But I say, Teddy, where are you bound?"

"Bound, is it, ye're asking! Och! I'm not bound at all, at all—but frae as the biped of a chap ye calls a toad, that St. Pathrick (blissings on his name!) kicked out o' ould Ireland, for a baastly serpent, an' it was."

"Did St. Patrick wear brogans when he kicked the toad so far?" asked Huntly, gravely.

"Brogans!" cried Teddy, with a comi-

cal look of surprise, that any one should be so ignorant: "Brogans, ye spalpeen!—beg pardon! your honor I mane; why he was a saint, a howly saint, ye devil—beg pardon! your honor—and didn't need the hilp of kivering to kaap the crathurs from biting him."

"O, yes," said Huntly, feigning to recollect; "I remember now, he was a saint; and of course he could kick any body, or any thing, whether bare-footed or shod."

"He could do that same—could St. Pathrick," replied the Irishman; "and as ay too, as your honor could be afther swollering a paaled praty, barring the choking if yees didn't chaw it hand-somely."

"A fellow of infinite jest; I like him much," said Huntly to me, aside, with a smile. "I must secure him—eh, Frank?"

"Certainly, by all means," I replied, in the same manner; "for his like we ne'er may see again."

"But if you are not bound, Teddy," continued Huntly, addressing the Irishman, "pray tell me whither you are going."

"Faith, now, ye've jist axed a question, which meself has put to Teddy O'Lagherty more'n fifty times, widout gitting a single straight answer."

"Then I suppose you are, like us, on a journey of adventure."

"It's like I may be, for a devil of a thing else me knows about it."

"Would you like to get employment?"

"Would a pig like to ate his suppher, or a nager like to stael?" answered Teddy, promptly.

"How would you like to engage with us now?"

"Troth, I've done many a worse thing, I'm thinking, your honor."

"No doubt of it, Teddy."

"But what d'ye want of me, your honor? and where to go!—for I'm liking travel, if it's all the same to yees."

"So much the better, for we are bound on a long journey;" and Charles proceeded to explain our intentions, and in what capacity the other would be wanted.

"Och!" cried Teddy, jumping up and cracking his heels with delight, to our great amusement; "it's that same I'd be

after saaking, if ye'd a axed me what I wanted."

"Think you can shoot Indians, eh! Teddy?"

"Shoot, is it? Faith, I can shoot any thing that flies on two legs. Although I sez it meself, what shouldn't, but let me mother for me, I'm the greatest shooter ye iver knew, I is."

"Indeed! I am glad to hear it, Teddy; for I presume we shall have plenty of shooting to do. But what did you ever kill, Teddy?"

"Kill, is it? Troth, now, ye're after heading me wid your cunning."

"Well, then, what did you shoot?"

"A two-legged bir-r-d, your honor."

"Well, you killed it of course?"

"Killed it! Agh! now ye're talking. Faith, it wouldn't die. I shot it as plain as daylight, right fornenst the back-bone of its spine; and would ye belave it, divil of a shot touched it at all, at all—the ugly baast that it was."

"Well, well, Teddy, I think you will do," said Huntly, laughing; and forthwith he proceeded to close the bargain with the Irishman.

Our trip proved very delightful, and in due time we arrived at Cincinnati, where it was our design to spend at least a day. It was a beautiful morning, when we rounded the first bend above the city, and beheld the spires of this great western mart glittering in the sunbeams. The levee we found lined with boats, and crowded with drays, hacks, and merchandise; and every thing bespoke the life and briskness of immense trade. Taking rooms at the Broadway Hotel, we sauntered forth to view the city, and evening found us well pleased with our day's ramble.

It was about eleven o'clock the night of our arrival, that, having returned from a concert, we were preparing to retire to rest, when the alarm of fire, accompanied by a bright light, which shone in at our windows, attracted our attention.

"Ha! here is another adventure, Charley," I exclaimed, replacing my coat, which I was in the act of taking from my shoulders. "Come, once more forth, and let us

see what we can discover that is new and startling—for to-morrow, you know, we leave."

"Not to-night, Frank," answered Huntly, yawning and rubbing his eyes. "I-faith, man, I've seen enough of fire to last me for a long time; and O, (yawning again) I am so sleepy."

"Then I will go alone."

"Well, go; for myself, I'll to-bed and dream about it. But I say, Frank," pursued Huntly, as I was on the point of quitting the room, "have you secured your pistols about you?"

"No."

"You had better."

"Pshaw! I do not want them: I am not going to fight."

"Nevertheless you had better go armed, in a strange place like this."

"Nonsense," I replied, closing the door, and hurrying down a flight of stairs, and into the street.

A thought struck me, that I would take Teddy along; but upon second consideration I resolved to go alone.

There was but little difficulty in finding the fire, for a bright flame, shooting upward on the dark canopy above, guided me to it. Passing up Broadway to Sixth street, I turned down some four or five squares, and discovered the fire to proceed from an old, two-story wooden building, which had been tenanted by two or three families of the poorer class. At the moment when I arrived, four engines were in active play, and some two or three others preparing to join them. The water was not thrown upon the burning building—for that was already too far gone—but upon one or two others that nearly joined, which were smoking from the heat. Many household articles had been thrown into the street, and these were surrounded by the fire-watch; while an Irishman and his wife, with a daughter of sixteen, were running to and fro, and lamenting in piteous tones the loss of their home and property.

"Och! howly mither of Mary! was the like on't iver saan?" cried the matron, some forty-five years of age, whose tidy dress bespoke her a rather thrifty housewife.

"Niver, since the flood," blubbered her husband, dolefully.

"What an invintion is fire!" again cried the mother.

"Tirrible crathur it is," rejoined the daughter.

"Och, honey, don't be despairing now!" said a voice, which I fancied I recognized; and turning toward the speaker, to my astonishment I beheld Teddy, in the laudible act of consoling the afflicted damsel.

"Teddy!" I shouted.

"Here, your honor," returned the Hibernian, looking around in surprise, and advancing to me with an abashed look.

"What are you doing here, Teddy?" I continued. "I thought you were at the hotel, and asleep."

"Faith! and it's like I thought the same of your honor, barring the slaap," rejoined the Irishman, scratching his head. "I seed the fire, your honor, and I thought as maybe there'd be some females that'd naad consoling; and so, ye see, I gathered meself hitherward, as fast as me trotters would let me."

"And so you make it your business to console females, eh?" I asked, with a smile which I could not repress.

"Faith, now," answered Teddy, "if it's all the same to yourself, your honor, I'm a female man, barring the dress they wears."

"Well, well," said I, laughing outright in spite of myself, "go on in your good work—but mind you are at your post betimes in the morning, or you will be left behind."

"It's meself that'll not forgit that same," answered the other, as he turned away to rejoin the party in distress, and add his consolation.

At this moment I felt myself rudely jostled from behind, and, turning quickly round, found myself hemmed in by a crowd, in which two men were fighting. I endeavored to escape, and, in doing so, accidentally trod on the foot of a stranger, who turned furiously upon me, with,

"What in —— (uttering an oath) do you mean?"

"An accident," said I, apologetically.

"You're a liar!" he rejoined; "you did it a purpose."

I never was remarkable for prudence at any time, or I should have been more cautious on the present occasion. But the insulting words of the stranger made my young blood boil, until I felt its heat in my face. Without regard to consequences and ere the words had fairly escaped his lips, I struck him a blow in the face, so violent that he fell back upon the ground.

"Another fight!" cried a dozen voices at once: "Another fight! hurrah!"

In a moment I regretted what I had done, but it was too late. I would have escaped, but the crowd had now formed around me so dense, that escape was impossible. Besides, my antagonist, regaining his feet, his face covered with blood, was now advancing upon me furiously.—There was no alternative; and watching my opportunity as he came up, I dexterously planted the second blow exactly where I had the first, and down he went again.

"A trump, by ——!" "Give it to him, stranger!" "He's a few!" were some of the expressions which greeted me from the delighted by-standers.

But I had short time to enjoy my triumph—if such a display of animal powers may be termed a triumph—for the next moment I beheld my adversary again approaching, but more warily than before, and evidently better prepared for the combat. I was not considered a bad pugilist for one of my age, nor did I in general fear one of my race; but as I gazed upon my advancing foe, I will be frank to own that I trembled for the result. He was a powerfully built man, six feet in stature, had a tremendous arm, and an eye that would quail before nothing mortal.

"By ——! young chap," he exclaimed, as he came up, "you've done what nobody else has of latter years. Take that, and see how you'll like it;" and with the word he threw all his strength into a blow, that fell like a sledge hammer.

I saw it, and prepared to ward it. I did so, partially, but its force broke my guard, and his double-jointed fist alighting upon my head, staggered me back and brought me to my knees. With all the suppleness I was master of, I sprang to my feet, only

to receive another blow, which laid me out upon the flinty pavement. For a moment I was stunned and confused; but regaining my senses and feet, I prepared to renew the contest.

"I say, stranger," said my antagonist, motioning his hand for a parley, "you're good blood, but you haint got quite enough of the metal to cope with me. You're only a boy yit, and so just consider yourself licked, and go home, afore I git cantankerous and hurt you a few."

But I was not in a condition to take his advice. True, I was bruised and fatigued, and should have rested satisfied to let the affair end thus. But my worst passions had now got the better of my reasoning powers. I fancied I had been insulted, disgraced, and that nothing but victory or death could remove the stigma. I saw some of the spectators smile, and some look pityingly upon me, and this decided my course of action. My temper rose, my eyes flashed, and my cheeks burned, as I thought of the insulting words of the other.

"Some men live by bullying," I replied, pointedly; "and I suppose you are one of them; if not, you will keep your advice till one of us is the victor."

My opponent looked upon me with a mingled expression of surprise and rage.

"Fool!" he cried, "do you dare me again to the fight! By ——! I'll whip you this time or die!"

"Make your words good," I retorted, springing forward, and pretending to aim a blow at his head.

He prepared to ward it, and, in doing so, left his abdomen unguarded. He saw his mistake, but too late to retrieve it; for instead of striking with my fist, I only made a feint, and doubling with great dexterity, took him with my head just below the pit of the stomach, and hurled him over backwards upon the ground. He threw out his hand, caught me as he fell, and drew me upon him.

Now came the contest in earnest. I had a slight advantage in being uppermost; but how long it would last was doubtful; for throwing his arms around, he strove to turn me. I seized him by the throat,

and clung there with the tenacity of a drowning man to a rope. He made a desperate effort to bring me under, but still I maintained my position. The force of my grasp now began to tell upon him. He strangled, and I could sensibly perceive he was growing weaker. At length, just as I was about to relax my hold, for fear of choking him to death, he suddenly threw up one hand, buried it in my hair, twined a long lock around his finger, and the next moment placed his thumb to my eye, with a force that seemed to start the ball from its socket.

Great Heaven! what a feeling of horror came over me! I was about to lose an eye—be disfigured for life. Death, I fancied, was preferable to this; and instantly releasing his throat, I seized his hand with both of mine. This was exactly what he desired; and the next moment I found myself whirled violently upon my back on the rough pavement, and my antagonist uppermost. I attempted to recover my former advantage, but in vain. My adversary was by far too powerful a man.—Grasping my throat with one hand, with such a pressure that every thing began to grow dark, he partly raised himself, planted a knee upon my breast, and with the other hand drew a long knife. I just caught a glimmer of the blade, as he raised it to give me a fatal stab; but I was too exhausted and overmastered to make any resistance; and I closed my eyes in despair, and felt that all was over.

Suddenly I heard the voice of Teddy, shouting:

"To the divil wid ye, now, for a blathering spalpeen, that ye is!" and at the same moment I felt the grasp of my opponent leave my throat, and his weight my body.

With my remaining strength I rose to a sitting posture, and saw Teddy dancing around me, flourishing a hickory she-lalah over his head in the scientific manner of his countrymen, and whooping, shouting, and cursing, in a way peculiar to himself.

By some means he had been made aware of my danger, and, like a noble fellow, had rushed into the crowd and felled my ad-

versary, with a blow so powerful that he still lay senseless upon the ground.

"And who are you, that dares thus to interfere!" cried a voice in the crowd, which found immediate echo with a dozen others.

"Who am I, ye blaggards?" roared Teddy: "Who should I be but a watchman, ye dirthy scull-mullions, yees! Come," he cried, seizing me by the collar, "ye'll git a lock-up the night for this blaggard business of disturbing the slumbers of honest paaple afore they've gone to bid, jist."

I saw his ruse at once, and determined to profit by it, and make my escape. To do this, I pretended of course that I was not the aggressor, and that it was very hard to be brought up before the Mayor for a little harmless fun.

"Harmless fun!" roared the cunning Irishman. "D'ye calls it harmless fun, now, to have your throat cut, ye scoundrel! Come along wid ye!" and he pretended to jerk me through the crowd, which gave way before him.

We had just got fairly clear of the mass, when we heard voices behind us shouting:

"Stop 'em! stop 'em!—he's no watch."

"Faith, they're afther smelling the joke whin it's too late," said Teddy. "But run, your honor, or the devils will be howld of us."

I needed no second prompting; and with the aid of the Irishman, who partially supported me—for I was still weak—I darted down a dark and narrow street. For a short distance we heard the steps of pursuers behind us, but gradually one after another gave up the chase, until at last we found our course left free.

It would be impossible for me to picture the joy I felt at my escape, or my gratitude toward my deliverer. Turning to the Irishman, I seized his hand, while my eyes filled with tears.

"Teddy," I said, "you have saved my life, and I shall not soon forget it."

"Troth, your honor," replied Teddy, with a comical look, "it was wor-r-th pre-sarving—for it's the best and ounly one yees got."

I said no more, but silently slipped a gold coin into his hand.

"Howly mother! how smooth it makes a body's hands to be buthered," observed the Irishman, as he carefully hid the coin in his pocket.

Deep was the sympathy of Huntly for me, when, arrived at the hotel, I detailed what had occurred in my absence; and as deep his gratitude to the preserver of my life.

"Frank," he exclaimed, grasping my hand, "henceforth you go not alone, in the night, in a strange city."

The next day, though stiff and sore from my bruises, I found myself gliding down the Ohio on a splendid steamer, bound for St. Louis, where in due time we all arrived without accident or event worthy of note.

CHAPTER V.

THE PRAIRIE—SUNSET SCENE—REFLECTIONS
—OUR FIRST CAMP—COSTUME—EQUIP-
MENTS—THE TRAPPERS, ETC.

The prairie! the mighty, rolling, and seemingly boundless prairie! With what singular emotions I beheld it for the first time! I could compare it to nothing but a vast sea, changed suddenly to earth, with all its heaving, rolling billows. Thousands upon thousands of acres lay spread before me like a map, bounded by nothing but the deep blue sky. What a magnificent sight! A sight that made my soul expand with lofty thought, and its frail tenement sink into utter nothingness before it. Talk of man—his power, his knowledge, his *greatness*—what is he? A mere worm, an insect, a mote, a nothing, when brought in compare with the grand, the sublime in nature. Go, take the mighty one of earth—the crimson-robed, diamond-decked monarch, whose nod is law, and whose arrogant pride tells him he rules the land and sea—take him, bring him hither, and place him in the center of this ocean of land—far, far beyond the sounds of civilization—and what does he become? Talk to him then of his power, his greatness, his glory; tell him his word is law—to command, and he shall be obeyed; remind him of his treasures, and tell him now to try the power of gold! What would be the result? He would deeply

feel the mockery of your words, and the nothingness of all he once valued; for, alas! they would lack the power to guide, to feed, or save him from the thousand dangers of the wilderness.

Similar to these were my thoughts, as I stood alone, upon a slight rise of ground, and overlooked miles upon miles of the most lovely, the most sublime scene I had ever beheld. Wave upon wave of land, if I may be allowed the expression, stretched away on every hand, covered with beautiful, green prairie-grass, and the blooming wild flowers of the wilderness. Afar in the distance I beheld a drove of buffalo quietly grazing; and in another direction a stampede of wild horses, rushing onward with the velocity of the whirling car of modern days. Nearer me I occasionally caught glimpses of various other animals; while flocks of birds, of beautiful plumage, skimming over the surface, here and there alighting, or starting up from the earth—gave the enchantment of life and variety to the picture.

It had been a beautiful day, and the sun was now just burying himself in the far off ocean of blue, and his golden rays were streaming along the surface of the waving grass, and tinging it with a delightful hue. Occasionally some elevated point, like the one on which I stood, caught for a moment his fading rays, and shone like a ball of golden fire. Slowly he took his diurnal farewell—as if loth to quit a scene so lovely—and at last hid himself from my view beyond the western horizon. Then a bright, golden streak shot up toward the darkening dome of heaven, and, widening on either hand, gradually became sweetly blended with the cerulean blue. Then this slowly faded, and took a more crimson color; then more purple; until, at last, a faint tinge showed the point where the sun had disappeared, while the stars began to appear in the gray vault above.

I had stood and marked the whole change with that poetical feeling of pleasant sadness which a beautiful sunset rarely fails to awaken in the breast of the lover of nature. I noted every change that was going on, and yet my thoughts were far, far away, in my native land. I was think-

ing of the hundreds of miles that separated me from the friends I loved. I was recalling the delight with which I had, when a boy, viewed the farewell scenes of day from some of the many romantic hills of old New England. I pictured the once cheerful home of my parents, which I had forsaken, and which now peradventure was cheerful no longer, in consequence of my absence. I fancied I could see my mother move to the door, with a slow step and heavy heart, and gaze with maternal affection toward the broad, the mighty west, and sigh, and wonder what had become of him who should have been the stay and support of her declining years. I thought, and I grew more sad as I thought, until tears filled my eyes.

Mother! what a world of affection is compressed in that single word! How little do we, in the giddy round of youthful pleasures and folly, heed her wise counsels! How lightly do we look upon that jealous care with which she guides our otherwise erring feet, and watches with feelings which none but a mother can know, the gradual expansion of our youth to the riper years of discretion! We may not think of it then, but it will be recalled to us in after years, when the gloomy grave, or a fearful living separation, has placed her far beyond our reach, and her sweet voice of sympathy and consolation for the various ills attendant upon us, sounds in our ear no more. How deeply then we regret a thousand deeds that we have done contrary to her gentle admonitions! How we sigh for those days once more, that we may retrieve what we have done amiss, and make her sweet heart glad with happiness. Alas! once gone, they can rarely be renewed—and we grow mournfully sad with the bitter reflection.

My mother—my dearly beloved mother—would I ever behold her again!—Should I ever return to my native land, would I find her among the living! If not—*if not!* Heavens! what a sad, what a painful thought! and instantly I found my eyes swimming in tears, and my frame trembling with nervous agitation. But I would hope for the best; I would not borrow trouble; and gradually I became calm.—

Then I thought of my father—of many other dear friends—and, lastly, though I strove to avoid it, I thought of Lilian—sweet, lost, but ah! dearly loved Lilian. I could see her gentle features, I could hear her plaintive voice—soft and silvery as running waters—and I sighed, a long, deep sigh as I thought. Would I ever behold *her* again? I might, but—(my blood ran cold) but—wedded to another. “Ay! wedded to another!” I fairly groaned aloud, with a start that sent the red current of life swiftly through my veins.

I looked around me, and found it already growing dark. The beautiful scene I had so lately witnessed, was now faded from my sight; and the gloomy howl of a distant pack of wolves, reminded me that I was now beyond civilization, in the wilderness of an extensive prairie. I looked downward, and within a hundred yards of me beheld the fire of our first camp on the prairie; and with a hasty step I descended the eminence and joined my companions.

“Ah! Frank,” said Huntly, as I came up, “I was beginning to fear something had happened you, and you can easily imagine my feelings. Why did you absent yourself so long?”

“I was on yonder eminence, enraptured with the glories of the sunset scene,” I replied, somewhat evasively.

“Ah! was it not a splendid sight!” he rejoined, enthusiastically, with sparkling eyes. “I too beheld it with rapture, and regretted that you were not by to sympathise with me in my poetical feelings.—But come, supper is preparing, and so let us regale ourselves at once, and afterward take our first sleep in this magnificent wild.”

As I said before, this was our first camp on the prairie. On our way hither we had joined a party of four hunters or trappers, and in consequence our number was now augmented to seven. We had thrown off the lighter and more costly apparel of the settlements, and were now costumed in the rougher garments worn by the hunters of the Rocky Mountains. This consisted of a frock or hunting shirt, made of dressed buckskin, and ornamented with

long and parti-colored fringes. Our nether garments were of the same material, ornamented in the same manner, and on our feet were moccasins. Round the waist of each was a belt, supporting a brace of pistols and a long knife, the latter in a sheath made of buffalo-hide. A strip of leather passing over our right shoulders, suspended our powder horns and bullet pouches under our left arms. In the latter we carried flint and steel, and small etceteras of various kinds, that had been mentioned as being useful where we procured our fit-out. Among other things, we had taken care to secure plenty of ammunition, tobacco and pipes, together with an extra supply of apparel for the cold regions toward which we were journeying, all of which were snugly stowed away in our large buffaloeskin wallets—called by the trappers “possibles,” or “possible sacks”—which were either attached to or thrown across our saddles.

In the description just given, I have been speaking of our party alone—namely, Huntly, Teddy and myself—without regard to the trappers, who were costumed and equipped much like ourselves, with the exception that instead of horses their animals were mules; and in place of one apiece, they had three. They, however, were bound on a regular trapping expedition, and carried their traps with them, and took along their mules for furs; while we, going merely on adventure and not speculation, had only taken the animals upon which we rode. Our horses and appendages, what we had, were all of the finest description; and our long, silver-mounted rifles drew many a wistful look from our newly made companions. In joining them, our chief object was to learn their habits and customs in the wilderness, before we ventured forth upon our own resources; and by being somewhat liberal in supplying them with tobacco and many small things of great value to the trapper, we secured their friendship and favor at once.

The trapper of the Rocky Mountains is a singular being. Like the boatman of the river, the sailor of the ocean, or the scout of the forest, he has peculiar characteristics,

both as regards manners and dialect. Constantly exposed to danger and hardship, he becomes reckless of the one and indifferent to the other. His whole life, from beginning to end, is a constant succession of perilous adventures; and so infatuated does he become with the excitement attendant upon these, that, confine him in a settlement, and he will literally pine to death for his free mountain air and liberty to roam as he lists.

There is no polish, no sickly, sentimental refinement in his manners and conversation—but, on the contrary, all is rude, rough, blunt, and to the point. When he says a thing, he means it; and, in general, has but little deceit. With death he becomes so familiar, that all fear of the dread king of mortality is lost. True, he clings to life with great tenacity—but then there is no whimpering and whining at his fate. When he finds his time has come to go, he stands up like a man, and takes the result with the stoicism of a martyr. He is frequently a great boaster, and, like the sailor, delights in narrating strange tales of his wonderful adventures and hair-breadth escapes. In his outward behavior, he is often sullen and morose; but, as a general thing, his heart is in the right place.—He will kill and scalp an Indian foe, with the same indifference and delight that he would shoot a bear or deer—and yet you may trust your life and money in his hands with perfect safety. In fact, I may say, that his whole composition is a strange compound of odds and ends—of inexplicable incongruities—of good and evil.

Until within the last few days, I had never seen a trapper; and of course he was to me and my companions as great an object of curiosity, as would have been the aborigine himself. The four which we had joined, were genuine, bona fide specimens of the mountaineers. Each had seen much service, had been more or less upon trapping expeditions, and one had actually grown gray in the hardy life of the wilderness. Each had trapped on his own hook and for others, and had scoured the country from the upper regions of Oregon to the Mexican latitude—from the States to the Pacific ocean. They were acquainted

with the land in every direction—knew all the regularly organized fur companies—all the trading forts and stations—and consequently were just the men to initiate us into all the peculiarities of the wilderness, all the mysteries of the trapper's life, and excite our marvellous propensities by their startling and wonderful tales. They gloried in the *soubriquets* of Black George, Rash Will, Fiery Ned, and Daring Tom—appellations which had been bestowed on them for some peculiar look in their persons, or trait in their characters.

The first mentioned, Black George, was the eldest of the party, and had doubtless received his cognomen from his dingy complexion, which was but little removed from the sable son of Africa. Naturally dark, his skin had become almost black from long exposure to the weather. In height he was fully six feet, gaunt and raw-boned, with great breadth of shoulders, ponderous limbs and powerful muscles, which gave him a very formidable appearance. Although approaching sixty, his vigor seemed not the least impaired by age. His coarse hair, once black, was now an iron gray. His face was thin and long, with high cheek bones, pointed nose, hollow cheeks, large mouth, and cold, gray eyes. The wonted expression of his countenance was harsh and repulsive, though occasionally lighted with a humorous, benevolent smile. He was generally liked and respected by the whites, but hated and feared by the Indians, of whom he was a mortal enemy, that seldom failed to take their "hair"* whenever opportunity presented.

The next in order, Rash Will, as he was denominated, was a stout, heavy built man, somewhat above the medium stature, and about forty years of age. He had a large Roman nose and mouth, thick lips, low forehead, and blue eyes. The general expression of his physiognomy was a blunt, straight-forwardness, without regard to consequences. He could do a good deed or an evil one; and if he could justify the latter to himself, he cared not a straw for the opinions of others. Head-

* Scalp.

strong and violent when excited by anger, he had been the author of some dark deeds among the savages, which fully entitled him to the appellation of Rash Will.

The third in order, Fiery Ned, was about thirty-five years of age, of a robust, handsome form, some five feet ten inches in height, and fully developed in every part. His features were comely and prepossessing. The only marked points of his countenance were his eyes—which were small, black, restless, and piercing—and his forehead, which was high and ample. His temperament was ardent, passionate, and fiery. At times he was cool, frank and generous; but at others, especially in an Indian fight, he became wild, furious, and, in short, a perfect devil.

The last of the four, Daring Tom, was the youngest and the most to my liking of any. He was about thirty years of age, and of middling stature. Unlike his companions, his features were very fine, almost effeminate, with a mild, dignified expression, that instantly won the regard of all with whom he came in contact. He had a large, full, clear blue eye, which rarely varied in expression, be the circumstances what they might. Cool and collected at all times, he was never more so than when surrounded by imminent danger. There was no risk he would not run to serve a friend, and on no occasion had he ever been known to display the least sign of fear—hence was he called Daring Tom.

Such is an outline sketch of the trappers who had now become our companions; and probably take us all together, there was not in the whole broad west another party of the same number, that could present a more formidable appearance, or perform greater feats in the heat of contest.

At the moment when I came up to the fire, each of the trappers was seated beside it on the ground, cross-legged, engaged in toasting slices of a fat buck, which one of them had killed and brought in not an hour before. They were talking away briskly all the while, telling some wonderful tale, or cracking some joke, to the great amusement of Teddy O'Lagherty, who, a little apart, was seated in a similar manner to

themselves, and listening attentively, with mouth and eyes widely distended. A little distance from the fire, our hobbled animals were quietly cropping the luxuriant herbage beneath them.

"So then, Charley," I said, after having taken a general survey, "I suppose we are to fatten on deer meat?"

"Deer meat and salt," he replied, with a laugh. "The fancy preparations of civilization will regale us no longer, and we may be thankful if we always get fare as good as this."

While saying this, Huntly had drawn nearer the fire, so that the last remark caught the ear of Black George, who was just on the point of enforcing some assertion with an oath, but who suddenly stopped short, and turned to him with a comical look.

"See heyar, young chap, didn't I hearn you say you was from Bosson, or some sich place in the States?"

"Doubtless," answered Huntly, "for that, I am proud to say, is my native city."

"O, it's a city, then. Big's St. Louey hey?"

"Much larger."

"Do say! Why then it's some, I reckons."

"A very flourishing place."

"Hum! You was born to Bosson?"

"Ay, and bred there."

"Bred? O, that means you was foddered thar, spouse?"

"Yes, brought up and educated there."

"Educated—ugh! Heyar's what never did that; never had no need on't; know how to shoot and trap, but can't make pot hooks; can't tell 'em when they is made; know they's some, though, and wouldn't mind I know'd 'em a few—but don't care much no how; couldn't live no longer for't; couldn't 'float my sticks'* no better, spect.

* That is, couldn't get along any better. This is a common expression among the trappers, and its meaning depends altogether upon the sense in which it is used. It is derived from their occupation. A "stick" is attached to each trap by a string, and if the beaver runs away with the trap, the stick, floating on the surface of the water, indicates the whereabouts of the animal, and enables the trapper to recover his property.

Well, for a younker, you've had a right smart chance, and I spose know a heap.* Heyar's what's born way down to Arkansas, on a swamp patch, that didn't yield nothin worth divin for. I's raised down thar, or bread, as you calls it, young Bosson, (spose you've got no objection to bein called arter your natyve city) though almighty poor bread I was, for I didn't git much on't for a spell—in fact till I'd nearly gone under†—augh! Let's see, whar was I? O, you's saying sumthin 'bout bein thankful for sich fare's this. It tickled me a heap—*it* did—and I had to in'ardly hold on tight to my ribs, to keep from guffawing. Why, young Bossoners, (addressing both of us) ef you'd seen what I hev, a piece like that thar, (pointing to the meat on the end of his stick, which he was toasting at the fire,) would a bin a heaven on arth, and no mistake. Talk about bein thankful for sich fare's this! Wait till you've seen your hoss go under, and the last end o' the eatable part o' your possibles chawed up, and then talk."

Here the old man paused and chuckled heartily, and winked at his companions, who joined him in his merriment, to the utter consternation of poor Teddy, who, with mouth wide open, and eyes enlarged to their utmost capacity, simply exclaimed:

"Howly murther! what a baasty time on't yees had!"

"I suppose you have seen some very rough times!" I rejoined, anxious to draw the old man out in some of his wonderful tales of adventure.

"Well I has, hoss," was the quick response; "and ef you want to make folks stare in the States, you'd better jest jog down one I've a notion to tell."

"We shall all be eager listners," I rejoined.

"Think you'd like to hear it, hey?"

"O, most certainly."

The old man smiled complacently, and stroked his beard of a day's growth, in a way to denote that he felt himself somewhat complimented.

* A western word, equivalent to "very much."

† Died—another expression peculiar to the trapper.

"Got any bacca?"

I gave him a large quid.

"Well, plant yourselves down here in talking distance, and while this deer meat's sizzling, I'll tell you a trump, and an ace at that."

Huntly and myself at once seated ourselves upon the ground, as near the old man as possible, who, giving the weed a few extra turns in his mouth, and noting that all were waiting the story, began the tale which I give in the following chapter.

CHAPTER VI.

THE OLD TRAPPER'S TALE—ATTACK ON HIM BY THE INDIANS—HIS ESCAPE—THE DEAD PURSUER—SUFFERINGS—THE MYSTERIOUS PRAIRIE FLOWER, ETC.

"Ye see, strangers," said the old man, "or Bossoners, (though I spects it don't make no pertikular difrence what I calls ye, so it don't hurt your feelins none,) as I sez afore, I was raised down to Arkansas, or thereabouts, and it's nigh on to sixty year now sence I fust tuk a center-shot at daylight, and in course I've forgot all the feelins a fust sight gin me. Howsomever, that's nothin here nor tother.—(I say, Will, ef you've got that thar bottle about you, I doesn't mind a taste, jest to grease this here bacca—augh! Thank-kee, Will; you're some, *you* is.)

"Well, strangers, you needn't 'spect I'm agoin to gin ye my whole hist'ry, case I isn't, and don't know's I could ef I wanted to, case most on't's forgot. So now I'll jest jump over a cord o' time, and come down to 'bout four year ago come next Feberry, when it was so all-fired cold, it froze icykels on to the star rays, and stoped 'em comin down; and the sun froze so he couldn't shine; and the moon didn't git up at all, *she* didn't; and this here arth was as dark nor a stack o' chowdered niggers."

Here the Irishman, unable to stand it longer, roared out:

"Howly saints! ye're not spaking truth, now, Mither Black George!"

"Aint I, though?" answered the old trapper, gravely, slyly tipping the wink to

one of his companions. "D'ye think I'd lie 'bout it! You remembers the time, Will?"

"Well I does, hoss," replied Will, with a grin.

"In course ye does, and so does every body that knowed any thing 'bout it. I may hev exaggerated a leetle 'bout the stars and them things, but I jest tell ye what was fact and no mistake, and I'll be dog-gone ef I doesn't stake my v'racity on its being true's preachin!"

Here the old man made a pause.

"Well, well, go on!" cried I.

"Ay, ay!" echoed Huntly.

"Well," said Black George, "a leetle drap more o' that critter—jest a taste—case the truth makes me so infernal dry, you can't tell. Augh! thankee—(returning the bottle)—feel myself agin now. But let's see, whar was I?"

"You were speaking about the weather."

"So I was; that's a fact; I'll be dog-gone ef I wasn't! Well, as I's a sayin, it got so cold that when you throwed water up in the air, it all froze afore it could git down, and acterly had to stay thar, case it froze right on to the atmospheric."

"On to what?"

"The atmospheric."

"What is that?"

"You doesn't know what atmospheric is! Well, I'll be dog-gone ef I'm goin to 'lighten nobody; much's I ken do to understand for myself. But I knows the water froze to that article, for that's what I hearn a schollard call it, and I reckon he knowed a heap any how."

"Well, well, the story," cried I.

"Yes, well, I haint got through tellin how cold it was yit. Not only the water froze to the atmospheric, but the animals as used to run o' nights all quit the business, and you could walk right up to one and pat him han'some; case why—his eye-sight was all froze right up tight to his head. Fact! I'll be dog-gone ef it wasn't!

"Well, I'd bin out a trappin, and had made a purty good lick at it, and was comin down to Bent's Fort, to make a lounge for the winter—leastwise for what was

left on't—when jest as I crossed Cherry Creek, arter having left the Sothe Platte, I wish I may be smashed, ef I didn't see 'bout a dozen cussed Rapahos (Arrapahoes) coming toward me on hosses, as ef old Nick himself was arter 'em. I looked around me, and darned o' a thing could I see but snow and ice—and the snow was froze so hard that the hosses' and muleys' feet didn't make no impression on't. I was all alone, hoss-back, with three good muleys, all packed han'some; for Jim Davis—him as travelled with 'me—and Andy Forsker, another chap that made our party—had gone round another way, jest for fear o' them same painted heathen as was now comin up. But ye see I'd bin bolder nor them, and now I was a-goin to pay for't, sartin; for I seed by thar looks, they was bound to 'raise my hair'* ef I didn't do somethin for my country quicker. I looked all around me, and thought I was a gone beaver fast enough. I had a purty good hoss under me, and I knowed he only *could* save me, and a mighty slim chance he'd have on't at that. Howsomever, I reckon-ed it wasn't best to say die ef I could live, and I didn't like the notion o' bein 'rubbed out'† by sich a dog-gone, scrimptious lookin set o' half humans as them thar Rapahos. I cast around me, and seed that old Sweetlove, (rifle) and her pups, (pistols) and my butchers, (knife and tomahawk) was all about; and so I jest swore I'd set my traps and make one on 'em 'come, ef I 'went a wolfin' for it.

"I said thar was 'bout a dozen—maybe more—and they was ticklin thar hosses' ribs mighty han'some, you'd better believe, and a comin for me with a perfect looseness, every one on 'em carryin a bow, and every bow bent with an arrer in it. I knowed my muleys was gone, sartin, and all my traps and furs; but jest then I felt so all-fired mad, that I thought ef I could throw a couple, I wouldn't care a kick. So instead o' trying to run away, I hollered 'Whoa' to the animals, and waited for the redskins to come up.—(Jest a drap more o' that, Rash, ef you please; for this here

* Take my scalp.

† Killed.

hoss is as dry to-night as a dog-woried skunk.)

"Well, on they comes, thunderin away like a newly invented arthquake, and I 'spected for sartin I was a gone beaver. Jest afore they got up so as they could let thar shafts riddle me, the infernal cowards seein as how I didn't budge, had the oudaciousness to come to a halt, and stare at me as ef I was a kangaroo. I raised Sweetlove, and told her to tell 'em I's about, and 'some in a bar fight.' She answered right han'some, did Sweetlove, and down the for'ard one drapped right purty, he did. Well, this sot the rest on 'em in a rage, and afore I knowed it, they was all round me, yellin like the old Scratch.— Half a dozen shafts come hiss in through my buckskins, and two on 'em stuck right in my meat-bag, and made me feel all over in spots like a Guinea nigger. Instanter I pulled out Sweetlove's pups, and set 'em to barkin, and two more o' the humans drapped down to see how the snow felt. Knowin it wasn't no use to be foolin my time, I jerked the ropes, and told Skinflint to travel afore my hair was raised, leavin the muleys to do what they liked.

"Seein me a-goin, the oudacious Rapa-hos thought they'd stop me; but I rid right through 'em purty, and got another arrer in my back for it.

"Arter I'd got away, I looked round and seed two on 'em a-comin like all possessed, with thar lariats doubled for a throw. I knowed ef they got near enough, I'd be snaked off like a dead nigger, and my hair raised afore I could say Jack Robinson. Maybe I didn't ax Skinflint to do his purtiest, and maybe he didn't, hey! Why he left a trail o' fire behind him, as he went over that frozen snow, that looked for all nater like a streak o' big lightnin. But it didn't seem to be o' no use; for the infernal scamps come thunderin on, jest about so fur behind, and I seed thar hosses was all o' the right stuff. The sun was about a two hour up, and thar he stayed, he did; for it was so almighty cold, as I said afore, he couldn't git down to hide.

"Well, on we run, and run, and run, till the hosses smoked and puffed like a Maassassip steamer, and still we run. I

made tracks as nigh as I could calculate for the mountains, in the direction o' Pike's Peak, and on we went, as ef old Brimstone was arter us. I calculated my chasers 'ud git tired and gin in; but they was the real grit, and didn't seem to mind it. At last they begun to gain on me, and I knowed from the 'signs' o' Skinflint, that he'd hev to go under, sure's guns, ef I didn't come to a rest purty soon. You'd better believe I felt queer jest then, and thought over all my sins, with the arrers stickin in my belly and back like all git out. I tried to pray; but I'd never larnt no prayers when a pup, and now I was too old a dog to ketch new tricks; besides, it was so all-fired cold, that my thoughts stuck in my head like they was pinned thar with icykels. I'd bin chased afore by the Commanches and Blackfoot, by the Pawnees and Kickapoos, by the Crows and Chickasaws, but I'd never had sich feelins as now. The short on't is, boys, I was gittin the squaw into me, and I knowed it; but I'll be dog-gone ef I could help it, to save my hair, that stood up so stiff and straight as to raise my hat and let the atmospheric in about a feet. I was gittin outrageous cold, too, and could feel my heart pumpin up icykels by the sack full, and I knowed death was about sartin as daylight.

"'Well,' sez I to myself, 'old hoss, you've got to go under and lose your top-knot, so what's the use a kickin?'

"'Howsomever,' I answered, 'sposi: I has, I reckon's best to die game, aint it?'— and with this I pulled old Sweetlove round and commenced fodderin her as best I could. She knowed what was wanted, did Sweetlove, and looked right sassy, I'll be dog-gone ef she didn't.

"'You're a few, aint you?' sez I, as I rammed home an all-fired charge of powder, that made her grunt like forty.

"Well, I turned round, fetched her up to my face, and 'drawin a bead'* on to the nearest, pulled the trigger.

"Now you needn't believe it without ye take a notion, but I'll be rumfuzzled (stir that fire, Ned, or this here meat won't

* Taking close sight,

git toasted till midnight), ef she didn't hold shoot about a minnet, and I all the time squintin away too, afore the fire could melt the ice round the powder and let her off. That's a fact!—I'll be dog-gone ef it wasn't!

"Well, she went off at last, *she* did, with a whoass-k cheeess-cup cho-bang, and I hope I may be dogged for a possum, ef one o' my chasers didn't hev to pile himself on a level with his moccasin right han'some. Now I thought as how this 'ud start the wind out o' t'other, and put him on the back'ard track. But it didn't. He didn't seem to mind it no more'n's ef it was the commonest thing out.

"Well," thinks I to myself, 'maybe you'll ketch a few ef you keep foolin your time that-a-ways;' and so I set to work and foddered Sweetlove agin.

"By this time poor Skinflint, I seed, was gittin top-heavy right smart, and I knowed ef I done any thing, it 'ud hev to be did afore the beginnin o' next month, or 'twouldn't be o' no use, not a darned bit. Well, I tuk squint agin, plum-center, and blazed away; but hang me up for bar's meat, ef it made the least difrence with the skunk of a Rapaho. I was perfect dumfouzled; complete used up; for I'd never missed a target o' that size afore, sence I was big enough to shoot pop-guns to flies. I felt sort o' chawed up. Never felt so all of a heap afore but once't, and that was when I axed Suke Harris to hev sue, and she said 'No.'

"Now you'd better calculate I hadn't no great deal o' time to think, for thar he was—the cussed Injin—jest as plain as the nose on your face, and a-comin full spfit right at me, with his rope quirled in his hand, jest ready for a throw. Quicker as winkin, I foddered Sweetlove agin, and gin him another plum-center, which in-course I spected would knock the hind-sights off on him. Did it! Now you ken take my possibles, traps and muleys, ef it did. Did it! No! reckons it didn't. Thar he sot, straight up and down, a thunderin on jest as ef the arth was made for his special purpose. I begun to git skeered in arnest, and thought maybe it was the devil deformed into a Injin; and I'd a no-

tion to put in a silver bullet, only I didn't happen to have none 'bout me.

"On he come, the scamp, and on I bolted—or tried to rayther—for Skinflint had got used up, and down he pitched, sending me right plum over his noddle on to my back, whar I lay sprawlin like a bottle o' spilt whisky.

"It's all up now, and I'm a gone possum,' sez I, as I seed the Injin come tearin ahead; and I drewed the old butcher, and tried to feed one o' the pups, but my fingers was so numb I couldn't.

"Well up rides old Rapaho, lookin as savage nor a meat-axe, his black eyes shinin like two coals o' fire. Well now what d'ye think he did! Did he shoot me? No! Did he rope (lasso) me? No! Did he try to? No, I'll be dog-gone ef he did!"

"What did he do?" inquired I, quickly.

"Ay, ay, what did he do?" echoed Huntly.

"Howly Mary! if ye knows what he did, Mистер George, spaak it, jist, an re-lave yer mind now," put in the Irishman.

The old trapper smiled.

"Rash," he said, "ef that thar bottle isn't empty, I'll jest take another pull."

"Taint all gone yit," answered Rash Will; "'spect 'twill be soon; but go it, old hoss, and gin us the rest o' that—Rapahos affair."

The old man drank, smacked his lips, smiled, and remarked:

"How comfortable deer meat smells."

"But the Rapaho," cried I, "what did he do?"

"Do!" answered Black George, with a singular expression that I could not define: "Do! why he rid up to my hoss and stopped, *he* did; and didn't do nothin else, *he* didn't."

"How so?"

"Case he was done for."

"Dead?"

"As dog meat—augh!"

"Ah! you had killed him, then?" cried I.

"No I hadn't, though."

"What then?"

"He'd died himself, *he* had.

"How, died?"

"Froze, young Bossons, froze as stiff nor a white oak."

"Froze!" echoed two or three voices, mine among the rest.

"Yes, blaze my old carcass and send me a wolf in, ef he hadn't! and I, like a — fool, had bin runnin away from a dead nigger. Maybe I didn't swear some, and say a few that aint spoke in the pulpit. You'd jest better believe, strangers, I felt soft as a chowdered possum."

"But how had he followed you if he was dead?"

"He hadn't, not pertikerlarly; but his hoss had; for in course he didn't know his rider was rubbed out, and so he kept on arter mine, till the divin o' old Skinflint fetched him up a-standin."

"Of course you were rejoiced at your escape?"

"Why, sort o' so, and sort o' not; for I felt so all-fired mean, to think I'd bin runnin from and shootin to a dead Injin, that for a long spell I couldn't git wind enough to say nothin."

"At last I sez, sez I, 'This here's purty business now, aint it? I reckons, old beaver, you've had little to do, to be foolin your time and burnin your powder this way;' and then I outs with old butcher, and swore I'd raise his hair."

"Well, I coaxed my way up to his old hoss, and got hold on himself; but it wasn't a darned bit o' use; he was froze tight to the saddle. I tried to cut into him, but I'll be dog-gone ef my knife ud enter more'n 'twould into a stone. Jest then I tuk a look round, and may I be rumbuzzled, ef the sun hadn't got thawed a leetle, and, arter strainin so hard, had gone down with a jump right behind a big ridge."

"Well," sez I, 'this nigger'd better be making tracks somewhar, or he'll spile, sure.'

"So wishin old Rapaho a pleasant time on't, I tried Skinflint, but findin it wasn't no go, I gathered up sich things from my possibles as I couldn't do without, pulled the arrers out o' me, and off I sot for a ridge 'bout five mile away."

"When I got thar, it was so dark you couldn't tell a tree from a nigger, and the wind—phe-ew!—it blowed so one time that I had to hitch on to a rock to keep myself any whar. I tried to strike a fire,

but my fingers was so cold I couldn't, and the snow had kivered up every thing, so that thar wasn't nothin to make it on.

"'It's a screecher,' I sez, to myself, 'and afore daylight I'll be rubbed out, sartin.'

"At last I begun to feel so queer, and so sleepy I couldn't hardly keep open my peepers. I knowed ef I laid down and slept, I was a gone beaver; and so stumblin about, I got hold o' a tree, and begun to climb, and when I got up high enough, I slid down agin, and you'd better believe this here operation felt good—ef it didn't I wouldn't tell ye so."

"The whole blessed night I worked in this way, and it blowin, and snowin, and freezin all the time like sixty. At last mornin come, but it was a dorned long while about it, and arter I'd gin in that daylight wasn't no whar."

"Well, soon's I could see, off I sot, and travelled, and travelled, I didn't know which way nor whar, till night had come agin, and I hadn't seen nothin human—and besides, I'd eat up all my fodder. I tried to shoot somethin, but I'll be dogged ef thar was any varmint to shoot o' no kind—they was all froze up'tighter nor darnation."

"That night went like tother, in rubbin a tree, and the next day I sot on agin, and travelled till night, without eatin a bit o' food. I had a leetle bacca, and that I chawed like all git out, until I'd chawed it all up, and begun to think I was chawed up myself. I'd got, though, whar I could find a few sticks, and I made a fire, and it'd a jest done ye good to seen the way I sot to it."

"The next mornin I put on agin, but I'd got so powerful weak, that I rolled round like I'd bin spilin a quart. Night come agin, and I'd got worse tangled up nor ever, and didn't know the pint o' compass from a buffler's tail."

"'Well, it's all up with this here coon,' I sez; 'and so what's the use o' tryin? Might as well die now as when I've got more sins to count;' and so givin old Sweetlove a smack, and tellin her to be a good gal, I keeled over as nateral as shootin. I looked up'ard, and seed a bright

star that 'ud jest thawed its way down, and thinkin' maybe I'd be thar soon, I gin in and shut my peepers, as I spected for the last time.

"How long I laid thar I never knowed, and never spect to; but when I seed daylight agin, I found this here hoss in a Injin lodge, somewhar about, and tickle me with a pitch-pine knot ef I ever knowed exactly whar; for I forgot to 'blaze'* the place, and couldn't never find it agin. At fust in course I thought I was in the other country folks tells about; and thinks I, I've bin stuck among the Injins, jest to punish me for raisin so much hair while on the arth. I begun to git skeered, I tell ye; but it wasn't long afore I seed a sight that made it seem like Heaven any how—leastwise I felt perfectly willin to be punished that way eternally, I did.—(I say, Bosson, got any more bacca? This here travels like a May frost.)"

"Well, what did you see?" I inquired, as I hastily supplied him with the desired article.

"See! sposin you guess now. You're what they calls Yankee, and ort to guess any thing."

"O, I could not guess it, I am satisfied."

"I can now," said the Irishman.

"Well, Teddy, out with it."

"Why, he saan a bothel o' whisky, in course; what else should he sae to make him happy all of a sudden?"

A roar of laughter followed this witty reply, in which Black George good humoredly joined.

"Well, you is some at guessin, you is," replied the old trapper; "but you didn't quite hit it, hoss. I say, strangers, what's the purtiest sight you ever seed on the arth?"

"A beautiful female," I replied.

"Well that's jest what I seen. I seed afore me a critter in the shape o' a gal, that was the most purty I ever drawed bead on."

"A beautiful girl?" I exclaimed.

* To "blaze" a tree is to mark it with an axe, or in some way, so that it can be identified. A "blazed path" is one so marked throughout.

"Well, stranger, she wasn't nothin else' she wasn't—I'll be dog-gone ef she was!"

"Describe her!"

"Jest describe a angel, and you've got her to a T—ef you havn't, why was beavers growed! that's all."

"Who was she?"

"Well now, hoss, you're gittin into the picters, and headin off this old coon right center. I never knowed who she was, unless she was a sperit—for I'll be dog-gone ef ever I seed any thing half as decent 'bout a Injin."

"Can you not describe her?"

"Describe thunder! Why she was the tallest specimen of a human as ever sp'ilt par-flesh of buffler, she was. She had long hair, black as a nigger in a thunder-cloud; and eyes black too, and so large and bright you could see to shave in 'em as easy as trappin. And then sich a face!—well that was a face, now, or I wouldn't tell ye so. It kept puttin me in mind o' summer weather and persimmons, it was so almighty warm and sweet lookin. O, sich a nose—sich lips—sich teeth—and, heavens *and* arth! sich a smile!—(A drap more, Will, for this child's mouth's gittin watery a thinkin, and that meat looks like feedin time.)"

"Why, now, you have raised my curiosity to the highest point," I said, "and so I must have the rest of the story forthwith."

"Boys often git thar curiosity raised out here—aways, and thar hair too sometimes," replied the old hunter, coolly, taking his meat off the stick and commencing to eat.

"But you are going to finish your story, George?" queried Huntly, quickly.

"Why, I spect I'll hev to; but I'll make it short; for I never likes to talk much 'bout that gal; I al'ays feel so much all overish, I can't tell ye how."

"Perhaps you got in love with her," returned Huntly, jocosely.

The old trapper suddenly paused, with the meat half way to his mouth, and turned upon my friend with a frown and gleaming eyes.

"Look heyar, boy," he said, "you didn't mean to insult this child, I reckon?"

"Far from it," answered Huntly, quickly. "I only spoke in jest, and crave pardon if I offended."

"Twon't do to jest about every thing, young chap, case thar is spots as won't bear rubbin. Howsomever, I sees you didn't mean nothin, and so I'll not pack it. Talkin of love! Now I doesn't know much 'bout the article, though I've seed nigh sixty year, and never was spliced to no gal; but I'll tell you what 'tis, Bosson, ef I'd bin thirty year younger, ef I hadn't made tracks with that'ar gal, and hitched, then call me a nigger and let me spile."

"How old was she?" I asked.

"Jest old enough hto be purty, *she* was."

"But how had she found you so opportunely?"

"That's whar I'm fooled; for though I axed her, and she told me, I'll be dog-gone ef I wasn't thinkin how purty she looked when she talked, and let the whole on't slip me like tryin to throw a bufler with a greased rope. All I could ever ketch on't was, that she or some other Injin, or somebody else, come across me and tuk me in, did up my scratches, and fetched me sensible. She said she was purty much of a beaver among the Injins, and could do 'bout as she tuk a notion; but that ef I wanted my hair, I'd better be leavin right smartly, or maybe I'd be made meat of—*ugh!*"

"Well, arter it come dark, she packed some fodder for me, and acterly went herself along and seed me through the camp—for it wasn't a reg'lar village of Injins no how.

"What tribe's this?" I axed, arter I'd got ready to quit.

"That you musn't know," she sez. "Ax no questions, but set your nose afore ye till daylight, and don't come heyar agin, or you're dead nigger."

"But ef you won't tell this child the Injins, tell me who you is?"

"I'm called Leni-Leoti, or Perrarie-Flower," sez she; and then afore I could say, "O, you is, hey!" she turned and put back like darnation.

"I'd a great notion to foller her, and I cussed myself arterwards case I didn't; but

I spects I was feelin green then, and so I did jest as she told me—ef I didn't, I wish I may be dogged! When it come mornin, I looked all round, and concluded I was on tother side of the 'Divide.' So I tuk a new track, and arter many days' travel, fetched up in Brown's Hole, whar I found lots of trappers, and spent the winter—*ugh!* Now don't ax no more, for you've got all this hoss' agoin to tell; for the whisky's out, the bacca's low, this coon's hungered, and the meat's a spilin."

Here, sure enough, the old trapper came to a pause; and although I felt a deep interest to know more about the singular being he had described, Prairie-Flower, I saw it would be useless to question him further. The conversation now turned upon trivial affairs, in which neither Huntly nor myself took much interest. We felt wearied and hungry; and so after regaling ourselves on toasted deer meat, without bread, and only a little salt, and having seen our animals driven in and picketed—that is, fastened to a stake in the ground, by a long lariat or rope of skin, so that they could feed in a circle—we threw ourselves upon the earth around the fire, and, with no covering but our garments and the broad canopy of heaven, brilliantly studded with thousands on thousands of stars, slept as sweetly and soundly as ever we did in a thickly peopled settlement.

CHAPTER VII.

MORNING SCENE—CONVERSATION—BOTH IN LOVE—LUDICROUS MISTAKE—OLD FEELINGS TOUCHED—INTERRUPTION.

At the first tinge of day-break on the following morning, I sprung to my feet, and rousing Huntly, we stole quietly from the circle of sleeping trappers, and took our way to the eminence from which I had viewed the farewell of day the evening previous. It was a splendid morning, and the air, clear, soft and balmy, was not strired by a single zephyr. As we ascended the knoll and looked toward the east, we could barely perceive a faint blush indica-

ting the rosy dawn of day, while a soft, gray light spread sweetly over the scene, and the stars, growing less and less bright, gradually began to disappear from our view. Presently the blush of morn took a deeper hue, and gently expanding on either hand, blended beautifully with the deepening blue. Then golden flashes shot upward, growing brighter and brighter, till it seemed as if the world were on fire; while night, slowly receding, gradually revealed the lovely prairie to our enchanted gaze. Brighter, more golden, more beautiful grew the east, and brighter the light around us, until the stars had all become hidden, and objects far and near could be distinctly traced, standing out in soft relief from the green earth and the blue and golden sky.

"Magnificent!" I exclaimed, turning toward my friend, who was standing with his face to the east, his gaze fixed on high, apparently lost in contemplation.

He did not reply, and repeating my exclamation, I lightly touched him on the arm. He started suddenly, and turned to me with an expression so absent, so vacant, that I felt a slight alarm, and instantly added:

"Huntly, are you ill?"

"Ill, Frank! No! no! not ill by any means," he replied. "Why do you ask?"

"You appeared so strangely."

"Indeed! Well, where think you were my thoughts?"

"How should I know?"

"True enough, and I will tell you. I was thinking of that fair being we rescued from the flames."

"And why of her now?"

"Not only now, Frank, but she fills my thoughts more than you are aware. Often do I see her in my dreams; and the mere resemblance of yonder sky to fire, vividly recalled to mind that never-to-be forgotten night when first I beheld her."

"Charley, you are in love."

"It may be," he answered with a sigh; "but, alas! if so, I love one whom I shall never behold again;" and he dropped his head upon his bosom in a musing mood.

"Nay, nay, old friend," I said gaily; "it will not do for you to be getting sentimentally

love-sick; away out here upon the prairies. Who knows but some day she you are thinking of, may, in spite of your now doleful looks, become your wife!"

"Frank," said Huntly, in quick reply, with a look of reproach, "if you knew my feelings, you would not wound them, I am sure, by untimely jests."

"Good heavens! Charley," I exclaimed, in surprise, at once grasping his hand with a hearty pressure; "I wound your feelings? Why such a thought never entered my head. I spoke jestingly, it is true; but I was not aware that the affair had become so serious. I was thinking at the time that one ailing youth in our camp was sufficient."

"To whom do you allude?"

"Myself."

"How so? I was not aware that you were ailing, as you call it."

"Why, do you not know that I am in love, like yourself?"

"Heavens! not with her, Frank—not with her!" cried my friend, grasping my arm nervously, and peering into my face with a searching glance.

"Ay, Charles, and I thought you knew it. I acted wrongly, I know, and have deeply repented since."

"But then, you—you—love her still, Frank?"

"Devotedly, as God is my judge!"

Huntly released my arm with a groan, and turned away his head.

"What is the meaning of this, Charles?" I inquired, in a tone of alarm.

"Why did you not tell it me before?" he said, with a long, deep sigh.

"First, because it is a delicate subject, and I did not like to mention it. Secondly, because you have never before alluded to it yourself."

"True; but I did not dream it was so. O God! why, then, did you not let me perish in the flames?"

"Perish, Charles!—how strangely you talk! Why should I have let you perish!"

"To end my misery."

"Misery? You alarm me, Charles! you are not well—you have bad news—or something has happened which you have kept from me?"

"You love her, you say—is not that enough? But go on! I will yield all to you. I will not stand in your way. No! sooner would I die than mar your happiness. But I regret I did not know of it before."

"Charles," I exclaimed, in real alarm, what mean you by these strange words! You stand in my way! I do not understand you; you have some hidden meaning!"

"Have you, then, not divined that I love her?"

"Ay."

"And can two love the same, and both be happy?"

"Why not? I would not rob you of your love. True, I love her deeply, devotedly, I swear to you; and I know you love her also; but then our love is different. You love her as a brother—but I, as something more than brother."

"I see you are mistaken, Frank; and to show you how much I sacrifice to your happiness, I will say, once for all, I love her as deeply, as devotedly, as passionately as yourself; but not as a brother, my friend; O no, not as a brother."

"Indeed, Charles!" I cried, with a terrible suspicion of something I dared not express: "Indeed, Charles!" and I grasped his arm, and sought his eye with mine: "Indeed, Huntly! No, no! gracious heavens! you cannot mean what you have said! Take it back, I beg of you, and avow you love her as a brother, and nothing more—for more would be criminal."

"I do not see the criminality you speak of," he answered coldly. "Is it not enough that I have offered to sacrifice my own happiness, without being charged with crime?"

"But Charles, my friend, consider!—you have no *right* to an attachment warmer than a brother's."

"*Right!*" echoed Huntly, turning pale with excitement: "*Right*, say you! By heavens! when it comes to that, I know not why my *right* to love her is not as good as yours."

"Shall I tell you?"

"Ay, do! Quote me the law that makes it criminal for me to love and not yourself," answered Charles, bitterly.

"The law of consanguinity."

"Heavens! what do you mean?"

"Does not the same blood flow in the veins of both of you?"

"Good God! you chill my blood with horror! you do not mean this!" and my friend turned deadly pale, reeled like one intoxicated, and grasped my arm for support. "I was not aware of this, Frank."

I now became more alarmed than ever. Something had assuredly turned the brain of my friend, and he was now, (how I shuddered as I thought)—he was now a maniac!

"Why, Charley," I said, in a tone as soothing as I could command, "surely you know her to be your sister!"

"*Sister!*" he fairly shrieked.

"Ay, sister, Charley. Is not Lillian your sister?"

"Lillian!" he cried, with a start, and a rapid change of countenance that terrified me. "Lillian!—then you were speaking of my sister Lillian!"

"Assure *my*! who else?"

Huntly looked at me a moment steadily, and then burst into an uncontrollable fit of laughter, that made my blood run cold.

"Great Heaven!" I cried, his senses are indeed lost!" and I was on the point of hurrying to camp, to give the alarm and get assistance, when, seizing me by the arm with one hand, and giving me a hearty slap on the shoulder with the other, he exclaimed:

"Frank, if ever there were two fools, then you and I make four."

"Poor fellow!" I sighed, and my eyes filled with tears: "What a shock it will be to his family!"

"Why, Frank, he cried again, accompanying his words with another slap, "you are dreaming, man!—your senses are wool-gathering."

"Exactly," I said; "he of course thinks me insane, poor fellow!"

"Nonsense, Frank. It is all a mistake, my dear fellow, and a laughable one truly, as you must know. You were speaking of sister Lillian; while I, all the time, was alluding to the fair unknown."

"What!" cried I, comprehending all at a glance; "then it is no insanity with you

—and we have both made fools of ourselves indeed!”

“Exactly; so give me your hand on it, my old chum!”

Instantly my hand was locked in that of my friend, and then such another shout of merriment as we both set up, at the ridiculousness of the whole affair, I venture to say was never heard in that part of the country before nor since.

“So, then,” resumed I, “the secret is out, and we have both acknowledged to being deeply in love. Really, dear Charley, I feel under great obligations to you for that meditated sacrifice—more especially, as the lady in question is thousands of miles away, is entirely unknown to us, and will probably never be seen again by either Charles Huntly or Francis Leighton.”

“Tut, tut, tut, Frank! ‘No more of that, an’ thou lovest me,’” returned my friend, good humoredly. “I admit that I have acted the simpleton; but, at the same time (and he gave me a comical look), I feel proud to say I have had most excellent company—Eh! my dear fellow!”

“I acknowledge the corn.”

“But touching my sister, Frank.”

“Well, what of her?” I cried quickly, while I felt the blood rush to my face in a warm current.

“Did you not act hastily—too hastily—in that matter, my friend?”

“I fear I did, and I have bitterly repented me since. But I loved her so, Charley; and you know my passionate nature could not brook a rival.”

“A rival, Frank! I never knew you had a rival.”

“What! not know the elegant Mr. Wharton?”

“Pah! you did not take him for a rival, I hope.”

“Indeed I did. Does he not visit your house frequently?”

“Yes, and so do fifty others; but I assure you dear Lilian will not marry them all.”

“But—but—I thought Wharton—a—a—”

“A fashionable gallant. So he is.”

“No—a—a—special suitor to your sis-

ter’s hand,” I stammered, concluding the sentence my friend had interrupted.

“Pshaw! Frank. Why Lilian would not look at him—other than to treat him respectfully, as she would any visiter—much less marry him.”

“Then you think she does not love him?”

“Love him!” echoed Huntly, with a smile of contempt, and an expressive shrug of his shoulders. “No! Lilian Huntly loves but one.”

“And who is he?”

“One certain hot-headed youth, ycleped Frank Leighton.”

“Are you sure of this, Charles!” and I caught the hand of my friend, and fastened my eye steadily upon his.

“I will stake my life on it; and had you been possessed of your usual good sense that night you must have seen it.”

I released the hand I had clasped in mine, and staggered back as if struck a violent blow. My brain grew dizzy, my hands trembled, and it was with difficulty I could keep myself upon my feet. Instantly the arm of my friend encircled my waist, and he said, hurriedly:

“Good heavens! what have I done! Frank, Frank, take this not so hard—it will all be right in the end. Lilian and you were made for each other, I see; and this seperation will only serve to knit more closely the tie of affection between you when again you meet.”

I replied not; I could not; but I struck my head with my fist, and gave vent to a groan that seemed to issue from my very soul.

“Is it there ye is, your honors!” said the voice of Teddy, at this moment.—“Faith, now, I’ve bin lookin for yees wid my two eyes and ears this long while, to ax ye, would ye have your breakfast cooked, or be afther takin it raw?”

“Cooked, you fool!” cried Huntly, angrily.

“Thin all I have to say is, it’s waitin, your honors, and done beautilfully, by the chief cook and buthler, Teddy O’Laghererty, barring that he’s no cook at all, at all, worth mintion, and divil a bit o’ a buthler is in him now. And what’s mere, I’m to till ye that the Misther Trapphers is jist

gitting ready to lave the whereabouts, and they sez be ye going wid them, they'll be axing yees to travel."

"Sure enough," said Huntly, looking down toward the camp, "they are preparing to leave in earnest. So come, Frank;" and taking my arm in his, we descended the hill together in silence.

CHAPTER VIII.

OUR CAMP RAISED AND JOURNEY RESUMED—
A HALT—COTTON'S CREEK—ORIGIN OF
THE NAME—ALARM—PREPARATION FOR
DEFENCE—CAMP, ETC.

By the time that we had joined the trappers, the sun was already risen, and streaming his golden light over the broad prairie with a beautiful effect. Hastily partaking of our breakfast, watering our animals at a small creek which ran bubbling round the base of the little knoll so often mentioned, we prepared to raise our camp, as packing up to leave is termed by the mountaineers. Placing our saddles, possibles, ect., on our horses and mules, we mounted and took a northern course over the prairie.

As we passed along, we saw a few deer away in the distance, and occasionally caught sight of a buffalo, while animals of various kinds and sizes appeared here and there, sporting in the glorious sunbeams and seeking their daily fare, both single and in numbers. However, as we had plenty of "meat" laid in for the present, we did not trouble them, but kept quietly along upon our course—Black George taking the lead as pilot, and the rest of us following in his track, Indian file.

A little past noon we came to a small creek which flows into the Blue Earth river, or "Big Blue" as I heard it called by the mountain men, and here we paused again to water our animals, and allow them a few minutes to crop the luxuriant grass beneath their feet.

"Thar's time enough boys, I'm thinkin'," said Black George; "so what's the use o' hurryin! Spect we wouldn't live no longer for't; and jest to tell you fact, I'm in

no particular drive to quit this warm sunshine, for the clouds and snow and ice o' the mountains—Eh! Ned?—augh!

"Don't know's the mountains 'll be any better for our waitin'," grumbled Ned; "and as long's we've got to go, what's the use o' our throwin away time here?"

"Augh!" grunted the old trapper.—"You're al'ays in a haste, boy, and some day you'll git rubbed out in a haste, or I'm no beaver. Come, what say you, Tom?—you haint opened your face sence you bolted that meat—leastwise to my knowin."

"I don't care a chaw which—stay or go—suit yourselves," answered Daring Tom, sententiously.

"Well, boys," rejoined the old mountaineer, "we'll hold our wind here 'bout a quarter, and then travel."

Saying which, he dismounted his mule, drew his pipe from a little holder suspended round his neck, and squatting upon the ground, deliberately filled and ignited it, by means of punk, flint and steel, and commenced puffing away, as indifferent to every thing or person around him, as if he had been paid expressly to pass his life in this manner. Fiery Ned, however, was not pleased; and ripping out a few oaths, on what he termed the "d—d laziness of the other," he jerked up his mules and set forward, followed by Rash Will only—Daring Tom and ourselves remaining with Black George. The last mentioned puffed away quietly, until the foremost party had disappeared, when taking his pipe from his mouth, blowing out a large volume of smoke, and watching it as it curled round and round on its ascent ere it disappeared, he turned to me with a comical look, and shrugging his shoulders and winking his eye, observed:

"They'll not live no longer for it, hoss—I'll be dog-gone ef they will!" Saying which, he drew his legs a little more under him, and resumed his pipe with the gravity of a Dutchman.

The spot where we were now halted, was one of rare beauty. It was a little valley, nearly surrounded by hills in the shape of a horse-shoe, along the base of which, like a silver wire, wound the little murmuring rivulet, its waters sparkling

in the sunshine, becoming glassy in the shade, and mirroring the steeps above it as it gaily took its way to unite with the larger waters of the Blue. Above us, on three sides, rose the horse-shoe ridge, partially bare with frowning rocks, and partially covered with a dwarfish growth of various kinds of wood. The valley or bottom was a rich alluvion, carpeted with fresh sweet grass—which our animals cropped eagerly—and with various kinds of wild flowers; while hundreds of gay-plumaged birds were hovering over our heads, or skimming along the surface, and thus checkering and enlivening the scene with their presence, and filling the air and our ears with the melody of their voices. The point of the valley not belted with the hills, looked out upon a prairie which stretched away to the west and south, its half grown grass waving in the breeze and resembling the lighter ripples of some beautiful lake.

"What a lovely scene!" said Huntly, turning to me, as, dismounted, we both stood gazing upon it.

"A little Paradise that I have never seen surpassed," was my answer.

"Yes, but every thing beautiful hereabouts gets spilt to them as knows it a few," chimed in the old hunter, blowing the smoke deliberately from his mouth. "Now I've no doubt this here place looks purty to you, but I've seen blood run hereaways—ugh!"

"Indeed!" I exclaimed, advancing to the old trapper, as did each of the others, with the exception of Tom, who, having squatted himself some little distance off and lit his pipe, seemed wholly absorbed with thoughts of his own. "Then there has been fighting here in days gone by?" I pursued.

"Well thar has, hoss," was the response. "Ye see that ar creek, don't ye!" pointing to it with the stem of his pipe.

"Ay."

"Well, it look's purty enough to one as don't know, but this coon's seen them waters red afore now."

"Tell us the tale," said Huntly.

"Why it's long, Bosson, and we haint got time to throw away—so I'll hev to let

it slide, I'm thinkin. Howsomever, I'll gin ye the gist on't, and I spose that'll do as well. That creek you see yonder's bin called Cotton's Creek ever sence that time, and the reason on't is, case a powerful good chap called Jim Cotton, or 'Snake-Eye,' got rubbed out thar by the cussed Pawnees. Me and him, and Jake Strader, and Sigh Davis, had bin down to St. Louey, and sold our beavers to the Nor-Westers*, (and them was the days when they fetched somethin—five dollar a plew,† old or young uns, instead o' a dollar a pound—ugh!) and coming out to Independence with the 'rocks' in our pockets, we got on a regular spree, and spent a few—but not all—and a infernal Greaser‡ somehow gittin wind on't, and finding out jest which way we's agoin, put out ahead, and got some five or six Pawnees to jine him, and come down here to cache§ for us.

"Well in course we wasn't thinkin o' nothin dangerous, case our bottles warn't all emptied, and we felt happy enough.—Jest down here we stopped to water and rest like we're doin now, when all at once that' ar bush you see yonder near the bank let out seven bullets right among us. Jim Cotton was throwed cold, and never kicked arter, poor feller! Jake Strader got his arm broke, Sigh Davis a ball through his shoulder, and me one right into my calf. Then thinkin they throwed the majority, the oudacious skunks come tearin and yellin like sin, old Greaser on the lead. A part broke for us, and the rest for our animals, so as ef they didn't 'count a coup' they could put us 'afoot.'

"Heyars hair, and a chance for dry powder—gin 'em h—!' sez I; and I ups with old Sweetlove, and throwed old Greaser cold, right in his tracks—so cold he never knowed what made meat of him, Greaser didn't.

"Well, jest as mine went I heerd two more pops, and blow me for a liar ef two more of the — rasca's didn't drap purty!

*Hudson Bay Company is sometimes so called by the trappers.

† Pluie—a whole skin.

‡ Spaniard or Mexican.

§ Hide—from cachet.

How they'd done it—specially Jake Strader with his broken arm—got me all of a heap; but done it they had, sartin as win-kin; and thar the varmints lay, a-kickin like darnation. Now thar was only four left, and grabbin Jim Cotton's rifle, afore they knowed what I was about, I laid another han'some. Now we was even, and I hollered to the skunks to come on and show fair fight, and I'd eyther lick the three or gin 'em my sca'p. But they hadn't no notion o' tryin on't, the cowards! but turned and 'split' as ef the arth was agoin to swaller 'em.

"'Hurraw for us beavers!' I sez; 'and let us go hair-raisin;' and with that I takes my butcher and walks into the varmints; and them as wasn't dead I carved; and arter I'd done, me and Sigh—for Jake couldn't work well—we hove the meat into the water, christening it Cotton's Creek; then we dug a hole nigh 'bout whar you're standin, put in poor Jim, kivered him over, and jest as we was, all wounded, we mounted our critters and put out."

"And do ye think there is, maybe, iny of the likes of thim rid devils about here now, sure, Misther Trapper George?" inquired Teddy, with an uneasy look.

"Shouldn't wonder, hoss; for we're ago-in right toward 'em."

"Faith, thin," said Teddy, turning slightly pale, "maybe it's the wrong road ye're going now!"

"O, ye needn't fear I'll miss the track," answered the old hunter, who put a literal construction on the Irishman's words. "I know the ground as well as you know your own daddy."

"Agh! and well ye may, Misther George, and have little to brag on the whites, jist," rejoined the other quickly. "But what I mean is, it's maybe if we take anither way, we'll not rin among the devils and git made maat of as ye calls it, now."

"Why, Teddy," said I, "you are not becoming alarmed at this stage of the journey I hope!"

"Och, no! it's not alar-r-med meself is gittin at all, at all, barring a little fright maybe I has for your honor's safety."

"O, never mind me, Teddy," I replied. "I assure you I am doing very well, and

of course prepared myself to run all hazards before I came here."

"Well," observed Huntly, "I think we had better set forward again, and select our camp early."

"That's a fact," cried Black George, springing to his feet with the agility of a youth of twenty: "You is right, boy—right. Come, Tom, we's a-goin to put;" and he turned toward his saddle mule.—"Hey! what!" he exclaimed suddenly, with a stress upon the words that instantly brought us all round him, eager to learn the cause.

But nothing could we discover, save that the old mule alluded to was snuffing the air, with her ears bent forward and pointing steadily in one direction. Two or three words, however, from the old trapper, sufficed to enlighten and alarm us at the same time.

"Injins, boys—rifles ready—Suke's no liar." Then turning to Tom, who had also started to his feet on hearing the first exclamation of Black George, he added: "Split for cover, Tom, and hunt for 'sign.'"

Scarcely was the sentence out of the old man's mouth, ere Tom was out of sight; for understanding all at a glance, he had turned at the first word, and, leaping across the stream, disappeared in a thicket on the other side.

I felt queer, I must own, for it was the first time that danger had become apparent to me; and this being concealed, I knew not what to expect, and of course magnified it considerably. Besides, the story I had just heard, together with the quick and decisive movements of the trappers, led me to anticipate a sudden onset from a large body of Indians. Determined to sell my life dearly, I grasped my rifle in one hand, and loosened my pistols and knife with the other. I cast a quick glance upon Huntly, and saw that he was also prepared for the worst. His features had paled a little, his brow was slightly wrinkled, and his lips compressed, showing a stern resolve. But the Irishman, in spite of my fears, amused me. Instead of bringing up his rifle ready for an aim, Teddy had griped it midway, and was whirling it over his head as he would a shela-

lah, the while raising first one foot and then the other in great excitement, as if treading on live coals, his face flushed, his eyes fixed in one direction, his nostrils expanded, and his breast heaving with hard breathing.

"Quick!" exclaimed Black George; "fetch round the animals, and make a breast-work to cover."

Instantly Huntly and I sprang to our horses, and the old trapper to his mules, while the Irishman, heeding nothing that was said, still continued his laborious gyrations. In less than a minute the animals were arranged in our front, and we were repriming our fire-weapons, and preparing to repel the attack manfully, should one be made. A minute of silence succeeded, when Black George cried out to Teddy:

"D'ye want to be made meat on, you thunderin fool! that you stand thar like a monkey target!"

But the Hibernian either did not hear, or, hearing, did not heed.

"Teddy," I shouted.

"Here, your honor!" answered Teddy, running up and crawling under my horse, he having been standing outside of our animal breast-work.

"What were you doing out there, Teddy?"

"Troth, I was gitting my hand in, jist."

"Yes, and you might hev got a bullet in your meat-bag," rejoined the old trapper, dryly.

"Ah!" said Teddy, dolefully, "if ye'll belave me now, it's that same doings that worries meselt the most in this kind of fighting. Barring the shooting and the danger attendin' it, it's me mother's son as wouldn't mind fighting at all, at all."

"There are a great many such heroes in the world," I rejoined, with a smile; "and most men are brave when there is no danger. But I'll exonerate you from being a coward, Teddy, for you once nobly saved my life; but at the same time I think I shall have to give you a few lessons when this affair is over, so that you will be able to act becomingly, under like circumstances, and know the proper use of your rifle."

"Hist!" said Black George at this moment.

All became a dead silence. Presently the faint cawing of a distant crow was heard in the wood nearest us.

"Injin sign—but no sudden dash," observed the old trapper again.

"Indeed!" I exclaimed, in surprise; "and pray how came you by your information?"

"Jest as easy as you ken look at pot-hooks and tell what they sez," answered the mountaineer. "You know how to read a heap in books; I know how to read the sign o' nater; and both is good in thar places. You heerd that crow, I'm thinkin'?"

"I did."

"Well that was Darin Tom speakin to me, and tellin me what I told you."

Ere I had time to express my surprise, the person in question made his appearance, leaping nimbly across the little creek, and gliding up to us as silently as an Indian.

"What's the sign?" asked Black George.

"Pawnees," was the answer.

"How'd they number, and which way?"

"Twenty odd, and toward the sothe."

"Arter hair?"

"I reckon."

"Be apt to trouble us?"

"Think they passed with thar eyes shut."

"Playin possum maybe. How long gone?"

"Less nor a quarter."

"Then Suke must hev smelt 'em. She's a knowin one, is Suke, and don't fool her time. Spect we'd better put out and look for camp!"

"I reckon."

"Augh!"

Although this kind of dialogue was new to me, I nevertheless was able to understand that a body of Pawnees had passed us, and was either not aware of our proximity, or did not care to make an attack upon us in broad daylight. As the mountaineers concluded, they instantly mounted their mules and set forward; and springing upon our horses, we kept them company. As we left the little cove—if I may so term it—by way of the prairie, we were

surprised to meet Fiery Ned and Rash Will on their return to join us.

"Well?" said Black George, interrogatively.

"Injins," returned Rash Will.

"Ahead or ahind?"

"Moccasins to the sothe."

"We've seed 'em—auh!"

No more was said; but wheeling their animals, the two mountaineers silently joined the cavallada, and we all moved forward together.

The country over which we were now passing, was exceedingly beautiful and picturesque. Alternately well timbered bottoms—steep, craggy, barren bluffs—open, rolling prairies—met our view; while sparkling little streams, winding around in every direction, appeared like silver threads fastening the whole together.

On our way hither, we had passed through Independence, one of the most important points in Missouri for obtaining an outfit, and taking much the same route as that now followed by Oregon emigrants, had crossed the Caw or Kansas river a day or two previous to our camp on the prairie, of which I have given a description. Although this, as I then said, was our first camp on the prairie, I wish the reader to distinctly understand it was not our first encampment beyond the boundaries of civilization. But as I did not care to trouble him with a tedious journey, which produced no important incident, I jumped over our progress to the time when I felt our adventures had really begun. I say this in explanation, lest having travelled the route himself, he might be puzzled to understand how, in so short a time from the raising of our camp, we could have become so far advanced.

It was now the middle of June, and the sun poured down his heat with great intensity, so that our animals perspired freely, and seemed far more inclined to linger in the shade when we passed a timbered spot, than to hurry forward in the open sunshine. Nevertheless we managed, before the sun sunk to rest, to put a good thirty miles between us and our camp of the previous evening. Reaching at last a smooth, pleasant spot—belted with hills,

not unlike the one of our noonday halt, through which likewise murmured and sparkled a little rivulet—we paused and decided to camp at once. In a few minutes our animals were hobbled, and regaling themselves with great gusto upon the sweet, green blade which here grew exuberantly.

"Somebody'll hev to stand sentinel to-night," observed Black George, as we seated ourselves around the fire, which had been kindled for the purpose of toasting our meat, and keeping off the wild beasts. "Who's agoin to claim the privilege?"

No one answered; but the other trappers all looked toward Huntly and myself, which I was not slow to understand.

"Do you think there is any danger to-night?" I inquired.

"Thar's never a time in this part of the world when thar isn't, stranger," was the answer.

"But do you apprehend an attack from the savages to-night?"

"Maybe, and maybe not; but you know what hap'd to-day, and thar's sign about, clear as mud."

"Well, if you think I will answer the purpose, I am ready to volunteer my services."

The old trapper mused a moment, shook his head, and replied:

"I'm feared not. I'll keep guard myself; for you be young, and mightn't know a Injin from a tree; and it's like thar'll be powder burnt afore mornin'."

Although these words portended danger, yet so fatigued was I from my day's travel, that in less than two hours from the time they were spoken, in common with the rest—Black George excepted, who, pipe in mouth, and rifle in hand, remained squatted before the fire—I was sound asleep.

CHAPTER IX.

A PAINFUL DREAM—ATTACK FROM THE PAWNEES—ALARM—TREEING—COWARDICE OF THE WESTERN INDIANS—COLD-BLOODED MUTILATION—COOLNESS AND VALOR OF THE MOUNTAINEERS.

I was once more in my native land.—

Time had flown rapidly, years had rolled onward, thousands on thousands of miles had been gone over, and now I stood in the city of my nativity. Strange and powerful emotions stirred me. I was wending my way through the old and well remembered streets to the home of one who had been daily and nightly in my thoughts during my long absence. I already pictured myself entering her abode, and the start and thrill of joyful surprise on her beholding me again. At length I reached the well known mansion. There it stood, just as I had left it. There were the same steps I had ascended, and the bell I had rung on the night when I had so abruptly and cruelly torn myself from her sweet presence. I felt a nervous tremor run through my whole system. I could scarcely stand. My heart seemed to shrink into nothing, my blood began to curdle in my veins, and my quaking limbs refused to do my bidding. There I stood, shaking like an aspen leaf, afraid to go forward, unwilling to retreat. At length, by a great effort, I grew more calm. With a fresh determination not to be conquered by myself, I rushed up the steps and rang the bell. A servant appeared. But he was not the one I had expected to behold; not the one that had answered my former summons; his face was new to me. This was a change, it is true, and produced some very unpleasant feelings; but this was a common one, and nothing to alarm me.

"Is Miss Huntly at home?" I inquired.

"Miss Huntly don't live here, sir."

"What!" cried I, gasping for breath, "not live here?"

"No, sir! this is Mr. Wharton's house."

"Wharton? Yes, well, he—he—is—married?"

"Yes, sir, he's married."

"Who did he marry?"

"Don't know, sir."

"Was it—a—Lillian Huntly?"

"No indeed, I guess it wasn't. He wouldn't look at her, I know."

"Not look at her, villain! why not?" and, excited beyond reason, I seized my informant by the collar. "Why would he not look at her, wretch?" I repeated, hoarse-

ly. "Tell me quickly, or I will dash your brains out at my feet!"

"Ca-cause she's poor," was the trembling reply.

"Poor?" I shouted.

"Ye-yes, sir."

"And where is she to be found?"

"Just round that alley yonder—first door on the left."

I followed with my eyes the direction indicated by the finger of my informant, and the next moment found the door slammed in my face. But for this I cared not. Lillian was in trouble. With one bound I cleared the steps, and darting down the street, turned the corner of the alley, and stood before a miserable wooden house.

"Great God!" I cried, mentally, "the home of Lillian, dear Lillian!" and the next moment, without pausing to knock, I burst open the door and entered a miserable apartment, scantily furnished.

The first object that fixed my attention was sweet Lillian herself; but oh! how altered! how pale! how wo-begone her look! Her dress and appearance bespoke poverty and suffering, and chilled my blood.

"Lillian!" I cried, rushing towards her with outstretched arms.

She rose—stared at me—a frightful expression swept over her pale, grief-worn, but still lovely features—she struggled forward—gasped—and, uttering my name, with a terrible shriek, sunk senseless into my arms.

At this moment the door was burst rudely open, and Wharton, with eyes gleaming fire, pistol in hand, rushed into the apartment. Ere I had time for thought, the pistol flashed, the report rang in my ears, and the ball buried itself in the head of my beloved Lillian. With a shriek of horror, I dropped her lifeless body, and—*awoke*.

I looked up, and saw Huntly bending over me, and heard a confused noise, the discharge of firearms, and, rising above all the din, the yells of savages.

"Awake, Frank!—up—for God's sake!—we are attacked!" cried Huntly.

Instantly I sprang to my feet, completely bewildered.

"Tree, tree, or you're dead nigger!" shouted a voice behind me.

I turned around, but was still too much confused to understand what was meant. The next moment Huntly seized me by the arm, and hurriedly dragging me to a neighboring tree, thrust me behind it on the side farthest from the fire. I had cause to be thankful for this; for as I moved from the spot where I had stood, a ball whizzed past me, which, had it been sped a second sooner, had doubtless proved fatal.

I now learned, from a few hurried words spoken by my friend, that the Indians—supposed to be Pawnees, and, in fact, the same party which had alarmed us at Cotton's Creek—had made a sudden dash at our animals, which were picketed within pistol shot of the fire, and, with loud yells, had discharged their pieces and arrows into our camp, fortunately without doing us any injury. In a moment every one was on his feet; with the exception of myself, who, as the reader knows, was lost in the mazes of a troublesome dream, and had actually converted the screeches of the savages into cries from Lilian, and the report of firearms into the fatal shot from the pistol of one I had looked upon as a rival. Each of the trappers had hurriedly sought his tree, while the Irishman, though a good deal bewildered, had had presence of mind and good sense enough to imitate their example. Huntly of course could not leave me to perish, and had paused to rouse me in the manner shown.

By this time all had become silent as the grave. Our camp fire was still burning brightly, and by its light we could trace a large circle round it; but not an object, save our animals—some of which, particularly the mules, snuffed and snorted, and appeared very restless—was seen to stir. One would suppose, to have gazed around him in that warm, still night, that not a creature more dangerous than the fire-fly and mosquito was at hand, to disturb the now seemingly deep and solemn solitude of the place. In this way some two or three minutes passed, during which you could have heard the fall of a leaf, when suddenly the stillness was broken by the report of a rifle within twenty feet of me,

and was succeeded by a yell of agony some thirty paces distant in another direction, while an Indian, whom I had not before observed, staggered forward, and fell within the circle lighted by the fire.

Now it was, as if the whole wilderness were full of demons, that the most terrific yells resounded on all sides, and some fifteen or twenty savages, naked all but the breech-clout, hideously painted, were seen dodging among the scattering trees, making toward us, and discharging their muskets and bows at random. A bullet striking the stock of my rifle just above where my hand grasped it, splintering it, and sending some of the pieces into my face, maddened me not a little; and I vowed revenge upon the first savage I could lay eyes on.

"Give the skunks h—!" shouted a voice; and ere the words were fairly uttered, some three or four rifles belched forth their deadly contents, and three more savages rolled howling in the dust.

At this moment I discovered a powerful Indian making toward me, not ten feet distant, his basilisk eyes fairly shining like two coals of fire; and raising my rifle quick as lightning to my face, without pausing even to sight it, I lodged the contents in his body. He staggered back, partly turned to fly, reeled, and then with a howl of rage fell to the earth a corpse.

The Indians of the Far West of the present day, are not the Indians of former times, whose wigwams once rose where now stand our cities and hamlets, and whose daring in war, when led by a Phillip, a Pontiac, or a Tecumsah, could only be excelled by their cunning and ferocity. No! far from it. The present tribes have degenerated wonderfully. They are, take them as a whole, a dirty, cowardly, despicable set, without one noble trait, and not worth the powder it takes to kill them.—They will attack you, it is true; but then they must treble you in numbers; and if they fail in killing or completely overpowering you at the onset, ten to one but they will beat a hasty retreat, and leave you master of the field.

Of such dastardly wretches was composed the party which had assailed us.—

Although vastly superior to us in numbers, they now seemed completely thunderstruck at the result of an attack which, doubtless, they had counted on as certain victory.— Five of their party had already bitten the dust, and yet not one of us had been touched. Notwithstanding this, even, had they possessed one half the courage and daring of their eastern forefathers, they might to all appearance have annihilated us. But no! they *dared* not longer fight for victory. Like frightened poltroons, as they were, they wavered for a moment, and then, as their last hope, made a “break” for our animals, with the intention of seizing and making off with them, and thus leaving us to foot our long journey. But even in this they failed, through their own cowardice; for comprehending their intent, the trappers, with yells as savage as their own, sprang from their trees, and rushing toward them, they instantly abandoned their ~~design~~ and again most ingloriously fled.

Two of our party, however, Fiery Ned and Rash Will, were far from being satisfied with even this victory. Maddened with rage, and a desire of farther revenge, they actually leaped onward after the fugitives, and quickly disappeared from our view. For a time we could hear them shouting and yelling; but gradually the sounds grew fainter and more faint, until at last nothing whatever could be heard.

“The infernal skunks!” said Black George, stepping out from behind his tree, and giving vent to a quiet, inward laugh, peculiar to men of his profession. “Reckon they’ll stay put a few, and not trouble us agin in a hurry;” and again he laughed as before. “But what fools Ned and Will is! They’re never content with a fair whip, but must al’ays be tryin to do a heap more; and some day they’ll git thar hair raised and go under with a vengeance, or I’m no sinner. But I say, Tom!”

“Well, hoss?”

“Didn’t we throw ’em purty?”

“Well we did, old coon.”

“I’ll be dog-gone ef we ’didn’t. Come, let’s lift thar hair—ugh!”

With this, both trappers drew their knives, and taking from a little bag attached to their garments a small sand-

stone, commenced sharpening them with as much indifference as if they were about to slice a buffalo, rather than dip them in the blood of human beings. When done, their whetstones were carefully replaced, and then turning to me, who with Huntly and Teddy had meantime gathered around the two, the old mountaineer said: “Boy, you’ve done somethin for the fust time, and needn’t be ashamed on’t. Thrown him cold in his tracks, I’ll be dog-gone ef you didn’t!” and he nodded toward the Indian I had slain. “Well, he’s your meat; and so at him and raise his top-knot afore he gits cold.”

I shuddered at the bare thought of such barbarity, and involuntarily shrunk back.

“O, then you’re a leetle squeamish, hey? Well I’ve heern tell o’ sich things afore; but it won’t last long, Bosson, take my word for’t. Ef you don’t raise hair afore you’re a thousand year older, jest call me a liar and stop off my bacca.”

“No!” I replied, firmly: “I could never be brought to degrade myself by a custom which originated with, and if it must still be practiced should ever belong to, the savage. I may kill an Indian in my own defence, but I cannot mutilate him when dead. I was bred in a very different school.”

“Bread, be——!” returned Black George, not comprehending my meaning. “This here ain’t bread—it’s meat; and as to skule, as you calls it, why that ar belongs to the settlements; and haint got nothin to do out hereaways in thê woods. Eh! Tom?”

“Well it haint.”

“No, I’ll be rumfuzzled ef it hev! And so, stranger, ef you want to show you’re smart a heap, you’ll jest lift that ar skunk’s hair and say no more about it. Eh! Tom?”

“Fact!—ugh!”

“No!” I rejoined in a decisive tone, “I will have nothing to do with it. If you choose to scalp the Indian, that is no business of mine; but I will not so degrade myself.”

“Well, ef your mind’s made up, in course it’s no use o’ talkin; and so, Tom, let’s begin to slice.”

At this moment we heard the report of a distant rifle, quickly followed by another.

"Them boys is eyther throwed now, or else some Injins hev got rubbed out," observed Black George, indifferently. "Come, Tom, let's lift."

Saying this, the old trapper and his companion set about their bloody work. The first Indian they came to was not dead; and running his knife into his heart, with a barbarous coolness that made me shudder, Black George observed:

"That's your meat, Tom."

He then passed on, leaving the latter to finish the bloody task. Bending over the now dead savage, and seizing him by the hair of the head—which, instead of a long lock or cue as worn by some tribes, was short and ridged, like the comb of a fowl—Daring Tom ran his knife round the skull-bone with a scientific flourish, tore off the scalp, and knocking it on the ground to free it as much as possible of gouts of blood, coolly attached it to his girdle, and proceeded to the next.

"What a horrid custom!" I exclaimed, turning to Huntly.

"It is, truly," he replied. "But then you know, Frank, it is one that belongs to the Indian and mountaineer; and as we have come among them voluntarily, we have no right of course to quarrel with them for it."

"Be jabbers!" cried Teddy, "is it murdering the Injins twice they is, now, your honors?"

"It would seem so," replied Huntly, with a smile.

"Faith, and your honor, and it's meself as thinks they naad it, sure, the blathering spalpeens, to be coming round us paceable citizins wid their nonsense, and cuthing our throats. Och! if I'd a knowed how to lit off this bothersome article, (holding up his rifle) I'd a killed a dozen o' the baastly crathurs; I would."

"Why, Teddy," I rejoined, "I thought you knew how to shoot a rifle!—at least you told us so."

Teddy scratched his head, and put on a very comical look, as he replied:

"Yes, but ye sae, your honor, it was an

Irish rifle I was spaking of, barring that it wasn't made in Ireland at all, at all, but in France, jist."

"But I thought they did not allow you to use rifles in Ireland, Teddy?"

"No more they don't; but thin, ye sae, it isn't sich murdering things as this now they uses."

"What then?"

"Why, I most forgit meself," returned the Irishman, with a perplexed look, again scratching his head. "Och! now I come to think on't, I belave it shot wid a long stick, and that it wasn't meself as shot it at all, at all, but me mother's father that knowed sich things—pace to his ashes."

"Teddy," I rejoined, assuming a serious tone which I was very far from feeling, "it is evident that this is the first rifle you ever laid hands on, and that the story you told us on the boat, about your exploits in shooting, was without the least foundation whatever."

"Ah! troth, it's like it maybe," answered the Hibernian, penitently, with a sigh. "It's like it maybe, your honor; for divil a thing else can me make out of it. But ye sae, ye questioned me close now, and I's afeared that didn't I have the qualifications ye axed, I'd not be naaded; and as I saan ye was raal gintlemen, and no blathers of spalpeens, it was going wid yoursel's Teddy O'Lagherty was afther doing, if he towld a story jiat—for which howly Mary forgive me!"

"Well, well, Teddy, never mind," I said, smiling. "I will show you the use of the rifle the first convenient opportunity; and so let what is past be forgotten."

"Ah!" cried the grateful Irishman, doffing his beaver and making a low bow, "I knowed ye was gintlemen, your honors, every inch of yees, and wouldn't be hard upon a poor forlonner like meself."

"Ha!" exclaimed Huntly, "listen!" and at the moment we heard the gloomy howl of a pack of wolves.

"They already smell the feast prepared for them," I rejoined.

"Well, Frank, let us return to our camp fire; for I see the trappers have nearly completed their unenviable task."

Acting upon his suggestion we set for-

ward, and gaining the fire, were soon joined by Black George and Daring Tom, who came up with five bloody scalps dangling at their girdles—bringing with them also some two or three rifles, a fresh supply of powder and ball, and various other trifles which they had taken from the dead Indians.

"I think we can count a coup this heat," observed the old mountaineer, with his peculiar, quiet laugh: "Eh! Tom?"

"We can't do nothing else," was the satisfactory response.

"I say, Tom, them wolves smell blood."

"Well they does."

"Thar's plenty o' meat for 'em, any how; and ef they'll jest foller us, and them skunks of Pawnees want to try this here over agin, we'll make 'em fat. Eh! Tom!"

"Will so-o."

"Yes, I'll be dog-gone ef we don't! But I say, Tom, aint it most time for Rash and Fire to be in?"

"I reckon."

"Hope they didn't git throwed. It 'ud be a pity to hev them go under jest now—and would spile all our sport."

"Well it would, hoss."

"Hark! thar goes a whistle! That's them, or I'm a nigger."

"'Taint nobody else," responded Daring Tom.

"All right. Augh! Let's smoke."

Squatting themselves upon the ground, cross-legged, the trappers filled their pipes, and commenced puffing away as though nothing had happened to disturb their equanimity. Such perfect recklessness of life, such indifference to danger, I had never seen displayed before; and though I abhorred some of their customs, I could not but admire their coolness and valor. Their sense of hearing I soon discovered was far more acute than mine; for when the old trapper spoke of the whistle of his comrades, I could not, for the life of me, detect a distant sound proceeding from human lips. But that he was right, was soon evident; for in less than five minutes after, Fiery Ned and Rash Will made their appearance, and quietly stealing up to the circle, threw themselves upon the ground without a remark. At the belt of each

hung a fresh scalp, showing that two more of the enemy had been their victims.

For some time the two smoked away in silence, and then suggesting to the others the propriety of joining them, all four were soon in full blast. After a little, they began to talk over their exploits; and amusing themselves in this way for an hour or more, one after another straightened himself out on the earth, an example which Teddy soon imitated, and in five minutes all were lost in sleep.

As for Huntly and myself, slumber had fled our eyelids; and stirring the fire, we seated ourselves at a little distance and talked till daylight—I narrating my singular dream, and both commenting upon it. All night long we heard the howling of the ravenous wolves, as they tore the flesh from the bones of our dead foes, and occasionally caught a gleam of their fiery eyeballs, when they ventured nearer than usual to our camp.

CHAPTER X.

JOURNEY RESUMED—UNPLEASANT FEELINGS—CAMP—RESTLESSNESS—A HALF FORMED RESOLUTION—THE LONELY WATCH—TERRIFIC THUNDER STORM—PAINFUL SEPARATION—JOYFUL MEETING—LOSS OF ANIMALS—SECOND CAMP.

At an early hour in the morning we resumed our journey. As we moved along, I beheld the bones of two of our late foes, basking white and ghastly in the sunlight, their clean-licked, shiny skulls, hollow sockets, and grinning teeth and jaws, fairly making my flesh to creep. And the more so, perhaps, as I took into consideration that only a few hours before, these same bones belonged to animated human beings; and that a mere turn of the wheel of fate might have placed me in their position, they in mine. Death is a solemn thing to contemplate at any time, and I was now in a mood to feel its terrors in more than their wonted force. My dream, although I tried to dispel it as only a dream, still made a deep impression upon my

mind; and this, together with what occurred afterwards, and the remembrance of the conversation I had held with my friend the morning previous, touching Lillian, all tended to depress my spirits and make me melancholy.

At length, to rouse me from my sinking stupor, I turned my eyes upon Huntly; but perceiving that he too was deep in thought, I did not disturb his reverie; while my own mind settling back into itself, if I may be permitted the expression, wandered far away to the past, recalled a thousand old scenes, and then leaped forward to the future, and became perplexed in conjectures regarding my final fate.

About noon we reached the banks of the Blue river, and, as on the preceding day, halted a few minutes to rest and refresh ourselves and animals. Here I noticed trees of oak, ash, walnut and hickory, with occasionally one of cottonwood and willow. The bottoms of this stream are often wide and fertile, on which the wild pea vine grows in abundance. The pea itself is somewhat smaller than that grown in the settlements, and can be used as vegetable, its flavor being agreeable.

As our meat was now running short, Daring Tom observed that he would "make somethin come;" and setting forth with his rifle, soon returned heavily laden with wild turkeys. Hastily dressing, we threw them into our possible sacks, and again set forward.

Travelling some fifteen miles through woodland and over prairie, we encamped at last in a beautiful little grove of ash and hickory, on the margin of a creek that flowed into the Blue. The day had been excessively hot and sultry, and all of us were much fatigued. Starting a fire as usual, we cooked some of our turkey meat, and found it very delicious. As no Indian sign had been discovered through the day, it was thought unnecessary to set a guard, and accordingly we stretched ourselves upon the earth around the fire, and in a few minutes, with the exception of myself, all were sound asleep.

I could not rest. I tried to, but in vain. The air was filled with mosquitoes, and various other insects attracted hither by

the fire-light, and they annoyed me exceedingly. This was not all. My mind, as in fact it had been throughout the day, was sorely depressed. A thousand thoughts that I vainly strove to banish, obtruded themselves upon me. In spite of myself, I thought of my dream. Pshaw! why should that trouble me? It could not be true, I knew; and was only caused by the previous remarks of Huntly, my excited feelings, and surrounding circumstances. Still it came up in my mind, as startlingly as I had dreamed it; and, in spite of my scoffings, with every appearance of reality. I was not naturally superstitious, and did not believe in dreams—but this one haunted me as a foreboding of evil to her I loved; and as I lay and meditated, I half formed the resolution to set out in the morning upon my return, already sick of my undertaking.

It is one thing to read of adventures in others, and another to experience them ourself; and this I felt, O! how keenly! To strengthen my resolution, I pictured the home of my parents, the sadness which I knew must be preying upon them on account of my absence, and the flash of joy that would light their faces and warm their hearts on beholding their only son once more seated at their fireside, never to depart again while he or they were blessed with life. I thought over all this, and grew stronger in my new resolve; and had it not been for the whimsical fear of ridicule—the idle jest of some coxcomb fool, for whose opinion or regard in any other way I cared not a straw—it is more than probable this narrative had not been written.

What a powerful engine is ridicule! It is the battering-ram of the mind, and will often destroy by a single blow the mightiest fabric of reason. It is used by fools and men whose minds are too imbecile to cope with the edifice of thought which towers above their limited grasp, and yet the very architect of such construction fears it, as does the poor red-man the annihilating artillery of the pale-face.

I lay and thought; and the more I thought, the more restless I became. I rolled to and fro in an agony of mind that

at last became intolerable, and I arose. Stealing quietly from the sleeping circle, I proceeded to the creek, and having moistened my parched and feverish lips and bathed my heated temples and brow, I took my way thence to a little bluff on the opposite side, whence I could overlook the valley for a considerable extent.

Seating myself upon a rock, I gazed around. Below was our camp fire, brightly burning, beside which I could trace, with a shadowy distinctness, the outlines of the sleepers' dark forms. There they lay, all unconscious to the outer world, perhaps enjoying the pleasure of some delightful dream. How I envied them their sleep! Beyond them, by the same light, I could faintly perceive our animals—hobbled, but not picketed, the latter being thought unnecessary—quietly grazing.

It was a warm, still, starlight night.—Above me the heavens were brilliantly studded with myriads of shining orbs whose light fell softly and sweetly upon the sleeping earth. Here not a scud floated in the clear atmosphere; but in the west I could perceive huge, black clouds of monstrous shapes, lifting their ill-shaped heads above the horizon, darting forth the red bolts of heaven, while a far-off-rumbling sound came jarringly upon my ear.

Fixing my gaze at last in this direction, I sat and watched the rapid progress of an approaching storm. On it came like a mighty squadron, a few fleecy clouds as banners thrown out in advance, behind which flashed and thundered its dread artillery, making the very earth tremble beneath the sound.

From youth up, the rapid play of lightning had strongly affected my nervous system, and made me a coward; and now—lonely, sad and gloomy—I was in a proper condition to feel its effects more sensibly than ever. Half an hour passed, and the rolling clouds had darkened the western heavens, while the almost incessant flashes of fire seemed to set the earth in a blaze, and then vanishing, left it shrouded in a darkness almost impenetrable.

Dismal as was the scene, I sat with my eyes riveted upon it, while a painful sense of awe made my limbs feel weak and my

blood move sluggishly through my veins, or rush over me with flashes of feverish heat. Several times I arose with the intention of returning to camp, but as often resumed my former position, as if enchained to the spot by some powerful, magic spell.

On came the storm with startling velocity, and presently I could see the tops of distant trees bending to the blast—the rain falling in broad, white sheets, as if about to deluge the earth—and hear the truly dismal roaring of the rushing winds. I would have returned to my companions now, but our camp afforded no protection, and I fancied myself as safe where I was.

At last it broke upon me in all its force; and such a storm I never witnessed before, and hope never to again. I feel myself incompetent to describe it. The rain fell in torrents; the wind blew a perfect hurricane; and tall, old trees, which had perhaps stood for centuries, were broken and uprooted; while others, together with surrounding rocks, were shattered by the fiery bolts, and the crashing thunder fairly deafened me. How I maintained my position—why I was not hurled headlong down the cliff—is still a mystery to myself. Occasionally I caught a glimpse of my companions moving about below, evidently trying to secure their powder from the storm, while Huntly was running to and fro in search of his friend, and, to all appearance, surprised, alarmed and distressed. Our animals too had become frightened, and rearing and plunging, they soon broke loose of their tethers, and dashed madly over the plain in every direction. I would have joined my companions now, but this had become impossible; for the rain had already swelled the little creek between me and them into a mighty stream, that rolled its dark, angry waters with fury below me, and added its sullen roar to the howlings of the storm. I shouted, but my voice was lost even to myself in the mightier ones of the furious elements.

Two hours—two long, never-to-be-forgotten hours—did the storm rage thus in fury; and in those two hours methought I lived a lifetime. Then to my joy it began to abate; and in half an hour more I again

beheld the twinkling stars through rents in the driving clouds; while the flashing lightning and the roaring thunder, gradually becoming less and less distinct to eye and ear, told me the devastating storm was fast speeding onward to the east.

I now descended to the creek to join my companions; but finding it too much swollen to attempt a passage with safety, I again ascended the cliff and shouted to them to assure them of my safety. At first I could not make them hear; but after repeated trials, I had the satisfaction of receiving an answering shout from Huntly, who immediately set off in the direction whence he supposed my voice proceeded. After a few minutes' search, during which we both called to each other continually, Huntly was enabled to make out my locality—but the creek prevented our meeting during the night.

At day-break I discovered him and Teddy standing on the opposite side; and as the flood had a little subsided, I plunged in and swam across—not, however, without much difficulty and danger, nor until the rushing waters had borne me some forty or fifty yards down the stream. No sooner was I safe on the bank, than Huntly threw his arms around my neck and wept like a child.

"Thank God! Frank, my friend," he exclaimed, "that I am able to clasp you once again! O! if you could but know my feelings of last night! I thought you were lost—lost to me forever!" and again he was forced to dash the tears from his eyes. "But tell me, Frank—how came you there?"

I proceeded to detail every particular.

"A horrible night to you, too, Frank," said Huntly, in reply. "But hereafter, my friend, you must not steal away from me in this way. If you have troubles, share them with me."

Teddy was greatly rejoiced to see me also; and he got me by the hand, and by the leg, and capered around me like a delighted child—at the same time uttering various phrases in his peculiar style, which, in spite of all that had happened, did not fail to amuse and sometimes make me laugh aloud.

I found the trappers surly and grumbling at what they considered their ill luck—being for the most part in the loss of a few pounds of powder, and their mules—all of which had escaped, as well as our horses.

"Augh!" grunted Black George as I came up. "Glad to see you, boy. Thought you'd gone under. It was a screecher of a night, wasn't it? Lost heaps of powder, and all the critters gone to the —. Augh!"

My powder had fortunately been so packed that nearly all was safe; and as I had a great store on hand, I gave each of the mountaineers a pound, which served to put them in a better humor.

We now separated and set off in different directions to hunt our animals, with the understanding that this should be our rendezvous. We had a wearisome time of it, and it was late in the day before we all got together again. All, however, had been recovered; and mounting, we set forward once more rather briskly, and encamped some ten miles distant.

CHAPTER XI.

OUR COURSE ALONG THE PLATTE—KILLING AND DRESSING A BUFFALO—THEIR PATHS—THE PRAIRIE-DOG—THEIR TOWNS, APPEARANCE, HABITS, FOOD, ETC.—THE SOLITARY TOWER—CHIMNEY ROCK—SCOTT'S BLUFFS—ORIGIN OF THE NAME—FORT LARAMIE—ARRIVAL AT—ITS APPEARANCE, INMATES, ETC.—CURIOSITY.

The next morning we set forward again, and keeping a northwesterly course, mostly over a rolling prairie, encamped on the second night on the banks of the Nebraska or Platte river. This river is very shallow, and flows over a sandy bed. We found the bottom at this point some three or four miles wide, devoid of a tree, and covered with excellent grass, besprinkled with a salinous substance, which caused our animals to devour it greedily.

Setting our faces westward, we now followed the course of the Platte for several days, without a single inci-

dent worth being recorded. The Platte bottoms we found to vary from two to four miles in breadth, and in some places our animals fared slimly. On the fourth day, Fiery Ned shot a fat buffalo, which was the first I had ever seen close at hand.—This animal dies very hard, even when mortally wounded; and an individual unacquainted with its nature—or, as the mountaineers would term him, a “greenhorn”—though never so good a marksman, would assuredly fail, using the hunters’ phrase, “to throw him in his tracks.” One would suppose that a shot about the head or central part of the body would prove fatal—but nothing is more erroneous. To kill a ball, the ball must either divide his spine, or enter his body behind the shoulder, a few inches above the brisket—this being the only point through which his heart and lungs are accessible. And even here, the vital part of all vitality, with a ball directly through his heart, I was informed by one of the hunters that he had known an old bull run half a mile before falling.

The buffalo killed was a fat cow; and turning her upon her back, the trappers proceeded to dress her in the real mountain style. Parting the skin from head to tail with a sharp knife, directly across the belly, they peeled down the hide on either side, and then taking from her the “hump rib,” “tender loin,” “fleece,” “tongue,” and “boudins,” they left the remainder, with the exception of the skin, which was thrown across one of the mules, to the vigilant care of the wolves. The “boudin,” a portion of the entrails, is considered by the mountaineers the titbit of all. Slightly browned over a fire, it is swallowed yard after yard without being separated, and, I may add, without resulting in the least inconvenience to the gormand.

Through this section of country I observed innumerable buffalo paths, running from the bluffs to the river, and crossing each other in every direction. These paths present a striking appearance to one unused to the sight, being more than a foot in width, some three or four inches in depth, and as smooth and even as if cut artificially.

But to Huntly and myself, the most amusing and interesting sights of all we saw on the route, were the towns of the prairie-dog, which are to be found at different intervals along the whole course of the sandy Platte, and through several of which we passed. The first one we came to, so astonished and interested us, that Huntly, Teddy and myself dismounted to take a closer view, while the trappers, being of course familiar with such things, steadily pursued their way.

The prairie-dog is above the size of a large gray squirrel, somewhat longer than a Guinea pig, of a brownish or sandy hue, with a head somewhat resembling a bull dog. Being of a social disposition, they collect together in large bodies, and build their towns on a gravelly plain, some of them being miles in extent, and with a population equalling the largest cities of America, or even Europe. Their earthen houses, which are from two to three feet in height, are made in the form of a cone. They are entered by a hole in the top or apex, which descends vertically some three feet or more, and then takes an oblique course and connects with others in every direction. Their streets are laid out with something approaching regularity, and they evidently have a sort of police, and laws to govern them, not unlike those of superior and more enlightened beings. In some of the towns, a house larger than ordinary occupies a central position, which is tenanted by a sleek, fat dog, supposed to be the presiding functionary of the place, whose sole employment appears to be in sunning himself outside his domicile, and noting with patriarchal gravity the doings of his inferiors.

The town which myself and companions halted to examine, was one of the larger class, and covered an area, to the best of my judgment, of at least five hundred acres. On our approach, a certain portion of the little fellows ran to the mouth of their holes, and squatting down commenced a shrill barking, not unlike that made by a toy-dog—whereupon the pups and smaller sized animals betook themselves with the utmost despatch to their burrows. A nearer approach drove the more daring under

cover, whence they took the liberty of peeping out to examine us, and occasionally of uttering a shrill bark, as a gentle hint that our company was any thing but agreeable.

The food of these interesting little fellows consists, for the most part, of prairie grass and roots. They live a life of constant alarm—being watched and pounced upon continually by the wolf, the hawk, the eagle, &c. They are very hospitable to such animals as choose to come and live peaceably among them—and the screech owl and rattlesnake are their constant guests; and it is not unusual, I was told, to find all three burrowed together in one hole. They are some times eaten by the Indian and mountaineer.

Spending an hour or more in examining the town, we remounted our horses and soon overtook the trappers, Teddy observing as we quitted the village:

"Faith, your honors, but thim is queer bir-r-ds now, isn't they! Och! be me mother's hair! it's like they've bin down to St. Louey and got the notion in their heads and think they can baat the city, the spalpeens! I'd like 'em to go an sae Dublin, now—maybe that 'ud astonish 'em a wee bit, and give 'em some new idees respecting public idiffices, jist. Ochone! Ireland's the place to taach 'em—the baastly serpents of bir-r-ds that they is."

The first natural object of curiosity I beheld after crossing the South Fork of the Platte, was the Solitary Tower, opposite which we encamped on the margin of a small stream called Little Creek. This tower, composed of sand and clay, resembles a stone edifice, and being some seven or eight hundred feet in height, can be seen at a distance of fifteen or twenty miles. To the distant beholder it presents the appearance of some mighty structure of feudal days; but a near view dispels the illusion, and the spectator sees before him only a rough, unseemly, but stupendous pile—thus verifying the words of the poet, that

"Distance lends enchantment to the view."

I was informed by Black George, that this tower could be ascended, though at some

risk to the adventurer; and that he and another trapper had made the trial some years before, and spent one cold winter's night in one of its damp crevices—escaping by this means a party of hostile savages on his trail. I did not attempt the ascent myself.

The following day, before noon, we reached Chimney Rock, another natural curiosity, which can be seen at a distance of thirty miles, and which afar off resembles a shot tower; but as you near it, it gradually assumes the appearance of a haystack, with a pole protruding from the apex. It is about two hundred feet in height, and is composed of much the same substance as the Solitary Tower. The rains are gradually wearing it away, and in course of time it will cease to be an object of curiosity. Black George informed me that twenty years before, it was at least a hundred and fifty or two hundred feet above its present elevation.

Pursuing our journey, we encamped in the evening, on Scott's Bluffs, where we found a good spring, and plenty of grass for our animals. As wood was abundant here, we started a fire, and while sitting around discussing our meat and smoking our pipes, the old trapper, who had not been loquacious for several days, observed:

"Strangers, heyar's what can't look round this spot without feelin badly—I'll be dog-gone ef I can!"

"And why so?" I asked.

"Case one o' the almightiest best fellers you ever seed, went under here. I knowed him like a trump; and he was one o' them chaps you could bear to talk about—real mountain grit, with a hand that 'ud make your fingers ache when he squeezed 'em, and a fist that could knock a hole into your upper story and let in the atmospheric, ef he didn't like ye. Yes, he was one o' the purtiest men that ever raised hair, throwed buffler, trapped beaver, swallowed 'boundins,' or I'm a liar. But all wouldn't do. Death sot his trap and cotched him, and left jest a few floatin sticks in the shape o' bones to let us know he was a goner. He died right down thar, 'bout six paces from whar you're settin."

"Tell us the story."

"It's purty easy told. Him and a heap o' other fellers had bin up on a right smart trade with the Injins, and was comin down this way, goin to the States, when a lot o' the cussed varmints jumped on to 'em and stole every blessed thing they had, even to thar guns, powder, meat, and be — to 'em. Well, Jimmy Scott—him as I's tellin about—he hadn't bin well for a week, and gittin aground o' fodder fetched him right over the coals. He kicked mighty hard at fust; but findin it wasn't no use, he gin in, and told them as was with him that his time was up, and he would hev to do the rest o' his trappin in another country, and that they'd best put out while they'd got meat enough on thar bones to make wolves foller 'em. They hated to leave him like darnation—but they had to do it; and so they sot him up agin a rock and vamosed. This was about a mile down on tother side thar; and arter they'd gone, Jimmy got up and paddled here, whar he laid down and went a wolfin. Nobody ever seed Jimmy Scott arterwards—but they found his floatin sticks here, and gin this the name o' Scott's Bluffs."

The next day, long before sundown, we came in sight of Fort Laramie, where it was the intention of Huntly and myself to spend a few days, to refresh ourselves and rest our animals, before attempting the perilous journey of the mountains. On our whole route, from the moment we crossed Kansas river, we had not been gladdened by the sight of a single white man but ourselves; and consequently my delight may be imagined, when I beheld the walls of this celebrated fortress appear in the distance, and felt that there at least I could rest in safety.

Fort Laramie stands upon slightly elevated ground, some two miles from the Platte, and on the west bank of Laramie Fork. It is a dirty and clumsy looking edifice, built of adobes,* after the Mexican style, with walls some two feet in thickness and fifteen in height, in which are planted posts to support the roof, the whole being covered with a clay like substance. Through this wall are two gate-

ways, one at the north and the other at the south, and the top is surmounted by a wooden palisade. Over the main or front entrance is a square tower, built also of adobes; and at two angles, diagonally opposite each other, are large square bastions, so arranged as to sweep the four faces of the walls. The center of the fort is an open square, quadrangular in shape, along the sides of which are dwellings, store-rooms, stables, carpenter shops, smith shops, offices, &c., all fronting upon the inner area.

This fort belongs to the North American Fur Company, and is a general rendezvous for traders, travellers, trappers, Indians, emigrants, &c., on their way to and from the different trading posts, Oregon and the United States. Here may be found representatives of all nations and colors, meeting on an equal footing, often drinking and gambling together, many of whom may be put down as implacable enemies, and who, at another time and place, would think nothing of cutting each others' throats. Here occasionally may be seen the Ponka, the Pawnee, the Crow, the Blackfoot, the Sioux and the Shoshone—intermingled with the Spaniard, the Frenchman, the Mexican, the Anglo-Saxon, the Dutchman and Negro. The trapper comes in at certain seasons loaded with furs, and receives in exchange for them powder, lead, tobacco, whisky, &c., at the most exorbitant prices. Then generally follow a few days of dissipation—in feasting, gambling, drunkenness, and some times riot—when he finds all his hard earnings gone, and he obliged to betake himself again to the mountains, to procure a new supply, to be squandered in the same reckless manner.

As we rode up to the fort, we noticed several Indians standing outside, carelessly leaning against the mud-covered walls, their persons bedecked with gew-gaws, and their faces bedaubed with paint, looking surly and ferocious, evidently under the excitement of liquor, and ready at any moment, did not their cowardice and fears restrain them, to take the life and scalp of the first white man that should come in their way. Standing among them, and

* Sun-burned bricks.

addressing one who from his superiority of costume and equipments I judged to be a chief, was a man of small stature, mostly concealed under a large sarape and broad-brimmed sombrero.

"H—!" exclaimed Black George, with an indignant scowl: "Ef thar aint one o' them infernal Greasers, I wish I may be dogged! Well, all I've got to say is, he'd better not come foolin round this child, or he'll find his hair lifted. Eh! Ned?"

"Won't nothin short."

Passing through the gateway, we soon had the satisfaction of seeing our cavallada well disposed of; and entering the common reception room, took a friendly drink together; after which, lighting our pipes, (Huntly and myself had already adopted this habit since leaving home,) we strolled around the fortress to gratify our curiosity, and while away the time till supper.

We found every thing in perfect order, all the various compartments cleanly, and the fort well garrisoned by a dozen hardy fellows, each of whom had seen more or less service, and the commander of whom was at least a veteran in experience if not in years.

The fort was not crowded by any means—it not being the season of year for the traders and trappers to be "in"—but still the number of guests was quite respectable. There were a few families of emigrants on their way to Oregon and California, and one or two home-sick ones on their return to the United States, looking pale, sickly and dejected. Some half a dozen Indians, two or three Mexicans, as many French *voyageurs*, four or five trappers and hunters—all of whom were recognized by our companions—a brace of Yankee speculators, another of *coureur des bois*,* together with the squaw-wives and children of the garrison—completed, as far as I could judge by a hasty glance, the present occupants of the station.

On the eastern side of the fort we found an additional wall to the one I have described, which connected with the main one at both extremities, and enclosed

* Itinerant traders or pedlars

ground for stabling and *carrell*. A large gateway opened into this from the southern side, and a postern communicated with it from the main enclosure. Here were *carrelled* a few mules and cattle belonging to the emigrants, while in the stables our own horses were enjoying the best the country afforded, for which of course we expected to pay at least six prices. In view of this important item, and their incapacity to meet it, the mountaineers had taken care to put their mules on less expensive diet.

In the main enclosure or common, were several heavy Pittsburgh wagons, some of which were undergoing repairs at the hands of the various mechanics employed about the station. As we drew near them after leaving the *carrell*, we noticed that several had left their employment and collected in a group round some object which we could not make out from where we stood, while others had suspended their labors and were gazing in the same direction, evidently on the point of joining their comrades. As by this time Huntly and I were by ourselves, and our curiosity being excited, we eagerly sprang forward, and elbowing our way through the fast thickening crowd, to our surprise beheld what I shall proceed to describe in the following chapter.

CHAPTER XII.

THE CURIOUS INDIAN PONY—ALARMING RUMOR—POMPOSITY—THE RENOWNED MOUNTAINEER—THE AMUSING MISTAKE—THE MYSTERIOUS EQUESTRIENNE.

In the center of the ring stood an Indian pony of the largest class, and the most beautiful animal I had ever seen.—His color was a jet black, and so glossy that it seemed to possess the power of reflection. Every point and limb was perfectly developed, with legs sleek and slim, and a beautifully arched neck, on which was a head that bore the look of conscious superiority and pride. His trappings were in perfect keeping with all the rest. A small, delicately formed Spanish

saddle, designed for an equestrienne, surmounted his back, underneath which was a saddle blanket of wampum, most beautifully wrought with fine, shiny beads of all colors, into various birds and flowers, and which being long and hanging low, almost enveloped him in its ample folds. Even his bridle, martingales, reins and belly-girth, were worked in the same beautiful manner, with beads of red, white and blue. He was walking to and fro, snuffing the air, pawing the ground, and occasionally turning his gaze upon the crowd with a proud look, as if conscious he was an object both of curiosity and admiration.

Various were the remarks of surprise and delight which were passed upon him by the excited spectators, some of whom ventured to pat his sleek neck and rub his head. At length one strapping fellow caught him by the bridle, and placed his hand upon the saddle as if with the intention of vaulting upon his back. But this, according to the pony's notion, was carrying familiarity a little too far; and with a loud neigh, a rear and plunge, he tore himself away, nor would he afterwards permit a hand to touch him, although he still remained quietly in the ring.

"By heavens!" exclaimed Huntly, "saw you ever the like, Frank!—saw you ever any thing of the brute creation so beautiful?"

"Never in my life," I replied; "and I assure you I am anxious to behold his rider—for by the saddle it is a female."

"True; I did not think of that; and if she prove half as beautiful, i' faith I fear I shall find myself in love with her."

"Notwithstanding the lovely unknown—eh! Charley!"

"Come, come—no home thrusts now," answered Huntly, good humordly. "Do not rub a part already too tender."

"Well, heyar's what's seed a good many sights in my time, but I'll be dog-gone ef ever I seed any thing o' the hoss kind as could hold a primin to this critter," said the voice of Black George, who had come up behind us,

"But who, and where is the rider?" I asked, turning to him.

"Don't know whar, but spect it's some squaw or other—augh!"

"The rider is an Indian female, the most perfect I ever beheld," rejoined a stranger at my elbow, and whom I recognized as one of the speculators previously mentioned.

"Where is she? where is she?" cried several voices, before I had time to respond to my informant; and immediately the stranger became the center of observation.

"She is now closeted with the commander of the garrison."

"Then perhaps she brings important news?" observed Huntly.

"Nothing more probable, sir," was the reply. "There is a good deal of dissatisfaction among the Indians, I understand."

"Indeed!" I replied. "And do you think the route westward particularly dangerous at this time?"

"I do; for rumors have reached us that the Crows, the Oglallahs, the Gros Ventres, the Cheyennes, and one or two other tribes, have vowed to take vengeance on all the whites that fall in their way; and it is said, I do not know with how much truth, that the Oglallahs are out on the Black Hill range and in the vicinity of the Red Buttes, while the Crows are skulking through the valley of the Sweet-water."

"Why this is alarming, truly," I rejoined; "and certainly discouraging to those who, like ourselves, are going merely for adventure and amusement."

"If adventure or amusement is your only object in crossing the Rocky mountains, take my advice, young men, and either turn back or remain where you are."

"And yet why should they turn back?" said a voice behind us. "All men are born to die, and it's not probable any will go before thar time. Courage and resolution ar every thing in this part of the world."

I turned round and beheld in the speaker a young man of small stature and robust frame, over whose clean shaven face time had not drawn a wrinkle. His features were regular and prepossessing. The general expression of his intelligent countenance was so reserved and unobtru-

sive, that I readily felt surprise he should have hazarded the remarks just quoted, without first being called upon for his opinion. To all appearance he had not seen over twenty-five winters, though in reality he might have been much older, so difficult was it to determine by his countenance. He had light hair—a keen, restless, eagle-like gray eye—an ample forehead—and a skin which, but for exposure to all kinds of weather, had doubtless been as fair and as soft as a lady's. Though small in stature and small limbed, as I said before, I noticed there was in all a beautiful symmetry—a perfect adaptation of one part to another. His limbs, though slender, were plump and wiry, with muscles of iron, and being something of a connoisseur in such matters, I at once put him down as an active, and, for his inches, a powerful man. He was costumed in the usual mountain style, and I judged had just entered the fort, as I did not remember having seen him before.

As he spoke, I noticed that several of the by-standers whispered to others, and that instantly all eyes became fixed upon him, with an air of curiosity which I could not account for—there being nothing particularly remarkable in his appearance, as I have shown by my description. The stranger to whom he had addressed his remarks, coolly examined him from head to foot, as one who felt a little nettled at his interference, and wished to assure himself of the exact importance that should be attached to his words before he ventured a reply. By a slight curl of the lip into something like a sneer, I saw at once he was not a judge of human nature, and had underrated the new comer not a little.—He was himself a supercilious man, who delighted in giving advice with a patronizing air, and consequently did not care to have his wise counsel questioned by what he evidently considered an interloper. He therefore, after taking a complete and rather insolent survey of the other's person, replied rather pompously:

“Why should they turn back, say you? Because there is danger, great danger, to them if they advance farther, as any one who is at all acquainted with this part of

the country must be aware. If you had travelled it as much as *I* have, sir, (there was an important stress on the pronoun) you would I fancy understand the value of my advice; but young men (the speaker was about thirty) on their first hunt are apt to be very knowing and imprudent—and, sir, I may add, without wishing to be personal, a little *impudent* also.”

Here the speaker straightened himself up with an air of importance, and glanced round upon the spectators, where he saw many a quiet smile, which he was fain to attribute to silent approvals of his own lofty and conclusive argument. The new comer also smiled slightly, as he quietly asked:

“May I inquire, sir, how much of the country you've travelled?”

“Thousands of miles, young man—thousands of miles, sir! Yes, sir! I have been twice to Oregon, and once to California.”

“Is that all?”

“That all, sir! Umph! that, let me tell you, is a good deal, sir, as you will find when *you* have gone over the half of it.”

“I think I have already—at least that's my impression,” was the somewhat nettling answer, which was rendered none the less so to the speculator, by a few half suppressed titters and one hearty laugh from the crowd.

“Indeed! young man. Pray be so good as to inform us *where* you have been?”

“It would be much easier to tell you whar I've *not* been,” answered the other, pleasantly. “But I may say, without fear of contradiction, that I've seen nearly every foot of ground from the Yellow Stone to the Spanish Peaks—from the Mississippi to the Pacific ocean.”

“Your name, stranger?” said the other, a little crest fallen.

“I'm called KIT CARSON.”

At the quiet mention of that renowned name, better known on the mountains and over the broad West than that of any other living being, and which was as familiar to me as a household word, I involuntarily gave a start of surprise, while three deafening cheers went up from the crowd, mingled with boisterous shouts of laughter, to the no small chagrin and mortifica-

tion of the pompous speculator, who muttered something which to me sounded very much like an oath.

Here, then, stood the famous Kit Carson! a being I had long had a secret desire to behold, but whom I had always pictured to myself as huge, rough, brawny and ferocious. Nor could I bring myself to realize that the person before me was that same incarnate devil in Indian fight I had heard him represented, and who had killed and scalped more sayages in the same number of years than any two hunters west of the old Mississippi.

When the laugh and tumult had somewhat subsided, the stranger, anxious to escape ridicule, observed:

"Gentlemen, I acknowledge my verdancy, and feel myself indebted to you a treat. Kit Carson, your hand! and how will you have yours—mixed or clear?"

Another burst of merriment broke from the crowd, with three hearty cheers for the speculator and the prospect of a speedy "wet" all round. Suddenly the boisterous tumult subsided as if by magic, and not a man ventured a remark above a whisper, while the eyes of each became fixed upon some object on the opposite side of the square.

"Stand back! stand back! She comes! she comes!" I heard whispered on all sides of me.

"Look, Frank—look!" said Huntly, in a suppressed voice, clutching my arm nervously.

I did look; and what I beheld I feel myself incompetent to describe and do the subject justice. Before me, perfectly erect, her tiny feet scarce seeming to touch the ground she trod, was a being which required no great stretch of imagination to fancy just dropped from some celestial sphere. She was a little above medium in stature, as straight as an arrow, and with a form as symmetrical and faultless as a Venus. Twenty summers (I could not realize she had ever seen a winter) had unclouded her features into what I may term a classic beauty, as if chiselled from marble by the hand of a master. Her skin was dark, but not more so than a Creole's, and with nothing of the brownish or red-

dish hue of the native Indian. It was beautifully clear too, and apparently of a velvet-like softness. Her hair was a glossy black, and her hazel eyes were large and lustrous, fringed with long lashes, and arched by fine, pencilled brows. Her profile was straight from forehead to chin, and her full face oval, lighted with a soul of feeling, fire and intelligence. A well formed mouth, guarded by two plump lips, was adorned with a beautiful set of teeth, partially displayed when she spoke or smiled. A slightly aquiline nose gave an air of decision to the whole countenance, and rendered its otherwise almost too effeminate expression, noble, lofty and commanding.

Her costume was singular, and such as could not fail to attract universal attention. A scarlet waistcoat concealed a well developed bust, to which were attached short sleeves and skirts—the latter coming barely to the knees, something after the fashion of the short frock worn by the danseuse of the present day. These skirts were showily embroidered with wampum, and a wampum belt passed around her waist, in which glittered a silver mounted Spanish dirk. From the frock downwards, leggins and moccasins beautifully wrought into various figures with beads, enclosed the legs and feet. A tiara of many colored feathers, to which were attached little bells that tinkled as she walked, surmounted the head; and a bracelet of pearl on either well rounded arm, with a necklace of the same material, completed her costume and ornaments.

With a proud carriage, and an unabashed look from her dark, eloquent eye, she advanced a few paces, glanced loftily around upon the surprised and admiring spectators, and then struck the palms of her hands together in rapid succession. In a moment her Indian pony came prancing to her side. With a single bound she vaulted into the saddle, and gracefully waving us a silent adieu, instantly vanished through the open gateway.

Rushing out of the fort, the excited crowd barely caught one more glimpse of her beautiful form, ere it became completely lost in the neighboring forest.

"Who is she? who can she be?" cried a dozen persons at once.

"PRAIRIE FLOWER, or I'm a nigger," shouted a well known voice in reply.

I turned and beheld Black George already working himself up to a great pitch of excitement.

CHAPTER XIII.

PRAIRIE FLOWER AND HER ALARMING INTELLIGENCE—SUPERSTITION—SPECULATION—THE DILEMMA—KIT CARSON'S SUGGESTION—THE DECISION—TEACHING TEDDY—THE MARCH—THE SCOUTS—THE HALT AND PREPARATIONS FOR FIGHT.

The news brought by Prairie Flower we learned in the course of the evening was of the utmost importance—being to the effect that a large band of warriors, composed chiefly of Oglallahs and Cheyennes, had taken up their position in the vicinity of Bitter Cottonwood—a place some twenty-five miles distant—and that they had vowed to cut off all the whites that came that way, either going to or coming from Oregon. The result of this information was to cause no little alarm in the station, particularly among the emigrants, who being for the greater part composed of women and children, were consequently in no fit condition to brave the assaults of a blood-thirsty body of savages.

But who was Prairie Flower—the mysterious messenger that belonged to the Indians, and yet came like a guardian angel to warn the whites of their danger? Who was she indeed! None could answer. To all save the commander of the garrison and Black George, (who now had to rehearse his remarkable story a dozen times, to gratify the curiosity of the excited inquirers, and who became a personage of no little importance in consequence,) she was an utter stranger; and for all any one knew to the contrary, might have dropped from the skies, a winged being of a fairer realm. The commander of the garrison, whom I shall term Captain Bal-

colm, had seen her once before, when she came to warn him of the Sioux, who were meditating a descent upon the fort, a surprise and general massacre of its inmates, and whose design by this timely notice was thwarted; but regarding who she was, how she gained her information, to what tribe she belonged, or why she was permitted to do these good acts and escape—he could give no satisfactory reply. On both occasions she had required a private audience with him; and on the former one had sent a request to him by an Indian half-breed, to meet her in a little grove some hundred or so of yards distant from the walls of the fortress.

At first he had refused to go unattended, for fear of some stratagem to take his life or make him prisoner. The messenger had gone back evidently dissatisfied, but in a few minutes had returned with a skin parchment, on which the same request, as orally delivered, was written with a charred stick, with the additional statement that the writer was a female, and that the news she had to convey was of great moment.

Ashamed to show further cowardice, he had armed himself to the teeth, and calling his garrison round him, had notified them to be in readiness to protect the fort if besieged, and avenge him on the half-breed, whom he left with them as hostage, in case he returned not within two hours—merely stating, by way of explanation, that he was going to hold a private conference with a distinguished chief. The result of this conference, as before stated, had been to save the lives of all, and defeat a well laid scheme of their enemies.

Captain Balcolm furthermore stated, that Prairie Flower, as she called herself, spoke the English language well and fluently; and that to his inquiry regarding herself and tribe, she had answered with a smile, that she must ever remain a mysterious being to him and all of his race; that as to tribe, she found herself a welcome guest with all—came and went as she chose without question or hindrance—and that the language of each she understood and spoke as readily as her mother tongue.

"In conclusion," added the gallant captain, "I must say, that with all my experience, I have never seen so perfect, so mysterious, and at the same time so incomprehensible a being as herself. Were I superstitious, I should unquestionably be tempted to doubt my senses, and believe her a supernatural visiter; but I have touched her, and *know* that she is flesh and blood."

Many there were in the fort, however, who had not so much faith in her identity with an earthly habitant as the captain; and I often heard confidential whispers to the effect, that she was a being from another realm, who had assumed the mortal shape for the time, merely to bring about some special design of the Great Spirit; and that when said design should be accomplished, she would never be seen again by living mortal.

The Indian, it is well known to all who know any thing of his history, is the most superstitious creature on earth, and believes in the direct interference of spirits, in bodily shape or otherwise, on any and every momentous occasion; and as the trapper or hunter is but little removed from him by civilization, and not a whit by knowledge gained from letters, it is hardly reasonable to suppose that he would imbibe ideas at war with those among whom the most of his eventful life is spent. In his earliest venture, he learns and adopts the habits of his enemy, and in some cases it would seem his very nature also; and the result is, that he becomes at last neither more nor less than what I may venture to term a civilized savage. And here I may remark, *en passant*, that your real, bona fide mountaineer, rarely looks beyond the lodge of some favorite tribe for a partner to share his toils and rear his progeny; and to the truth of this assertion, even the garrison of Fort Laramie bore striking evidence; for scarcely a wife among them, but was a full-blooded squaw—nor a child, but bore the cross of the red man and white.

Various were the speculations that night regarding Prairie Flower and her alarming intelligence. The truthfulness of the latter none seemed to question, however

much they might the identity of the former with the race called mortal. That the Indians were at Bitter Cottonwood in great force, was therefore a matter beyond dispute; and the question was, what should be done under the circumstances? To remain inactive, was only to act the part of cowards, doom a portion of their own race to certain destruction, augment the confidence of the wily foe in his own resources, and consequently raise his hopes with the flush of success, and add to his daring and temerity. While, on the other hand, to assail him in all his strength in his own stronghold, with only a handful of men, was like rushing unarmed into the lion's den and courting speedy annihilation. In this dilemma what was to be done? Something, all admitted, must be done, and that quickly—but what that something was, now became a matter of serious deliberation. Some proposed one thing, and some another, and the discussion waxed warm, and seemed likely to be protracted indefinitely, without resulting in the agreement of any two to the proposal of any other two.

At length Kit Carson, who had sat and listened attentively without venturing a remark, observed:

"Say what you will, comrades, that is after all but one way of settling this affair, and that is to pitch into the — varmints and lift their hair. I've had a little experience in my time, if I am young in years, and may safely say I've never knowed an Indian yet as wasn't a coward, when assailed in a vigorous manner by a determined pale-face. I've rode right among thar lodges before now, and alone, single-handed, raised a top-knot in full view of fifty able bodied warriors, and their squaws and papposes. Now if I could do this myself, it argues favorably for an attack upon them in numbers."

"But what, then, do you propose?" I inquired.

"Why, sir, to arm and mount on good horses a dozen or fifteen of us, dash into them, and fight our way out."

As he said this, his brow wrinkled, his eyes flashed, while his whole countenance exhibited traces of that fiery, reckless dar-

ing, which, together with its opposite, coolness and great presence of mind, had already rendered him so famous in the wilderness. I saw at once, that however mild and quiet he might appear when not excited, it only needed an occasion like the present to bring out his latent energies, and make him a terrible foe to contend with.

"Well," I rejoined, "although I came merely for adventure, and beyond that have no object in pursuing my way further, yet I will readily volunteer my services in a case of such emergency."

"And I," responded Huntly, quickly.

"Your hands, gentlemen!" said Carson. "I took you for *men*, and I see I was not mistaken. Who next?"

This rapid decision produced an electrical effect upon all, and in a moment a dozen affirmative answers responded to the challenge, while each, eager to get ahead of his neighbor, now pressed around the young, famous, and daring mountaineer.

In less than half an hour, all preliminaries were settled, and sixteen hardy, able bodied men were mustered into the ranks. These included the four trappers who had been our companions, together with Huntly, Teddy and myself.

It was then agreed that Kit Carson should be our leader, and that on the following day we should mount ourselves on the best horses that could be procured, and taking a roundabout course, should approach the savages as near as possible without being discovered, and await the night to commence our attack. This matter settled, we retired to rest, some of us for the last time before taking that final sleep which knows no waking.

Rolling myself in a buffalo skin, I threw myself upon the ground—but it was a long time before I could close my eyes in slumber. Thoughts of what another night might bring forth, kept me awake. I might be lying cold and dead upon the earth, a prey to wild beasts—or, what was more terrifying, be a living captive to a merciless foe, doomed to the awful tortures of the stake. I thought too of home—of Lillian—of the mysterious Prairie Flower—and in the confusion of all these, fell

asleep, to find them strangely commingled in my dreams.

The morning broke bright and beautiful; and ere the sun had more than gilded the loftiest peak of the Rocky Mountains, we were all astir, preparing for our hazardous expedition. With the assistance of Captain Balcolm, we succeeded in mustering sixteen fine horses, including of course those we had brought with us. We then armed ourselves to the teeth, with rifles, pistols, knives and tomahawks, and partaking of a savory breakfast tendered us by the gallant commander of the garrison, prepared ourselves to sally forth.

Before we departed, however, I had a task, which proved far more amusing than desirable, in explaining to Teddy the proper method of using his rifle and pistols, and the manner in which he must conduct himself in the forthcoming fight. Having shown him how to load, prime and sight the former weapon, I discharged it at a target, and ordered him to imitate my example with all the despatch possible.

"Jabers!" shouted Teddy, in great glee, scampering off to the target to make an examination of my shot.

In a moment he returned, bringing it with him; and pointing triumphantly to a bullet hole which he found in its center, he said:

"Troth, your honor, but thim same shooters is beauthifull things, now, for murthering the baastly blaggards of Injins, jist. Here, now, ye's boured a howle right central as asy as meself could do wid a gimlet, and yees a standing there too all the whiles! Be me sowl too! an' now I remimbers I didn't sae the ball at all, at all, though I looked mighty sharp at it all the time wid my two eyes. Howly murther! but Amirica is a great counthry now, barring the tieving baasts of savages that's in it."

Something like an hour was spent in making Teddy familiar with the rifle, at the end of which, I had the satisfaction of finding him fit for duty. By this time all save he and I were in their saddles; and hastily mounting, we joined the cavalcade—Carson in the van—and amid three hearty cheers from the regular garrison

(most of whom remained to protect the station), and earnest prayers from all for our safety and success in the coming contest—we quitted the fort.

Shaping our course along the bank of the river, we advanced some ten or fifteen miles over the regular Oregon route, when we came to a place called Big Spring, which takes its name from a large spring of water gushing out at the base of a steep hill, some quarter of a mile below the travelled road. Here we halted and held a council of war regarding our further progress, which resulted in the decision to quit the road at this point, and, by striking off to the left, keeping ourselves covered as much as possible in the wood, endeavor to gain a safe lodgement near the Indian camp, and remain quiet till after nightfall, when we must be guided wholly by circumstances. It was also thought prudent to throw out a few scouts in advance, lest we unknowingly should enter an ambuscade and all be cut off. For this purpose Carson dismounted, and appointing me his lieutenant, gave me private instructions regarding the route, and at what point, provided he had not joined us meantime, I was to halt and await him. Then ordering two Canadian-French voyageurs to dismount also, he said a few words to them in a jargon I did not understand, and in another moment all three had separated, and were buried in the surrounding wood at so many different points of compass.

Leading the unriden horses of the scouts, we slowly picked our way over rough and sometimes dangerous ground, keeping a sharp look out on every side for fear of surprise, until the sun had reached within an hour and a half of the horizon, when we came to a beautiful little open plat, covered with rich green grass and blooming wild flowers, in the center of which bubbled up a cool crystal spring, forming a sparkling little rivulet, and the whole of which was surrounded by a dense thicket, not more than a hundred yards distant at any point. This beautiful spot to me seemed the oasis of the desert; and being to the best of my judgement the one described by Kit, where I was to await him, I accordingly ordered a halt. Dismounting

and refreshing ourselves at the spring, we watered our animals and allowed them to graze around us, holding fast to the bridle reins the while, prepared to re-mount at a moment's notice or the first sign of danger.

Half an hour passed in this way, and some of the mountaineers were becoming impatient, when, to our great delight, we beheld the welcome visage of Carson, as he glided noiselessly into the open plat and rejoined us. And, singular enough! almost at the same moment the two voyageurs made their appearance, at different points, not one of the three having seen either of the others since their parting from us in the morning.

"Well, boys," said Carson, "thar'll have to be some warm doings to a certainty; and those of you who aint prepared to lose your scalps, had better be backing out or getting ready as soon as convenient."

"Have you seen the Indians?" asked Huntly.

"Well I have, and know Prairie Flower didn't lie either. Thar ar three distinct lodges of them—composed of Sioux, Cheyennes and Blackfeet—at least to the best of my judgment, for I didn't like venturing too close. They are camped in a little hollow just below Bitter Cottonwood, not more than three miles distant, and evidently have no suspicion of our being near them."

"Well, what is now to be done?" I asked.

"Wait till I've had a talk with these Canadians."

With this Kit called the scouts aside, and after a few minutes' conversation, returned to me and said:

"La Fanche and Grenois both report, they've seen no Indian signs to alarm, from which I argue, that thinking themselves secure where they ar, the savages haven't taken thar usual precaution to send out scouts. Regarding the plan of attack, I think we'd better let our horses feed here till dark, and then ride through the forest for a couple of miles or so, *cache* them, and take it afoot. I've got the plan fixed in my head, and will tell you more then. And now let's feed and smoke while we've got time."

We had provided ourselves with a good

supply of jerk, and as none of us had eaten a morsel since leaving the fort, we proceeded to satisfy the demands of nature. This done, we lighted our pipes and smoked and talked till the shades of night warned us to be again on the move. Guided by Kit, we entered the thicket and advanced slowly, cautiously and silently, for the better part of an hour, when we came to a dense cover of cottonwood.

"Halt and rope," said Kit, in a low tone.

In a moment each man was on the ground, and engaged in attaching his horse securely to a tree, though so dark was it here that every thing had to be done by the sense of touch.

"See that all your arms ar about you, and ready, and then follow me, Indian file," said Carson again; and in less than three minutes, with stealthy tread, sixteen determined men, one after another, glided from the thicket into an open wood, like so many specters stalking from the tombs of the dead.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE EVENING'S CAMP—OUR STEPS RETRACED—OUR SECOND ADVANCE—TERRIBLE AMBUSCADE—THE BLOODY CONTEST—KIT CARSON'S WONDERFUL FEATS—REINFORCEMENT OF THE ENEMY—IMMENSE SLAUGHTER—MY HORSE KILLED—A FOOT ENCOUNTER—DESPAIR—KIT'S EFFORT TO SAVE ME—UNCONSCIOUSNESS.

Some three-fourths of a mile brought us to the brow of a hill, whence we could overlook the stronghold of the enemy.—Immediately below us were several lodges made of skins, around which we could faintly perceive numerous dark figures moving to and fro, and evidently, as we thought, preparing to turn in for the night. A little beyond this was another encampment or cluster of lodges, and still beyond another—the three taken together numbering not less than a hundred and fifty or two hundred warriors. And here, stood we, a little band of sixteen men, about to as-

sail at the least calculation ten times our own force. What rashness! what a foolhardy undertaking!

"Charles," whispered I to my friend, "it is well that you and I are single men."

"Why so, Frank?"

"Because neither wife nor child will be left to mourn our loss."

"That is true," answered he with a sigh. "But do you then think our doom certain?"

"If we attack I do; or at least, that we have ten chances against us to one in our favor."

"It won't do," whispered Carson at this moment, retreating a few paces, and motioning us to follow him. Then he added in a low tone:

"We're too soon, and it will never do to try it afoot. I must stick to my first calculation. Our only chance of escape from certain death must be by our horses. We'll return to them and await the mid-watch of night. Then we must dash among them, raise all the hair we can, and split for cover, or we shall be rubbed out before we know it. I thought when I reconnoitered, it would do better to steal in among them and work silently—but I see now our only hope is by storm."

Accordingly we retraced our steps, and having gained the cover where our animals were concealed, squatted down upon the earth. As it was yet too early for our meditated attack, we once more replenished our pipes, and enjoyed the refreshing fragrance of some prime tobacco.

"I say, Kit," observed Black George, "what d'ye think o' that thar Injin gal, hey?"

"Think she's a mysterious one."

"Ever seed her afore?"

"Never."

"I have—augh! Think she's a speret, hey?"

"No! think she's a human."

"Well, I'll be dog-gone ef I do! I jest believe she's got wings and ken fly—ef I don't, call me a nigger and put me among the cotton plants—augh!"

"Faith, thin, Mister Black George, yees and meself is thinkin'g much alike now," interposed Teddy. "I thought all

the whiles she was a bir-r-d, barring the feathers which is all beads on her."

"Augh!—put out for a greenhorn now," returned the old trapper sarcastically. "She's no bir-rer-rerd as you sez. She's a angel, she is—ef she isn't, heyers what don't know 'fat cow from poor bull.'"

Talking of Prairie Flower, our present design, together with various other matters, we whiled away some too or three hours, when Carson notified us it was time to be on the move. Mounting once more our horses, we set forward, and bearing to the left, descended immediately into the valley in which the foe was camped, instead of keeping along the brow of the ridge as before. We were now compelled to use the utmost caution, as the least sound might betray us and thwart our plans.

At length we again made a halt in full view of the dark lodges, which were faintly perceptible in the dim light of the stars, and one or two smouldering fires near the center of the encampment. All was still as the grave, and, from any thing we could discover to the contrary, as devoid of living thing. Not a word, not even a whisper, was heard from one of our party. Each sat erect upon his horse, motionless as a statue, his eyes fixed upon some object before him, and his mind it may be upon death and the great hereafter. At least so was mine; and though I rarely knew fear, yet from some unaccountable cause I now felt my heart die within me, as if something dreadful were about to befall me. Our pause was but momentary; but in that short space of time, methought I lived a year.

"Forward!" whispered Carson, solemnly. "Each man for himself, and God for us all!"

Scarcely had the sentence passed his lips, when, to our astonishment and dismay, a tremendous volley rang on all sides of us, and a shower of bullets and arrows came whizzing through the air, accompanied by yells that made my blood run cold; while on every hand we beheld a legion of dark figures suddenly spring from the earth, their murderous knives and tomahawks faintly gleaming in the dim light, as, flourishing them over their heads, and

yelling their appalling war-whoops, they bore down upon us in overwhelming numbers. To add to our consternation, we heard the thundering tramp of a body of horse, in front and rear, rushing up to join our enemies and hem us in completely.

Instead of surprising the enemy as expected, we had found ourselves surprised in turn, and drawn into a terrible ambush, from which there seemed no chance of escape. Our design had doubtless been betrayed—but by whom I had no time for conjecture; for what between the yells of savages—groans and curses from our own little band—many of which had been wounded and some seriously—the rearing and plunging of the horses, and my desire to do the best I could for myself and friends—I had no time for speculation. Two of the enemy's balls had passed through my hat—one of them within an inch of my skull—and another through the sleeves of my frock, slightly grazing my arm; but fortunately none had injured myself nor horse.

"Riddle them—tear out thar hearts—scalp and send them to h—!" shouted Carson, in a voice that rose distinctly above the din of conflict; and wheeling his charger, he dashed into the thickest of the fray, with that utter disregard to personal safety, which Napoleon once displayed at the far famed bridge of Lodi.

Determined to share the fate of Kit, whatever it might be, I called to Huntly to join me, and rushed my horse along side of his. Now it was that I had an opportunity of witnessing that coolness and intrepidity, those almost superhuman resources and exertions, which, together with other matters, have rendered the name of Kit Carson immortal.

Discharging his rifle and pistols at the first he came to, Carson raised himself in his stirrups, and swinging the former weapon over his head, with as much apparent ease as if a mere wisp, he brought it down upon the skulls of the dusky horde around him with fatal effect. Not less than a dozen in the space of twice as many seconds bit the dust beneath its weight, while his horse, madly rearing and plunging, trod down some four or five more. Still they

thickened around us, (for Huntly and myself were along side, imitating to the best of our ability his noble example,) and still that weapon, already reeking with blood, was hurled upon them with the same astonishing rapidity and the same wonderful success.

On every hand we were hemmed in, and every man among us was fighting valiantly for his own life and vengeance. There was no opportunity for cowardice—no chance for flight—retreat was cut off—we must fight or die. All seemed to understand this, and used superhuman exertions to overcome the foe, who fell before us as grass before the scythe of the mower; but alas for us! only to have their places supplied by others equally as blood-thirsty and equally as determined on our annihilation.

On all sides resounded hideous yells, and curses, and groans, and shouts—mingled with the reports of firearms, and the clash of deadly weapons. Fear we knew not—at least I judge by myself—for under the intoxicating excitement of the time, I experienced no passion but uncontrollable rage and a desire to vent it upon our swarthy foe. Success so far had been with us, and numbers of the enemy had fallen to rise no more, while all but two of our own party were in their saddles, though some of them badly wounded. Above the tumult and din, I could now distinguish the voices of Carson, the trappers and Teddy, showing that each was doing his duty.

“Down, old paint face!” cried one.

“Take that, and keep them company as has gone under afore ye!” shouted another.

“H—l’s full o’ sichimps as you!” roared a third.

“To the divil wid ye now, ye bloody naggers! for attacking honest, dacent white paaples—ye murthering thieves of Sathan, yees!” yelled the excited Irishman; as, in all the glory of making a shelalah of his rifle, he laid about him right worthily.

At this moment, when the foot began to waver—when victory was almost ours—up thundered some thirty horsemen to reinforce our foes, revive their courage, and render our case terribly desperate, if not hopeless.

“At ’em, boys!” shouted Carson, apparently not the least disheartened; and driving his spurs into his horse, dropping his bridle rein upon the saddle bow, hurling his already broken and useless rifle at the heads of the nearest Indians, and drawing his knife and tomahawk, he charged upon the new comers, seemingly with as much confidence in his success as if backed by a whole battalion.

No wonder Kit Carson was famous—for he seemed a whole army of himself. A bare glimpse of one of his feats astonished me, and for the moment almost made me doubt my senses. Two powerful Indians, hard abreast, weapons in hand, and well mounted, rushed upon him at once, and involuntarily I uttered a cry of horror, for I thought him lost. But no! With an intrepidity equalled only by his activity, a weapon in either hand, he rushed his horse between the two, and dodging by some unaccountable means the blows aimed at his life, buried his knife in the breast of one, and at the same moment his tomahawk in the brain of the other. One frightful yell of rage and despair, and two riderless steeds went dashing on.

Side by side with Huntly, I fought with the desperation of a madman, and performed feats which astonished even myself. Thrice did I find my bridle rein seized by no less than three or four stalwart savages, and thought that all was over; but as often, by some inexplicable means, my path was cleared, and not a scratch upon my person.

For ten minutes did the carnage rage thus, during which time no less than forty of our foes had been killed or disabled, and six of our own gallant band had gone from among the living. Still the savages pressed around us, and I now found my situation growing more and more desperate. From over exertion, I began to feel weak; and my gallant steed, having been less fortunate than I, was already staggering under his wounds. A few more painful efforts to bear down upon his foes, and he reeled, dropped upon his knees, tried to recover, failed, and at last rolled over upon his side and expired.

As he went down, I leaped from his

back to the ground, and instantly found myself surrounded by savages. Striking right and left with renewed activity, I shouted to Huntly, and in a moment he charged to my rescue, and by our combined exertions we managed for a moment or two to keep the foe at bay. But the strength of both of us was failing rapidly, and already I found myself bleeding from numerous flesh wounds. A few stabs and one musket shot killed the horse of my friend, who was by this means brought to the same desperate strait as myself.

"It is all over, Frank," he groaned, as a blow on the head staggered him back against me.

"Never say die," I shouted, as with my remaining strength I sprang forward and plunged my knife into the breast of the aggressor, whose hatchet was already raised for a final and fatal stroke.

Partly recovering from my lunge, a blow on the back of my neck brought me to my knees; and before I could regain my feet, I saw another aimed at my head by a powerful Indian, who was standing over me. At this moment, when I thought my time had come, and "God have mercy on my soul!" was trembling on my lips, Kit Carson, like an imbodied spirit of battle; thundered past me on his powerful charger, and bending forward in his saddle, with a motion quick as lightning itself, seized the scalp lock of my antagonist in one hand, and with the other completely severed his head from his body, which he bore triumphantly away. I now sprang to my feet, only to see my friend struck down, and be felled senseless to the earth myself.

CHAPTER XV.

CONSCIOUSNESS—PAINFUL SURMISES—THE MYSTERIOUS OLD INDIAN—APPEARANCE OF PRAIRIE FLOWER—HER DEVOTION—OUR SINGULAR CONVERSATION REGARDING HERSELF AND TRIBE, THE FIGHT, MY FRIENDS, AND MANY OTHER IMPORTANT MATTERS.

When consciousness was again restored, I found myself lying on a pallet of skins,

in a small, rude cabin, curiously constructed of sticks, leaves, earth and a few hides of buffalo.

The first sensation was one of painful confusion. I felt much as one does on awaking from a troubled dream, without being able to recall a single event connected with it, and yet feeling the effects of all combined. I was aware that either something terrible had happened, or I had dreamed it; but what that something was, I had not the remotest idea. The most I could bring to mind, was a painful sensation of death. Perhaps I was dead? Horrible thought! I tried to rise, but could not—could not even lift my head from its rude pillow. By great exertion I raised one hand a little—but the effort exhausted all my strength, and it fell back heavily, causing me the most excruciating pain.

What did all this mean? Surely I was not dead!—for dead people, I thought to myself, feel no suffering. But where ~~was~~ I, and how came I here, and what was my ailment? And then—strange thought—*who* was I? Laugh if you will, reader—but I had actually forgotten my own name, and for the moment could not recall a single event of my existence. I had a confused idea of having lived before—of having been somebody—of having experienced sensations both of pleasure and pain; but beyond these, all was blank and dark as a rayless night.

Suddenly one remembrance after another began to flash upon me. First my youth—my school-boy days—my collegiate course; and then, the train once fired, years and events were passed with the velocity of thought itself; and in one brief moment, every thing, up to the time of my fall in the fight, rose fresh in my memory.

But still the mystery was as dark as ever, and my curiosity as much unsatisfied. How had the battle gone? Were my friends the victors? But no! that were impossible, or I should not be here. Had they all been killed or taken prisoners? And Huntly—my friend! Great Heaven! the very thought of him made me shudder with dread. Alas! he was dead. I knew it—I felt it. I had seen him fall, and of course he could not have escaped. Poor,

poor Charles Huntly—my bosom companion—friend of my happier days! The very thought of his untimely fate—cut off in the prime of life—made me groan with anguish.

But where was I, and how came I here? Why had I been saved and not my friend? But it might be that he was dead; while I, by showing signs of existence, had been brought hither and restored to life, only to be the victim of some oblation of thanksgiving to the imaginary deity who had vouchsafed the victory to my foes. Ay, this was the true, but horrible solution of the mystery! My friends were dead—my foes had triumphed—and for this (horrible thought!) I was about to be the sacrifice of rejoicing on a heathen shrine.

Was I alone? I listened, but could hear no sound indicating the presence of another. Not satisfied with this, I turned my head slightly, as much as my strength would permit, and in the center of the lodge, squatted on the ground, over a small fire, with a long pipe in his mouth, I beheld a little, old, dried up man, whom, but for now and then a slight motion, I might have taken for a heap of clay or a crumbled up Egyptian mummy—so much did the skins worn around his body, and his own shrivelled and livid flesh resemble either.

Drawing in the smoke a couple of times, and puffing it out to the right and left, he arose and shuffled toward me. Curious to learn the object of such a visit, I thought it best to feign unconsciousness. Accordingly shutting my eyes, but not so as to prevent my seeing him, I lay and watched his motions.

He was a miserable and loathsome looking being, the very sight of whom sickened and disgusted me, particularly as I fancied him my surgeon and jailor, who would heal my wounds, only to pass me over to the executioner. In height he could not have exceeded five feet even in his palmyest days, and this was now much reduced by age and debility. He was thin and skinny, and his small, puckered up visage bore the complicated autograph of a century. His head was bald, save a few white hairs on the crown, where had once been his

scalp lock; his nose and chin almost met over his toothless gums; and, to complete, his trembling limbs and tottering frame exhibited a striking resemblance to the bony picture of death. Only one feature about him gave evidence of his being more than a mere walking automaton; and that was his keen, eagle eye, whose luster, apparently undimmed by years, still flashed forth the unconsumed fires of what had once been a mighty soul, either for good or evil.

As he approached, he fastened his sharp eyes upon me with such intensity, that involuntarily I let mine drop to the ground, lest he should detect the feint. When I raised them again, I found him occupied with some mysterious ceremony, probably an incantation to lay the wrath or solicit the aid of some imaginary spirit.

Taking his pipe from his mouth, he blew a volume of smoke in a certain direction, toward which he pointed the stem of his pipe. This was done to the four cardinal points of compass, and then a volume was blown upward and another downward, after which he bent over me and went through a series of mysterious signs.—Then taking one of my hands in his, he felt my pulse, during which operation I could perceive his face brighten with an expression of internal satisfaction. Then his bony fingers were pressed upon my forehead and temples, and a single "Onh-chi," which I interpreted from his manner to mean "Good," escaped his livid lips.

Thinking longer deception unnecessary, I opened wide my eyes and said:

"Who are you?"

"Cha-cha-chee-kee-hobah" was the answer.

Then straightening himself as much as age would permit, he placed his pipe again in his mouth, and turning his face toward the door of the hut, struck the palms of his hands three times together, and uttered in a cracked voice the single word:

"Leni!"

Wondering what all this meant, I turned my eyes in the same direction, and the next moment, to my astonishment, beheld the beautiful form of the mysterious Prairie Flower enter from without.

With a light, quick tread, her face flushed with animation and joy, she glided up to the decrepid old Indian, and in a silvery voice, such as one might expect from so lovely a creature, said a few words and received a reply in a language to me wholly unintelligible. Then springing to me, she kneeled at my side, and turning her eyes upward, her sweet lips seemed moving to an earnest prayer from a guileless heart.

I no longer had fears for my safety—for in such a presence and with such an act of devotion, I knew myself safe. I was only afraid to speak or move, lest I should wake to find it all a delusive dream.

But my desire to be assured of its reality would not long let me remain silent, and at last I said:

"Sweet being, tell me the meaning of all I see."

"Friend, you must not talk," she replied in good English; "it will do you harm."

"Nevertheless, fair creature, you must answer my question. My curiosity is wonderfully excited, and silence will harm me more than conversation."

She turned and addressed a few words to the old man, who now approached her side and gazed down upon me with a mild look. His reply was apparently satisfactory; for looking full upon me again, she said:

"You may be right, and I will answer. You were badly wounded in the fight."

"I am aware of that."

"You were left upon the ground for dead."

"Ha! indeed! But the battle—who won?"

"Your friends were victorious."

"Surprising! What lucky chance of fortune gave them the victory?"

"A reinforcement."

"Indeed! from where?"

"Fort John."

This fort, now demolished, stood at the time of which I write about a mile below Fort Laramie, and was well garrisoned. From a mistaken confidence in our own abilities to win the day, we had neglected calling there for volunteers to augment

our numbers and render our success more certain.

"And what brought them to our aid so opportunely?" I inquired.

"Certain timely information."

"By whom conveyed?"

"A friend to your race."

"By the same messenger that brought intelligence of the enemy to Fort Laramie?"

"It matters not by whom. Let the result suffice."

"How shall I thank you, sweet Prairie Flower?"

"For what?"

"For all that you have done."

"I need no thanks."

"O say not thus."

"Then thank me by your silence."

"I will; and by my prayers for your safety and happiness."

"Bless you!" she exclaimed, fervently.

"The only boon I would have asked, save one."

"And what is that?"

"That you will not seek to know more of me and my history than I may choose to tell; and that whatever you may see and hear that seems mysterious, you will reveal to none without my permission."

"To please sweet Prairie Flower," I answered, "I will strive not to be a meddler nor a babler; though she must bear in mind, where so much interest is excited, the task she has imposed is a hard one."

"Then by adhering to it, you will confer upon her the deeper obligation."

"Yet I cannot forbear one question."

"Well?"

"Is Prairie Flower not of my race?"

"The judgment of the quierest must answer him."

"Will not you?"

"Not now—perhaps never."

"I regret your decision, yet will not press the point. But to return to the battle."

"What would you know?"

"How it was won—how I came to be neglected—and why I am here."

"A reinforcement charging suddenly upon the enemy, alarmed and put him to flight. The victors pressed upon his rear,

and left their killed and wounded upon the gory field. Before they returned, a few who beheld, but did not join the fight, found you and another in whom life was not yet extinct, and bore you both away."

"And—and—that other?" I gasped.—
"Was—was it—my friend?"

"None other."

"And he—he—is—alive?"

"Ay, and doing well."

"Thank God! thank God! A weight of grief is lifted from my heart. But where—O, tell me quickly—where is he now?"

"Not far hence."

"And all is owing to you?"

"Nay, I said not that."

"God bless you for an angel of mercy! I must thank you—my heart is bursting with gratitude!"

"Nay, spare your thanks to mortal!—Thank God—not me—for I am only an humble instrument in his hands."

"Mysterious being, who art thou?"

"Remember your promise and question not."

"But you seem more of Heaven than earth."

"It is only seeming then. But I must remind you that you have now talked full long."

"Nay, but tell me where I am?"

"In the lodge of Cha-cha-chee-kee-hobah, or Old-Man-of-the-Mountains."

"Is it he that stands beside you?"

"The same. He is 'Great Medicine,' and has cured you."

"And how long have I been here?"

"Four days."

"Good heavens! you astonish me! Surely not four days?"

"Prairie Flower would not tell you wrong," said my informant, with a reproachful look.

"I know it, sweet being. I will not doubt you—and only intended to express surprise. Then I have been four days unconscious."

"Ay, a week."

"A week?" I exclaimed, looking her earnestly in the face: "A week, say you? And was the battle fought a week ago?"

"It was—a week ago last night."

"And pray in what part of the country am I now?"

"On the Black Hills."

"Indeed! And how far from Fort Laramie?"

"Not less than sixty miles."

"And how was I borne here?"

"On a litter."

"By whom?"

"My friends."

"White men or red?"

"The latter."

"And for what purpose?"

"To restore you to health."

"And what object could you or they have in bestowing such kindness on strangers?"

"To do good."

"For which of course you expect a recompense?"

Prairie Flower looked at me earnestly a moment, with a sweet, sad, reproachful look, and then said with a sigh:

"Like the rest of the world, you misconstrue our motives."

"Forgive me!" I exclaimed, almost passionately—for her appearance and words touched my very soul: "Forgive me, sweet being! I was wrong, I see. On your part it was solely charity that prompted this noble act. But it is so rare that even a good action is done in this world without a selfish motive, that, in the thoughtlessness of the moment, I even imputed the latter to you."

"That is why I suppose so few understand us!" she said, sadly.

"You must be a very singular people," I rejoined, looking her full in the eye.—
"Will you not tell me the name of your tribe?"

She shook her head.

"I told you before," she answered, "you must not question me touching my history or tribe. Let it suffice that we are known as the Mysterious or Great Medicine Nation; that to us all roads are free, and with us all nations are at peace. We war upon none and none upon us."

"And yet do you not excite others to deeds you seem to abhor?"

"What mean you?" she asked quickly,

a flush of surprise giving a beautiful glow to her noble features.

"Forgive me if I speak too plainly.—But was not your message to Fort Laramie the cause of a bloody battle between the whites and Indians at Bitter Cottonwood?"

"The immediate cause of warrior meeting warrior in the game of death, most undoubtedly," she answered, with a proud look and sparkling eyes. "But do you not overlook the fact, that it was done to save the innocent and defenceless? Were not the Indians gathered there in mighty force to prey upon the weak? and was it not the duty of those who sought to do right to warn the few against the many—the unwary of their hidden foe? Could Prairie Flower stand idly by and see defenceless women and children drawn into a fatal snare and made a bloody sacrifice to a heartless enemy? Had the pale-face so laid in wait for the red-man, Prairie Flower, if in her power, had so warned the latter. Prairie Flower did not call the red-man there; she regretted to see him there; but being there, she could do no less than warn and put the pale-face on his guard."

This was said with such a proud look of conscious rectitude—an expression so sublime, and an eloquence so pathetic—that I could hardly realize I was gazing upon and listening to an earthly habitant. I felt ashamed of my ungallant and unjust insinuation, and hastened to reply:

"Forgive me, sweet Prairie Flower, for having again wronged you—of having again done you injustice! But as before, I overlooked the motive in the act. I will strive not to offend again and wound your sensitive feelings by doubting your generous intentions. Are there many more like you, sweet Prairie Flower?"

"Our tribe numbers between sixty and seventy souls."

"Is this your fixed abiding place?"

"Only for a time. Our home is every where between the rising and the setting sun. We go wherever we think ourselves the most beneficial in effecting good."

"Perhaps you are Christian missionaries?"

"We believe in the holy religion of Jesus Christ, and endeavor to inculcate its doctrines."

"Why then did this old man use mysterious signs?"

"He is of another race and generation, was once a Great Medicine in his tribe, and cannot divest himself of old habits."

"You seem rightly named the Mysterious Tribe; and of you in particular I have heard before."

"Indeed! When and how?"

I proceeded to detail briefly the story of the old trapper.

She mused a moment and replied:

"I remember such a person now, methinks. He was found, as you say, with life nearly extinct. By careful nursing he was restored to health. But he seemed inquisitive, and I employed the ruse of telling him his life was in danger to hurry his departure, lest he might prove troublesome. I trust there was nothing wrong in that. But come, come, I have forgotten my own caution, and talked too long by far. You need repose and silence."

"But one thing more! My friend?"

"You shall see him soon—perhaps to-morrow."

"O, no! say to-day!"

"I cannot. To-morrow is the earliest. And so adieu! Seek repose and forgetfulness in sleep."

With this she turned, and glided out of the apartment in the same noiseless manner she had entered it. The old man looked at me a moment—shook his head and trembling hands—turned—shuffled away to his fire—and I was left alone to reflect on what I had seen and heard and my present condition.

CHAPTER XVI.

SICK-BED REFLECTIONS—GREAT MEDICINE—REAPPEARANCE OF PRAIRIE FLOWER—OUR CONVERSATION—GRATITUDE—MY WOUNDS—HER SUDDEN EMBARRASSMENT—DEPARTURE, ETC.

It is a painful thing to one who has never known sickness, to be confined day

after day to his bed, racked with torture, debarred even the liberty of enjoying. for a moment the bright sunshine and clear air of heaven, unable perhaps to lift his head from his pillow, and yet beholding others, flushed with health and happiness, coming and going as they please, and seeming to prize lightly all which he most covets. It is only on a bed of sickness and pain, that we are taught to value as we should that greatest of all blessings, good health—a blessing without which all others are robbed of their pleasures: for what are fortune and friends and all their concomitants, to one who is borne down by a weight of bodily suffering? True, these may in a measure minister to his comforts—for without money and friends, the sick bed is only a pallet of the most abject misery—yet all the joys arising therefrom in connection with health, are lost to the invalid; and he lays, and sighs, and groans, and envies the veriest strolling mendicant on earth the enjoyment of his strength and liberty.

Such were my thoughts, as hour after hour, from the disappearance of Prairie Flower, I lay and mused upon all the events of my chequered life, up to the present time. Born to wealth, blessed with health, kind friends and a college education, I might have passed my whole life in luxurious ease, but for the restless desire of travel and adventure. Not a discomfort had I ever known ere my departure from the paternal roof; and when I remembered, that now I was thousands of miles away, in an Indian camp of the wilderness, wounded nigh unto death, unable to rise from my pallet, solely dependent upon strangers of a savage race for my existence and the few favors I received, perhaps rendered a cripple or an invalid for life, and reflected on how much I had sacrificed for this—my feelings may be better imagined than described.

To what extent I was wounded I knew not—for I had neglected to question Prairie Flower on the subject—and I was now too weak to make the examination myself. My head, one of my arms, and both of my lower limbs were bandaged in a rude way, and my weakness had doubtless been

caused by excessive hemorrhage. From the manner of Prairie Flower and the old Indian, I was led to infer that the crisis of danger had passed; but how long it would take me to recover, I had no means of ascertaining, nor whether I should be again blessed with the use of my limbs. Perhaps I might here be confined for months, and then only regain my wonted strength to find myself a cripple for life.

These thoughts pained and alarmed me, and I looked eagerly for the return of Prairie Flower, to gain the desired information. But she came not; and through sheer exhaustion, I was at last forced to drop the subject, while I strove to resign myself to such fate as He, who had preserved my existence as it were by a miracle, should, in his wise dispensation, see proper to decree.

Then my thoughts turned upon Prairie Flower. What mystery was shrouding this singular and angelic being, that she feared to be questioned regarding her history and tribe? Was she of the Indian race? I could not believe it. She seemed too fair and lovely, and without the lineaments which distinguish this people from those nations entitled to the name of pale-face. Might she not be a missionary, who—blessed with great self-denial and a desire to render herself useful while on earth, and yet too modest to avow it—had, at a tender age, gone boldly among the savages and labored zealously in her noble calling, to enlighten their dark minds and teach them the sacred truths of Christianity? She had admitted that all believed in the doctrines preached by the Savior; and though she had not openly acknowledged, she certainly had not denied, my imputation regarding the calling of herself and friends. This, then, was the best solution of the mystery I could invent. But even admitting this to be true—that she was in reality of the Anglo-American race, and a pious instructor who found her enjoyment in what to others would have been a source of misery—still it was a matter of curious research, how one of her age should have become so familiar with the language and habits of all the various tribes of the Far West—and why, if she had friends, she had

been permitted to venture among them alone and at the risk of her life. View the matter as I would, I found it ever shrouded with a veil of mystery and romance, beyond which all my speculations were unable to penetrate.

Thus I lay and pondered for several hours, during which time I saw not a living soul—the old Indian excepted—who, having finished his pipe, sat doubled up on the ground by his smouldering fire, as motionless and apparently as inanimate as so much lead. Once, and only once, he raised his head, peered curiously around him for a moment, and then settled down into his previous position. Fixing my gaze upon him, and wondering what secrets of the past and his own eventful life might perchance be locked in his aged breast, I at last felt my eyes grow heavy—the old man grew less and less distinct, and seemed to nod and swim before my vision, sometimes single and sometimes double—and then all became confused, and I went off into a gentle sleep.

How long I slept I am unable to say; but an acute sense of pain awoke me; when, to my surprise, I found it already dark, and the old man bending over me, engaged in dressing my wounds, and applying a kind of whitish liniment of a soothing and healing nature, prepared by himself and kept on hand for such and similar purposes.

Some half an hour was he occupied in this proceeding, during which I suffered more or less pain from the removal of the bandages, which having become dry and stiff, adhered rather too closely to the affected parts.

Thinking it useless to question him, I made no remark, but passively suffered him to do as he pleased—which he did, without appearing to notice me any more than if I were dead, and he performing the last office of sepulture.

At length, the bandages being replaced, and my condition rendered as comfortable as circumstances would permit, he tendered me some light food and water—both of which I partook sparingly—and with the single word "Onh-chi," and a nod of his head, turned away and left

me to my meditations. In ten minutes I was again asleep.

When I next awoke, the sun was streaming through the open doorway and crevices of the old cabin, and, to my surprise, I found Prairie Flower again kneeling by my side. Her eyes were turned upward as before, and her lips moved, but not a sound issued from them. She was evidently making a silent appeal to Heaven in my behalf; and as I lay and gazed upon her sweet, placid countenance, and felt that all this was for me, methought I had never beheld a being so lovely; and she seemed rather an immortal seraph, bent at the Throne of Grace, than a mortal tenant of this mundane sphere.

At length she arose, and with a charming smile upon her features, and in the sweetest tone imaginable, said:

"And how fare you this morning, my friend?"

"I feel much refreshed," I answered, "by a night of calm repose—and my strength is evidently improving."

"I am glad to hear it—for you have been nigh unto death."

"I am aware of it, and know not how to express to you my deep obligations for my recovery."

"As I told you before, no thanks are due me. I did but my duty, and my own conscience has already rewarded me tenfold. Those who labor to effect all the good they can, need no thanks expressed in words—for words are superfluous."

"And yet had I done for you what you have done for me, would you not have thanked me?"

"Doubtless I should."

"And will you not allow me the privilege you would have claimed yourself?—Would it have pleased you to find me ungrateful?"

"I cannot say it would," she replied, musingly; "for, like others, I am only mortal; and perhaps vain—too vain—of having what little I do appreciated. I should not have such feelings, I am well aware; but they are engrafted in my nature, and I cannot help it."

"Then even oral thanks cannot be displeasing to sweet Prairie Flower?"

"Understand me, friend! There is a vast difference between expressing thanks by word of mouth, and being ungrateful. That you are not ungrateful, your look and actions tell—therefore are words superfluous."

"Well, then, I will say no more—but trust that time will give me an opportunity of proving by *acts*, what at best could be but feebly spoken. I agree with you, that words in a case like mine are of little importance. They are in fact 'trifles light as air,' and as often proceed from the lips merely, as from the heart. But now a word of myself. Tell me, fair being, and do not fear to speak plainly, regarding my present condition. Can I ever recover?"

"Great Medicine has pronounced you out of danger."

"Shall I ever regain the full use of all my limbs?"

"I know nothing to the contrary."

"And my wounds—what are they?"

"You were found with your head frightfully gashed, and your skull slightly fractured. Your left arm was broken, and the flesh around it badly bruised, apparently by the tread of a horse. Various other flesh wounds were found upon your person—made, seemingly, by some sharp instrument—from which you bled profusely. These, together with loss of blood, produced a delirious fever, from which kind Providence has restored you, as it were by a miracle. For a week, life and death contended equally as it seemed for the victory. Many a time have I stood by your side, and thought every breath you drew your last. I can only compare your critical condition to a person suspended by a mere cord over a terrible abyss, with a strain upon it so equal to its strength, that another pound would divide it and render death certain; and there hanging seven days and nights, ere a safe footing could be effected on the solid earth above."

"You draw a fearful picture, Prairie Flower. But my friend—did he know of this?"

"Not fully. He knew you were badly wounded—but we gave him all the hope we could, lest with his own wounds the

excitement should prove fatal to him also. As it was, he was often delirious, and raved of you, and accused himself of dragging you hither and being the cause of your misery, perhaps death. Had we informed him you were dead, I do not think he would have survived an hour."

"God bless him for a noble fellow—a true friend!" I cried, while tears of affection flooded my eyes.

As I spoke, I noticed the countenance of Prairie Flower become suddenly crimson, and then white as marble, while she averted her head and seemed uncommonly affected. What all this meant, I was at a loss to conjecture. In fact I did not give it much thought, for my mind was filled with the image of Charles Huntly, and I quickly added:

"Is he not a noble friend, sweet Prairie Flower?"

"He is indeed!" she exclaimed, looking at me earnestly a moment, as if to detect a hidden meaning in my words, and then dropping her eyes modestly to the ground.

"But his wounds?"

"Like yourself, he received two very severe contusions on the head, which rendered him senseless for several hours."

"And how is he now?"

"He has so far recovered that he leaves his lodge, and occasionally takes a short stroll."

"And has he not been to see me?"

"No! we would not permit him."

"And how did a refusal effect him?"

"Quite seriously. But we told him that your life, in a great measure, depended on your being kept perfectly quiet, and that as soon as he could do so with safety, he should be admitted to your presence. He seemed to grieve very much, but uttered no complaints."

"But you must let me see him now, Prairie Flower!"

"I do not know," she answered: "I will consult Great Medicine."

"But, Prairie Flower!" I called, as she turned away.

"Well?"

"Remember, I *must* see him!"

"But surely you would not endanger your life and his?"

"Certainly not. But do you think such would be the effect of our meeting?"

"I am unable to say, and that is why I wish to consult Cha-cha-chee-kee-hobah—or, as we often term him, Great Medicine."

"Go, then, and Heaven send I get a favorable answer."

Prairie Flower turned away, and approaching the Old-Man-of-the-Mountains, held with him a short consultation. Then returning to me, she said:

"Great Medicine thinks it imprudent; but if you insist on it, he says you may meet; at the same time he bids me warn you both to be cautious and not become too much excited, or the worst of consequences may follow."

"I will endeavor to be calm, and see no cause why I should be more than ordinarily excited."

"You perhaps overlook, my friend, that a great change has taken place in the appearance of each of you since last you met; and your system being in a feeble state, a sight of your friend may affect you more than you are now aware of. The greatest change, however, is in yourself; and I must prepare your friend to behold in you a far different person than he beheld on the night of the battle. I charge you beforehand, to brace your nerves and meet him calmly!"

Saying this, she turned and quitted the novel.

CHAPTER XVII.

VISIT OF MY FRIEND—HIS CHANGED APPEARANCE—SINGULAR MANNER OF PRAIRIE FLOWER—HER ABRUPT DÉPARTURE—HER RESEMBLANCE TO ANOTHER—OUR SURMISES REGARDING HER—MY FRIEND IN LOVE, ETC.

Half an hour of the most anxious suspense followed the disappearance of Prairie Flower, during which, in spite of myself, I suffered the most intense mental excitement, and my hands shook like the quak-

ing aspen, and I felt both sick and faint. At the end of the time mentioned, Prairie Flower appeared and announced that my friend would shortly be with me.

"But you seem agitated," she added, with an expression of alarm.

"O, no—mere nothing, I assure you," I quickly replied, fearful she would alter her arrangement and put off our meeting to another day. "My hand shakes a little perhaps—but you see, Prairie Flower, I am quite composed—quite collected, indeed."

She shook her head doubtingly, and was about to reply, when Huntly made his appearance, and approached me with a feeble step.

Heavens! what a change in sooth! A wild exclamation of alarm and surprise was already trembling on my lips, when, remembering the injunction of Prairie Flower, I, by a great effort, suppressed it.

Could this feeble, tottering form approaching me, indeed be the gay, dashing, enthusiastic Charles Huntly, whom I had known from boyhood? His face was pale and thin—his lips bloodless—his eyes had lost much of their luster, and moved somewhat nervously in their sunken sockets—his cheek bones protruded, and his robust figure was wonderfully emaciated—while the wonted expression of fire and soul in his intelligent countenance, had given place to sedateness and melancholy. To complete, his head was rudely bandaged, and his habiliments exhibited marks of the recent conflict. If such was his appearance, what, judging from the remarks of Prairie Flower, must have been mine! I shuddered at the thought.

As he came up, so that his eye could rest upon me, he suddenly started back, with a look of horror, threw up both hands and exclaimed:

"Merciful God! can this be Francis Leighton?" and staggering to my side, he dropped down upon the ground and burst into tears.

"Beware! beware!" cried Prairie Flower earnestly, her features turning deadly pale. "Remember, Charles Huntly—remember my warning! or you will do what can never be undone, and all our efforts

to save you both will have been made in vain."

"Charles," gasped I: "Charles—Huntly—my friend—compose yourself, or you will destroy us both!"

"Oh, Frank, Frank!" he rejoined somewhat wildly, "I never thought to see you thus, when in an evil moment I urged you to leave home. Oh! why did I do it! Forgive me, my friend—forgive me, for God's sake! or I shall go distracted."

"For Heaven's sake, my friend, do not blame yourself! I left home by my own desire and free will. You are not to blame, any more than I. Of course, we could not foretell what fate had in store for us. Rather thank God, dear Charles, that we are both alive and likely to recover!"

"And you think, dear Frank, I am not to blame?"

"Not in the least."

"God bless you for a generous soul! Oh! if you could but know what I have suffered! Tortures of mind beyond the strength of reason to bear."

"I have heard so from the lips of our sweet benefactor."

"Ay, sweet benefactor, indeed! God bless you, lovely Prairie Flower!" he added, passionately, suddenly turning his eyes upon her. "If you are not rewarded in this world, I am sure you will be in the next."

At the first sentence, the face of the maiden flushed, and then changed quickly to an ashen hue, while her breast heaved with some powerful emotion, like to the billowy sea. She strove to reply, but words failed her, and turning suddenly away, she rushed from the lodge, leaving us alone.

"Angelic creature!" pursued Huntly, gazing after her retreating form with an expression of sincere admiration. "A lily too fair to bloom in a region so desolate as this. But why did she leave us so abruptly, Frank?"

"I cannot say, unless it was her dislike of praise."

"I could adore her, Frank, for her goodness. Where would we be now, think you, but for her timely aid?"

"In another world, most probably," I answered solemnly.

"Ay, truly in another world," rejoined Huntly, with a sigh. "And you, Frank, if one may judge by your looks, are not far from there now. Great God!" he continued, gazing steadily on me, while his eyes became filled with tears, "what a change—what a change! I cannot realize, even now, that I am speaking to Francis Leighton. And this the work of one short week! Oh! how have I longed to see you, Frank! How on my knees have I cried, begged and implored to be permitted to see you! But I was denied—unresistingly denied—and now I am thankful for it; for had I seen you in that unconscious state described to me by Prairie Flower, I fear I should have lost my reason forever, and the sods of the valley would soon have been green above my mortal remains."

This was said with an air and tone so mournfully, touchingly sad, that in spite of myself I found my eyes swimming in tears.

"Well," I answered, "let us forget the past, and look forward with hope to the future, and return to Him—who has thus far watched over us with His all-seeing eye, and raised us up friends where we least expected them, in our moments of affliction—the spontaneous thanks of grateful hearts!"

In this and like manner, we conversed some half an hour without interruption. As my friend had been struck down at the same moment with myself, he was of course unable to give me any information regarding what happened afterwards. Whether any of our friends were killed or not, we had no means of ascertaining, and could only speculate upon the probability of this thing or that. What had become of Teddy? Had he survived?—and if so, what must have been his feelings, when he found we came not to his call, and appeared not to his search!

This train of conversation again brought us back to Prairie Flower, and each had to rehearse the little he had gleaned, and the much he had surmised, concerning herself and tribe; and in many points we found our conjectures to correspond exactly.

"By-the-by," I observed at length, "it

strikes me I have seen some face like hers—but where and when I cannot tell—perhaps in my dreams.”

“Indeed!” replied Huntly quickly; “and so have I—but thought it might be fancy merely—at least that you would think so—and therefore kept it to myself.”

“Who, then, is the person?”

“You have no idea!”

“None in the least.”

“And if I tell you, and you see no likeness, you will not ridicule my fancy?”

“Ridicule, Charles? No! certainly not. But why such a question?”

“You will understand that full soon.”

“Well, then, the lady?”

“Have you forgotten the fair unknown?”

“Good heavens! how like!” I exclaimed. You are right, my friend—there is indeed a wonderful likeness. Perhaps—but no! the idea is too chimerical.”

“Speak it, Frank—perhaps what?”

“I was about to add, perhaps they are related—but that could not be.”

“And why not?” asked Huntly. “Such a thing is not impossible.”

“Very true—but most highly improbable, as you will admit. The beautiful unknown we saw in New York—the beautiful mysterious, if I may so term her, in the Far West: the former, perhaps, a daughter of fashion in the gay and polished circles of civilization—the latter among barbarians, a prominent member of a roving tribe of savages.”

“But you overlook that she could not be bred among savages.”

“And why not?”

“Because her English education, manners and accomplishments, all belie such a supposition. I admit with you, that the suggestion advanced by yourself looks highly improbable—at the same time, I contend as before, it is not impossible.”

“Well, at all events, Charles, you must admit it is utterly useless to argue a point founded solely upon speculation on both sides. We have not even the history of Prairie Flower to go upon, setting aside entirely that of the other party, and consequently must come out exactly where

we started, neither of us the wiser for the discussion.”

“Nothing more true,” answered my friend, musingly. I would to Heaven I could learn the history of Prairie Flower! Can she be an Indian?”

“I think not.”

“What a perfect creature! and with a name as beautiful as her own fair self. Do you know, Frank, I——”

“Well, speak out!”

“You will not ridicule me?”

“No.”

“I am half in love.”

“With whom?”

“Prairie Flower.”

“Indeed! Well, that is nothing strange for you. I feel grateful enough to love her myself. But, Charley, you did not allow her to perceive any symptoms of your passion?”

“Not that I am aware of. But why do you ask?”

“Because it would offend her.”

“Do you think so?”

“I am sure of it.”

“And wherefore, Frank?” asked my friend, rather anxiously.

“Wherefore, Charley! Why, I believe you are in love in earnest.”

“Have I not admitted it?”

“Only partially.”

“Then I acknowledge it fully.”

“But how about the unknown?”

“I am in love with her too.”

“Ay, and with every pretty face you meet. But surely you are not serious in this matter?”

“I fear I am,” sighed Huntly.

“But you cannot love either much, when you acknowledge to loving both.”

“You forget the resemblance between the two. I could love any being methinks, in the absence of the unknown, who bore her likeness.”

“But, for heaven’s sake! Charley, do not let Prairie Flower know of this!—for it would only be to make her avoid us, and perhaps result in unpleasant consequences.”

“And yet, Frank, at the risk of being thought egotistical, I must own I have reasons for thinking my passion returned.”

"Returned, say you? Why, are you dreaming?"

"No, in my sober senses."

"And what reasons, I pray?"

"Her manner towards me whenever we meet, and whenever I speak to her. Surely you must have noticed her embarrassment and change of countenance when I addressed her last, ere her hasty departure."

"I did—but attributed it, as I told you then, to a dislike of flattery or praise to the face."

"I formed a different opinion."

"Why then did you ask me the cause of her leaving so abruptly?"

"Merely to see if you suspected the same as I—that, if so, my own fancies might have the surer foundation. Often when she thought herself unnoticed, have I, by turning suddenly upon her, caught her soft, dark eye fixed earnestly upon me, with an expression of deep, quiet, melancholly tenderness, which I could not account for, other than an affectionate regard for myself; and the more so, that when my eye caught hers, she ever turned her gaze away, blushed, and seemed much confused. It was this which first divided my thoughts between herself and you, and awakened in my breast a feeling of sympathy and affection for her in return."

"You may be right," I answered, as I recalled her strange manner of the day previous, when I spoke to her of my friend—and I proceeded to detail it to Huntly. "But I am truly sorry it is so," I added, in conclusion.

"Why so, Frank?"

"Because it will only render her unhappy for life."

"What! if I——"

"Well, say on! If you what, Charley?"

"I was going to add—a—marry her," he replied in some confusion.

"Marry her? Are you mad, Huntly?"

"Only a little deranged."

"Not a little either, if one may judge by such a remark. Why, my friend, you talk of marrying as if it were the most trifling thing in the world. You cannot be in earnest, surely! and it is a bad matter for a jest."

"I am not jesting at all events," he replied. "But why not marry her, if we both love! Is there any thing so remarkable in marriage?"

I looked at him earnestly, to detect if possible some sly curl of the lip, some little sign which I could construe into a quizzical meaning; but no! the expression of his countenance was uncommonly serious, if any thing rather melancholy. He was sincere beyond a doubt, and the very thought kept me dumb with surprise.

"You do not answer," he said at length. "Perhaps you do not believe in my sincerity?"

"Ay, too truly I do," I rejoined; "and the very knowledge made me speechless. Why, my dear friend, what are you thinking of! You, the young, wealthy, aristocratic Charles Huntly, prating seriously to me of marriage, and that to a nameless Indian girl of whose history you know nothing, and whose acquaintance you have made within a week! What! can this be the same wild, reckless school-mate of mine, whose mind six months ago rarely harbored an idea beyond uttering a jest or playing a prank upon some unsuspecting individual! Surely you are not in your sober senses, Charley! or this is a land of miracles indeed."

"I am not what I was," sighed my friend, "though I believe not the less in my senses for that. That I was a gay, wild youth once, is no evidence I should always remain one. To me there appears nothing remarkable, that one whose life has been a scene of folly, should become changed by the near approach of death. I have suffered too much within the past week, both in body and mind, not to have very serious reflections. As regards Prairie Flower, I acknowledge, as before, I am totally ignorant of her history; that, as you say, I have known her barely a week; but I cannot forget that I am her debtor, both for my own life and yours. That she is a rare being, too good almost to grace a world so cold and uncharitable as this, none who have seen and conversed with her as much as I, can doubt for a moment. Regarding marriage, I am very far from thinking it a trifling affair—on the

THE PRAIRIE FLOWER;

contrary, one of the most serious of a man's life. It is an event to make or mar his happiness; and for that reason should be considered with all due solemnity, and every thing pertaining to it duly weighed, that none may afterwards be found wanting. Had I proposed to you to unite myself with a lady of fine accomplishments and fortune, would you have asked the question if both loved—if she was one to make me happy? Probably not; for her wealth would prove the 'silver veil,' to conceal all her defects. Should a man take the solemn vows of marriage to please himself or friends? Should he do so merely to make a display in public, and render his heart in private the seat of misery? Of what value is gold, if it add nothing to a man's happiness? Riches are unstable, and often, as the proverb has it, 'take to themselves wings and fly away.' And then, to him who has made these his god—who has wedded them and not the woman—what is the result? A few days of misery and an unhappy end. Do not conclude from this, my dear Frank, that I have resolved to marry Prairie Flower; for until it was suggested by your own remarks, such a thought never entered my head; and even now such a result is highly improbable. I merely hinted at the possibility of the thing, to ascertain what effect it would have upon you."

"Well, I am happy in knowing the matter is not so serious as I was at first led to suppose. Take my word, Charley, it is only a mere whim of the moment, which will pass away with a return of health and strength. When the body becomes diseased, it is not uncommon for the mind to be affected also; and though the idea you have suggested may seem plausible now—mark me! you will yet live to think it preposterous, and laugh at your present folly."

"Then, Frank, you think my mind unsound?"

"Not in a healthy state, certainly—or, with your quick sense of perception, you would have become aware ere this, that, no matter how deep her love, Prairie Flower is one to reject even Charles Huntly."

"Reject me, Frank, say you!—reject

me!" cried Huntly, quickly, with a look of surprise.

"Ay, reject you—even you—the rich, educated, and polished Charles Huntly."

"And why, Frank?"

"First, because her proud, retiring nature would rebel at the thought of an alliance with one whom the world might consider her superior. Secondly, because her sense of duty would not allow her to depart from her tribe, to which she belongs either by birth or adoption. Thirdly, and conclusively, because she is one who has evidently resolved to remain single through life. She is a girl possessed of a remarkable mind, which, once fixed upon a point, remains unchangeable forever. That she loves you, I now believe; that you return the passion, in a measure, you have acknowledged; but that she would consent to leave her tribe and pledge herself to you for life, I believe a thing impossible."

"You perhaps have reasons for thinking thus?" observed Huntly, eyeing me sharply.

"Nothing more than what I have gathered from noting her closely, during the brief period of our acquaintance. I may be wrong, but time will show. At all events, my friend, I warn you, if you feel an increasing passion or affection for this girl, to suppress it at once, and leave the vicinity as soon as the health of both of us will permit."

"I will think of it, my dear friend; and in the mean time, do you watch Prairie Flower closely—as I will myself—to learn if your surmises be correct; and should a convenient opportunity offer, fail not to use it to find out the true state of her feelings regarding myself. I—But enough—she comes."

As he spoke, Prairie Flower entered the lodge to put an end to our conversation, lest harm might be done me by too much excitement. I now observed her narrowly, and saw there was a constraint in her manner, which she only the more exposed by trying to conceal and appear perfectly natural. She gently reminded Huntly it was time for him to withdraw; and though he strove hard to catch the soft glance of her dark beaming eye, yet all his efforts proved fruitless; and pressing my hand,

with a hearty "God bless you!" and a deep, earnest prayer for my speedy recovery, he quitted the apartment.

Asking me one or two questions regarding the effect produced upon me by my friend's visit, and finding instead of injury it had resulted to my benefit, Prairie Flower bade me seek instant repose in sleep; and promising that Huntly should see me again on the following day, she turned, and in a musing mood, with her head dropped upon her bosom, and slow steps, disappeared.

There was no mistaking it; Prairie Flower was in love with my friend; and I sighed at the thought, that the hour of her friendship to us, might prove the data of her own unhappiness.

CHAPTER XVIII.

CONVALESCENCE—THE MYSTERIOUS OR GREAT MEDICINE TRIBE—THEIR MANNERS—THEIR DAILY MODE OF WORSHIP—THEIR MORNING, NOON AND EVENING SONGS—A WEDDING—A FUNERAL, ETC.

Time rolled on slowly, each day adding something to my convalescence, and the expiration of a month found me so far recovered as to venture on a short stroll in the open air. During this long period of confinement, (to me it seemed a year,) Prairie Flower and Huntly visited me every day, though rarely together; and toward the last, my friend became an almost constant companion.

Never shall I forget the emotions of gratitude and joy which I experienced on beholding once more the green leaves and blades, the bright flowers and glorious sunshine, feeling again the soft, balmy breeze of heaven upon my emaciated frame, and hearing the artless songs of the forest warblers. Earth, which for a time had seemed cold and dreary, now appeared changed to a heavenly paradise, and I could not realize I had ever seen it look so enchantly beautiful before. In this I was doubtless correct; for never before had I been absent from it so long; and the con-

trast between the grim, rude walls of my late abode, and all I now beheld, was enough to have put in ecstasies a far less excitable and enthusiastic individual than myself.

The village of the Mysterious or Great Medicine Tribe, I found to consist of some fifteen or twenty lodges, situated on the side of the mountain so as to overlook a beautiful valley some quarter of a mile below, through which flowed a murmuring stream that formed one of the tributaries of the Platte. The cabins, though only temporarily erected, were very comfortable, and placed so as to form a complete circle, in the center of which stood the Great Medicine lodge of Cha-cha-chee-kehobah, where I had been confined, and by which, as I now learned, I had been highly honored, inasmuch as not a soul besides its owner and Prairie Flower, unless by special permit, was ever allowed to cross its threshold. This then accounted for my not having seen any of the tribe during my confinement in bed. The Great Medicine lodge, and one other, were distinguished from the rest by their whitish appearance, done probably by a limish composition found on the mountains. This other alluded to, was the residence of Prairie Flower, and two young, dark-skinned, black-haired, bright-eyed, pretty-faced Indian girls, whose countenances and costumes bespoke intelligence and superiority.

Among this tribe were some twenty females and as many children, and the balance males, all of whom were decently clad, and clean and tidy in their appearance. Save Prairie Flower, but very few of them wore any kind of ornaments, and their dark, clear skins were not in the least bedaubed with paint. Most of them spoke the English language, and some quite fluently; and I observed many an old well thumbed book—generally a bible—lying about their wigwams. In their intercourse with myself and friend, they displayed a dignified courtesy, and not one of all the children did I ever observe to behave in a rude or unbecoming manner.

They were, take them all in all, a remarkable people, and rightly named the

Mysterious Tribe; and, as far as I could judge, very zealous in the cause of Christianity. Three times a day did they collect for public devotion to the Great Spirit; and their ceremony, though simple, was one of the most impressive I ever witnessed. It was in the following manner.

At sunrise, noon and sunset, Prairie Flower and her two Indian companions would come forth from their lodge, arrayed in neat and simple attire, each bearing in her hand a kind of drum, or tamborine without the bells, and approaching the Great Medicine lodge, would arrange themselves in its front. Then bowing to the east and west, the north and south, they would beat the tamarines with their fingers—whereupon the whole village, men, women and children, would hastily quit whatever occupation they might be at, and assemble around them, their faces expressive of the importance and solemnity which they attached to the occasion.—The tamarines would continue to beat until all were gathered together, when a deep and impressive silence would ensue, during which each face would be turned upward, as if to solicit the Great Guardian of all to be with them in their devotions. Then the maidens would strike out into a clear, silvery song, and at the end of each stanza would be joined in the chorus by all of both sexes, young and old, during which each would kneel upon the earth, and continue there until the commencement of the next, when all would again rise to their feet.

These songs, of which there were three, were translated to me by Prairie Flower, at my request, and I herewith give them—if not in language, at least in spirit and sentiment—commencing with the

MORNING SONG.

The day is up, the sun appears,
That sun of many thousand years,
And morning smiles through evening's tears:

Thanks! thanks! thanks!

To Thee who made the earth and sky,
The hosts that go revolving by,
And all that live and all that die—

God! God! God!

CHORUS.

Kneel! kneel! kneel!
O, bless us, Spirit,

That doth inherit
The earth and air,
And every where!
And save us, Thou,
To whom we bow,
All humbly now,

Our Great and Heavenly Father!

The day is up, and through our sleep
We've felt no visitations deep,
And nothing wherefore we should weep:

Thanks! thanks! thanks!

Preserve us still throughout the day,
Teach us to seek the better way,
And let us never go astray—

God! God! God!

CHORUS.

Kneel! kneel! kneel!

O, bless us, Spirit,
That doth inherit
The earth and air,
And every where!
And save us, Thou,
To whom we bow,
All humbly now,

Our Great and Heavenly Father!

NOON-DAY SONG.

The day moves on and all goes well,
More blessings now than we can tell,
With gratitude our hearts do swell:

Thanks! thanks! thanks!

Bless and preserve us still, we pray,
With food and raiment line our way,
And keep us to the close of day—

God! God! God!

CHORUS.

Kneel! kneel! kneel!

Father of heaven,
To thee be given
Unbounded praise,
Through endless days!
And like the sun,
In heaven above,
Pour on us now
Thy warmth of love!
And may our feet
Forever press,
The virtuous paths
Which thou doth bless!

To thee all praise, Lord, God, our Father!

The noon-day breezes now go by,
The forest gives a welcome sigh,
The murmuring streamlets sweet reply:

Thanks! thanks! thanks!

The birds carol, the insects sing,
And joy beams out in every thing,
For which all praise to Thee we bring—

God! God! God!

CHORUS.

Kneel! kneel! kneel!
Father of Heaven,

To thee be given
 Unbounded praise,
 Through endless days!
 And like the sun,
 In heaven above,
 Pour on us now
 Thy warmth of love!
 And may our feet
 Forever press,
 The virtuous paths
 Which Thou doth bless?

To thee all praise, Lord, God, our Father!

EVENING SONG.

The day is dying, wood and wold
 Are growing dim, as we behold,
 And night will soon us all enfold:
 Thanks! thanks! thanks!
 That Thou the day hath kept us through,
 Taught each his duty right to do,
 And made us all so happy too—
 God! God! God!

CHORUS.

Kneel! kneel! kneel!
 All heaven, and earth, and sea, and sky,
 Are marked by His all-seeing eye,
 Which will look deep into the night,
 To note if each one doeth right,
 And watch us in our dreams of sleep,
 On all our thoughts and actions keep:
 So may each thought, each deed we do,
 Be one that will bear looking through!

And bless us, Thou,
 To whom we bow,
 All humbly now,

Most great Lord, God, Almighty!

The sun hath set in yonder west,
 The beasts and birds are seeking rest,
 All nature is in sable dressed:

Thanks! thanks! thanks!
 Preserve us, Thou, till morning light
 Doth lift the sable veil of night!
 May holy angels guard us right,
 Our sleep be sweet, our dreams be bright,
 And not a thing our souls affright—
 God! God! God!

CHORUS.

Kneel! kneel! kneel!
 All heaven, and earth, and sea, and sky,
 Are marked by His all-seeing eye,
 Which will look deep into the night,
 To note if each one doeth right,
 And watch us in our dreams of sleep,
 On all our thoughts and actions keep:
 So may each thought, each deed we do,
 Be one that will bear looking through!

And bless us, Thou,
 To whom we bow,
 All humbly now,

Most great Lord, God, Almighty!

It is impossible for me to convey the
 sweet and plaintive melody which accom-

panied each song, and which, before I knew a word that was uttered, produced upon my mind, and that of my friend, the most pleasing and solemn effect—particularly as we noted that each was accompanied with an earnestness and sincerity of manner, such as I had rarely witnessed in Christian churches within the borders of civilization. At the end of each of these songs, and while the assemblage remained in the kneeling posture of the chorus, the Old-Man-of-the-Mountains would suddenly make his appearance, and hooping his arms before him and bowing, after the Turkish fashion, would utter a few words as a sort of benediction—whereupon all would rise, and each depart quietly to his lodge, or his previous occupation.

The devotional scenes just mentioned were of every day occurrence, when nothing of importance had transpired to elate the actors with joy or depress them with grief—in either of which events, the songs and manner of worship was changed to suit the occasion.

With this people, a wedding or a funeral was a very important affair; and as I sojourned some two months or more among them, ere my strength permitted me to depart, I had an opportunity of witnessing both. As the former was the first in order of occurrence, I shall proceed to describe it first.

The bride was an interesting Indian maiden, some seventeen years of age, and the groom a tall, athletic Indian, her senior by at least five more. Both were becomingly decked with wampum belts, figured moccasins, and various ornaments, worn around the neck and arms, those of the maiden being bare above the elbow, and displaying her rich, dark skin to good advantage. Around the head of each was bound a wreath of ivy, diversified with a few sprigs of cedar, emblematical, as I was informed, of their love, which must ever remain green and unfading.

The nuptial ceremony took place in the lodge of the bride, and was as follows. On the announcement that all was ready, a deputation of maidens, consisting for the most part of Prairie Flower and her companions, surrounded the bride, and placing

their hands on her head, asked her several questions pertaining to herself and lover, the most important of which were, if she truly loved him she was about to take forever, and thought that marriage would increase her happiness. Receiving replies in the affirmative, they commenced singing in a low, melodious tone, the subjoined

BRIDAL SONG.

Blooming maiden,
Heavy laden
With new hopes, and joys, and fears—
Sad with gladness,
Glad with sadness,
Thou art going, young in years,
To another,
More than brother,
Father, mother,
Or aught other
Which among thy race appears.

We have bound thee,
As we found thee,
With unfading green wreathed thee—
Emblem fitting,
Unremitting
Must thy love forever be;
That thou ever
Must endeavor
Not to sever,
Now, nor never,
Bonds of time, eternity.

Now go, maiden,
Sweetly laden
With all blessings we've in store—
Take him to thee,
Who did woo thee,
Deeper love him than before:
God be sending
His defending,
Joy portending,
Never ending
Blessings on thee, evermore!

On the conclusion of this song, each of the singers laid her right hand upon the head of the bride, and commenced dancing around her in a circle. This lasted some ten minutes, during which time a deputation of Indian youths—or what in any other tribe would have been termed braves—led forward the groom to within a few feet of his intended, and commenced a similar dance around him, accompanying it with a song, the same in sentiment, if not in language, as the one just given. This dance over, the youths and maidens

fell back in two rows, facing each other, while the groom and bride modestly advanced, unattended, and took hold of hands.

In this manner all quitted the lodge for the open air, where the villagers were drawn up to receive them, and who immediately formed a dense circle around them. Then, amid a deep silence, all kneeled upon the earth, and rising, pointed their right fore-fingers to the sky, and bowed to the four great points of compass. Then all, save the bride and groom, united in the following

BRIDAL CHORUS.

Joined in heart, and joined in hand,
By great Heaven's wise decree,
Ye must ever so endeavor,
That ye ne'er may parted be—
Never! never!
So, forever,
May Almighty Power bless ye,
In your prime,
And through all time,
And on through all eternity!

As the chorus concluded, the ring opened, and the Old-Man-of-the-Mountains made his appearance, bearing in one hand a long staff, and in the other a horn cup of smoking incense, which he waved to and fro. Approaching the bride and groom, he held it between them, and laying his staff on their heads, and bidding them again join hands, he proceeded to chant, in a feeble, cracked voice, the

CLOSING MARRIAGE STRAIN.

As this incense to Heaven,
So your vows here are given,
And written by angels above,
On the ponderous pages,
Of the great Book of Ages,
And stamped with His great seal of Love.

By earth and by air,
By water and fire,
By every thing under the sun—
By your own plighted faith,
To be true unto death,
In God's name I pronounce you twain one!

Waving his stick once more above their heads, and uttering his usual word "Onh-chi," Great Medicine retraced his steps to his lodge. On his departure, the friends of the newly married pair stepped forward in the order of relation, and greeted both

with a hearty shaking of hands, and invocations of blessings from the Great Spirit. Then followed a feast prepared for the occasion, consisting principally of buffalo, bear and deer meat, together with that of various wild fowls. This was eaten seated upon buffalo-skins, and was served to the larger party by four waiters, two of both sexes. After this came one or two more songs, in which all joined, and a general dance closed the festivities of the day.

The funeral which I witnessed, was that of a young man greatly beloved by his tribe. The day succeeding his death, was the one appointed for the solemn ceremony of sepulture. Meantime the body remained in the lodge where the vital spark had been extinguished, and, locked up with it from all intrusion, remained also the near relatives of the deceased, fasting and employing their moments in prayer.

When the time for the funeral service had arrived, four Indian youths, who had been companions of the deceased, entered the lodge, and wrapping the body in a buffalo-hide, bore it to that of Great Medicine, and deposited it on the ground outside. Hither followed the relatives, their heads bound with withered flowers and leaves, emblematical of the decay of every thing earthly, however fair and beautiful. Forming a narrow circle round the body, they kneeled upon the earth, and placing their right hands upon the breast of the departed, and their left upon their hearts, uttered low and plaintive moans—the signal that all was ready for the mournful rite. Next appeared Prairie Flower, with three other maidens, and approaching the youths, all clasped hands and formed a ring outside the circle of kneeling and weeping relatives. Then they commenced walking round the living and dead, and as they passed the head of the latter, each uttered a short prayer, that his noble spirit might find eternal rest beyond the grave. When this was concluded, Great Medicine appeared, holding in his hand a drum, which he beat rapidly a few times, whereupon the remainder of the villagers came forth from their lodges, and formed a third circle outside of all. The second circle now fell back to the largest, leaving a wide space

between it and the mourners, who still remained kneeling as before. A short silence followed, when the leader of the corpse bearers stepped forward, and set forth, in a clear, musical tone, the many virtues of the dead, and pronounced an eloquent eulogy over his remains.

On the conclusion of this, the speaker took his place among the rest, when all broke forth in the following

FUNERAL DIRGE.

Gone! gone! gone!
 From earth gone forever:
 No more here we'll meet him,
 No more here we'll greet him,
 No more, nevermore—
 All is o'er, evermore—
 Forever! forever!
 He's gone from the mortal—
 He's passed Death's great portal—
 And now will his spirit
 Forever inherit,
 In regions of bliss,
 What it could not in this.
 Passed from all sorrow,
 Vexation and care,
 Gone to the regions
 That bright angels share,
 In yon golden Heaven
 His spirit will rest,
 With joys the most holy
 Forever be blessed.

Weep! weep! weep!
 But weep not in sorrow:
 With tears bend above him,
 With tears show you love him—
 But weep for relief,
 Rather than grief—
 For to-morrow—to-morrow—
 Ye may join him in glory,
 To tell the bright story,
 Of earthly denials,
 Losses and trials,
 Of unwavering faith,
 Of joy to meet death,
 That your spirit in freedom
 Forever might roam,
 O'er the sweet vales of Eden,
 Your last lovely home—
 To join there in singing,
 As bright angels do,
 The songs of Great Spirit,
 Eternity through.

This was sung to a mournful tune, and when the last strain had died away upon the air, all simultaneously dropped upon their knees, and bowed their heads to the earth,

in token of submission to the Divine will. Then they rose to their feet, mourners and all, and forming themselves into two long lines, the four bearers proceeded to raise the corpse slowly and in silence, and preceded by Great Medicine, and followed by the maidens, the relatives and the rest, two by two, all moved solemnly forward to the last earthly resting place of the dead, a rude grave scooped out in the side of the mountain, some forty rods distant from the village.

Depositing the body in the ground with all due reverence, the bearers threw upon it a handful of the loose earth, and moved aside for the others to do the same. This concluded, the villagers formed a large ring around the open grave, when Great Medicine stepped forward to the center and chanted

THE LAST DIRGE.

Formed of dust
The spirit spurneth,
Back to dust
The body turneth—
But the spirit,
Passed death's portal,
Doth become
A thing immortal.

Ye who mourn him,
Be unshaken,
That Who gave,
Again hath taken—
That the dead,
Before ye lying,
Made a happy
Change in dying.

And ye dead,
Here rest in quiet,
Till ye hear
The final fiat,
That in voice,
More loud than thunder,
Shall command

Your tomb assunder!
To earth we consign thee!
To God we resign thee!

CHORUS.

Sleep! sleep! sleep!
The birds shall carol o'er thy head,
The stream shall murmur o'er its bed,
The breeze shall make the forest sigh,
And flowers above thee bloom and die—
But birds, and stream, and breeze, and flowers,
Shall joy no more thy sleeping hours.

To earth we consign thee!
To God we resign thee!
Farewell!

The chorus was sung by all with impressive solemnity, and on its conclusion, the four corpse bearers advanced, and with wooden spades buried the dead forever from the sight of the living. Two by two, in the same order they had come hither, the whole party returned to the village, and the day was spent in fasting and devotional exercises.

The food of the Great Medicine Nation consisted, for the most part, of meat of various wild animals, which they generally killed with rifles, together with a few fish, for which they angled in the streams. Sometimes they planted and raised a small patch of corn, as was the case in the present instance; but their roving life, as a general thing, led them to depend upon such vegetable food as chanced in their way. Among them they owned some fifteen horses, as many tame goats, which they milked daily, and twice the number of mules. They also owned a few traps, and when in a beaver country, did not fail using them to procure pelts; which, together with buffalo and bear skins, they traded with the whites for such extras as they considered useful. With them all property, with the exception of bodily raiment, was in common; and each labored, not for himself alone, but for his neighbor also. During the day their animals fed around the encampment, and in the valley at the base of the mountain—but at night all were driven in and carrelled, or yarded, within the village.

Never before had I seen a people appear so wholly content with whatever Providence might give them, and so perfectly happy among themselves; and the time I spent with them, however singular the statement may seem to others, I must account one of the most pleasant periods of my life.

CHAPTER XIX.

RESOLVE TO RESUME OUR JOURNEY—ANNOUNCEMENT TO PRAIRIE FLOWER—HER SURPRISE AND REGRET—DANGERS ENUMERATED—A CARELESS QUESTION—ABRUPT ANSWER—ALARMING AGITATION OF PRAIRIE FLOWER—OUR JOURNEY POSPONED THREE DAYS—HASTY DEPARTURE OF PRAIRIE FLOWER.

It was about the beginning of September, that I found my wounds so far healed and my strength so much recovered, as to think seriously of taking my departure. The air, too, on the mountains was becoming cool and frosty; and as my friend and I had decided on crossing to Oregon or California before the snow-storms of winter should entirely bar our progress, we thought best to be on the move as soon as possible.

During my stay in the village, I had seen and conversed more or less with Prairie Flower every day, and noted with regret that her features gradually grew more and more pale, her eye more languid and less bright, her step less elastic and buoyant, and that she moved slowly and heavily over the ground, with her head bent forward in a mood of deep abstraction. The cause of this I was at no loss to conjecture, particularly as I saw a studied effort on her part to avoid my friend on all occasions, and that, when they did meet, she ever exhibited toward him a coldness totally foreign to her warm, frank, open, generous nature. Huntly noticed her seeming aversion to him, with less philosophy than I had expected to see him display. In fact he became exceedingly troubled about it, and often told me, with a sigh, that he must have been mistaken—that she did not love him—but that it was me on whom her affections were placed. I contradicted him only so far as to say, that she cared no more for me than for him; but I did not care to tell him the real cause of her coldness—for I saw it would only serve to inflame his passion, and, from what I could judge, render both the more unhappy.

That Prairie Flower loved my friend, and that too against her will, was to me as

clear as daylight; and the anguish it must have cost her gentle heart to avoid and appear cold and indifferent toward him, I could better imagine than realize. Several times had I been tempted to broach to her the subject, that I might learn from her lips the true state of her heart; but the slightest allusion to my friend, always produced such visible, painful embarrassment, that I instantly abandoned the idea, and adroitly changed the conversation to something as foreign as possible. Of one thing I became satisfied; and that was, that the sooner we took our departure, the better it would be for all parties; for both Prairie Flower and Huntly were becoming touched with a melancholy that I feared might lead to something more serious.

Accordingly, as soon as I fancied my strength sufficient to encounter the fatigue of a perilous journey, I announced my intention to Huntly, and wrung from him a reluctant consent to depart forthwith. My next move was to see Prairie Flower, and announce the same to her. As chance would have it, I shortly discovered her just outside the village, taking a stroll by herself—a habit which had now become with her of daily occurrence.—Bidding my friend remain in the village, I hastened after, and presently overtook her; but so deep was she buried in meditation, that my steps, close behind, failed to rouse her from her reverie.

“You seem lost in communion with your own thoughts, sweet Prairie Flower,” I said, in a cheerful tone; “and were I bent on surprising you, I might have done so to good advantage.”

She started, a slight flush suffused her pale features, and turning her lovely countenance upon me, with an expression of deep surprise, she rallied herself for a reply.

“Really, I must crave pardon, Mr. Leighton—but I was so engaged reflecting on—a—various matters, that I failed to catch the sound of your footsteps.”

“I saw you were deeply abstracted, and would not have intruded on your privacy, only that I have a matter of some little moment to communicate.”

“Indeed!” she rejoined, turning deadly

pale and trembling nervously: "I trust nothing has happened to—to—any one?"

"Give yourself no uneasiness, dear Prairie Flower. I have only come to thank you, and through you your friends, for the kindness and unbounded hospitality of all to myself and Huntly, and inform you that we are on the point of taking our departure."

For a moment after I spoke, Prairie Flower stood staring upon me with an expression of intense anguish, her breast heaving tumultuously, and apparently without the power to utter a syllable in reply. At length, placing her hand to her throat, as if she felt a choking sensation, she fairly gasped forth:

"Not—not—going—surely?"

"I fear we must, dear Prairie Flower," I answered sadly—for I felt touched to the very soul at this unusual display of feeling and sorrowful regret at our departure—coming too from one to whom both Huntly and I were under such deep obligations for the preservation of our lives, and the many kindnesses we had received. "We have intruded upon your hospitality too long already," I continued, "and have at last decided to depart immediately."

"But—but—your wounds?"

"Are nearly healed."

"And your—your—strength?"

"Sufficient for the journey, I think."

"And whither go you?"

"Over the mountains—to Oregon, or California, as the case may be."

"But have you considered the dangers?"

"Every thing."

"But the Indians may be in your path?"

"We must take our chance, then, as before. We have decided on taking a new route, however, and consequently will avoid all ambuscades."

"Still there are ten thousand dangers on a new route. You may get lost, get buried in the snows of the mountains, fall over some precipice—or, escaping all these, get captured by some roving tribe and put to the tortures."

"There are many dangers, sweet Prairie Flower, as you say; but had we feared to encounter them, we should never have been here."

"But you have no horses."

"We can purchase them at Fort Laramie, together with what other things we may need."

"You have no companions?"

"We may find some there, also—if not, we can venture alone."

"But—but——. You will go, then?"

"I fear we must—loth as we are to part from you and your people, with whom (I wish not to flatter when I say it) some of the happiest moments of my life have been spent."

For some time Prairie Flower did not reply, during which her eyes were cast upon the ground, and a look of deep sorrow settled over her lovely features, and her bosom heaved with internal emotions.—Raising her soft, dark eyes again to mine, I was pained to behold them slightly dimmed with tears, which she had striven in vain to repress.

"I did not think," she said, with a deep sigh, "that you would leave us so soon."

"Soon? dear Prairie Flower! God bless your noble soul! Soon, say you! Why have we not been here two long months and more?"

"True," she answered, as I fancied a little reproachfully, "I had forgotten that the time must have seemed long to you."

"Nay, sweet Prairie Flower, I meant not that. You are too sensitive—you misconstrue me. I only meant, it was long for utter strangers to share your hospitality, and trouble you with their presence."

"You would not trouble us if you staid forever," she rejoined, with an air of such sweet simplicity, that in spite of all my assumed stoicism, I felt a tear trembling in my eye.

Prairie Flower saw it, and quickly added, with an earnest, tender expression, which could only be realized by being seen:

"O, sir! I fear I have wounded your feelings!"

No wonder Huntly was in love, if he had ever seen any thing like this—for with all my philosophy and sober reasoning, I felt myself in a fair way of becoming his rival.

"God bless you, Prairie Flower!" I ex-

claimed from my very heart. "If Heaven holds many like you, no wonder it is a paradise beyond mortal conception."

"O, do not compare me with those who dwell in that bright realm," she quickly rejoined; "for I at best am only a poor sinful mortal."

"Then God help me!" I ejaculated, "if you are considered a sinner."

"But your—your—friend?" she said, hesitatingly. "Is—he—anxious to leave us?"

She strove to assume an indifference as she said this, but the effort to do so only the more exposed her feelings, of which becoming aware, she blushed deeply, and on the conclusion hung her head in real embarrassment.

"No, dear Prairie Flower," I said, appearing not to notice her confusion; "my friend is not anxious to leave; on the contrary, it was with much difficulty I could convince him of the necessity of our immediate departure, and gain his consent to set forth."

"And wherefore, do you think, is he loth to go!" she asked, carelessly turning her head aside, and stooping to pick a beautiful flower that was growing at her feet.

"Because sweet Prairie Flower goes not with him," I answered, rather abruptly, curious to see what effect such information would produce.

The next moment I regretted I had not hinted, rather than spoken, this important truth. As I pronounced the sentence, the hand of Prairie Flower, which already clasped the stem of the flower in the act of breaking it, became violently agitated and relaxed its hold, while its owner, raising her face, as pale as death, staggered back, and, but for my support, would have fallen to the ground.

"Good Heavens! Prairie Flower," I exclaimed, throwing an arm around her slender waist, and feigning ignorance of the cause of her agitation; "what has happened? Are you bit, or stung? Speak! quick! tell me!"

"A-a-little weakness—a-a-sudden weakness—a-a-kind of faintness," she stammered, endeavoring to recover her composure, and evidently relieved that I had not

imputed her agitation to the right cause. "I dont know that I ever was so effected before," she continued, smiling faintly. "But I think it will soon pass away. I feel much relieved now. There, there—thank you! that will do. Quite sudden, was it not?"

"Quite, indeed!" I replied, adding mentally, "Poor, poor girl! how I pity thee!—thy peace of mind has gone forever."

"But you spoke of leaving immediately," she answered. "What day have you set for your departure?"

"This."

"Not to-day, surely!" she exclaimed, in surprise.

"So had we determined."

"But you must not go to-day!"

"And why not?"

"O, it is not right to leave us so abruptly; and besides, I have reasons for wishing you to delay three days at least."

"What reasons?"

"I cannot tell you now; but remain and you shall know."

"Any thing to please you, sweet Prairie Flower."

"Then I have your promise?"

"You have."

"Thank you! thank you!—you will not regret it. But come, let us return to the village, for I see the sun is three good hours above the hills, and I have a long journey before me."

"What! are you going to leave, then?"

"I must! I have important business. But ask me no questions, and do not depart till I return."

Half an hour later, Prairie Flower, mounted on her beautiful Indian pony, as I had first beheld her at Fort Laramie, rode swiftly out of the village, unattended, and disappeared down the mountain.

CHAPTER XX.

PRAIRIE FLOWER STILL ABSENT—RESOLVE TO DEPART—BID OUR FRIENDS ADIEU—SET FORWARD WITH OUR GUIDE—UNEXPECTED MEETING WITH PRAIRIE FLOWER—RETURN TO THE VILLAGE—A SPLENDID PRESENT—OUR ROUTE CHANGED—SECOND ADIEU—PRAIRIE FLOWER AS GUIDE—OUR LAST PAINFUL PARTING WITH OUR SWEET BENEFACTRESS.

Three days dragged on wearily—for without Prairie Flower, the Indian village seemed gloomy and insipid both to Huntly and myself—and the fourth morning had come, and yet our fair benefactress had not made her appearance. Where had she gone, and wherefore did she not return? We questioned several of the villagers, but all shook their heads and replied, some in good and some in broken English, that they did not know, that she was frequently absent a month at a time, and that she rarely told on leaving where she was going or when she would return. Perhaps, then, her journey was merely a ruse to avoid a farewell scene, thinking we should depart in her absence; and this I mentioned to Huntly, whose surmises I found corresponded with mine.

"She has done it," he said, somewhat bitterly, "to put a slight upon us, or rather upon me, whose presence lately seems most offensive to her; and for myself, I am going to leave—you can do as you like."

In this I knew my friend was wrong altogether, but did not contradict him—for under the circumstances, I preferred he should think as he did, rather than be made aware of what, as I imagined, was the true cause of her actions. I therefore replied:

"Let us away, then, as soon as possible."

"Agreed."

Upon this we hastened to bid our Indian friends a long adieu, who seemed greatly surprised and expressed astonishment that we should leave so suddenly, without having given them a previous notice. Having gone the entire rounds, shook the dusky hands of each, young and old—Great Me-

dicine not excepted, who enlarged his small, dark eyes to their utmost tension, but merely grunted a farewell—and thanked each and all heartily for their hospitality and kindness to us as strangers, we prepared to set out at once for Fort Laramie. As the direct route was unknown to us, we inquired the way particularly, whereupon a stout, rather good-looking, intelligent Indian youth volunteered his services to act as guide—a proposition which we readily and gratefully accepted, with a promised reward when we should arrive safely at our destination.

It was a bright, clear, frosty morning, and the sun, just rising above the mountains, poured down his radiant light, gladdening the forest and our hearts with his presence; and this, together with the bracing air, the freedom we fancied we were about to experience after our long confinement, in being once more upon our journey in good health, produced feelings of buoyancy and independence, such as we had not known for many a long day.

Our guide had left us, as he said, to make preparations for our journey, and we were already becoming impatient at what we considered his tardiness, when to our surprise he reappeared, mounted on one and leading two horses, which he significantly intimated were at our service. This was a kindness we could fully appreciate, and of course felt no desire to chide him for his delay. Thanking him in unmeasured terms for his happy foresight in thus insuring us speed, and safety against fatigue, we vaulted into the saddles with as much agility as if we had never known a mishap.

Waving a silent adieu to the villagers, who came forth in a body to see us depart, we turned our horses' heads down the hill, and setting forward, soon reached the valley, crossed the stream, and burying ourselves in the forest, shut the Indian village completely from our view.

"Well, Frank," exclaimed Huntly, gaily, as with a spirited gallop we buried ourselves deeper and deeper in the forest of the valley, "this seems like old times—eh! my dear fellow!"

"It does, indeed!" I replied in the same

joyous manner, as I felt the warm blood of active excitement again coursing through all my veins.

Scarcely had the words passed my lips, when our guide, who was riding in advance, suddenly drew rein, brought his horse to a halt, and exclaimed:

"She comes!"

Ere we had time to inquire who, we beheld, much to our surprise, the beautiful Prairie Flower dashing up the valley we were descending, directly in our front. Of course there was no means of avoiding her, had we designed doing so, and accordingly we rode slowly forward to meet her. As we advanced, I could perceive that her pale features looked unusually care-worn, and that her lips were compressed, as by some inward struggle to appear entirely at her ease. As we met, she said, half in jest and half in earnest, while a slight flush tinted her cheeks and made her sweet countenance look lovely beyond description:

"Good morning, my friends. Not running away, surely?"

"Why," I answered, in some confusion, "we have bidden our friends of the village a last adieu, and are, as you see, already on our journey."

"Indeed! you surprise me! And could you not have deferred your departure till my return?"

"Why, the fact is—we—that is I—we waited three days—the time mentioned by you—and as we thought—that—as you had not made your appearance—that——"

"I would not return at all," she rejoined, completing the sentence which my embarrassment forced me to leave unfinished. "I truly grieve, my friends," she continued, with a look of sorrowful reproach, "that, having known me so long, you should be led to doubt my word. Did I ever deceive you, that you thought I might again?"

"Never! never!" cried both Huntly and I in the same breath, while the conscience of each accused him of having done wrong. "But as the three days had expired," I added, by way of justification, "and as none of the villagers knew whither you had gone, we feared to tarry longer,

lest the coming storms of winter should catch us on the mountains."

"Perhaps, then, you were right after all," she said with a sigh. "True, I did not return so soon as I expected, on account of an unforeseen delay; and though I did request you not to depart till I came back, and though I fondly relied on seeing you again, still I must admit that your promise has been faithfully kept, and that you had a perfect right to go, and I none to think you would stay to your own inconvenience."

This was said in a tone so sad, with such modest simplicity, that, knowing the true state of her heart, and remembering that to her generous nature and untiring watchfulness and care we both owed our lives, every word sunk like burning lava into my heart, and I felt condemned beyond the power of self-defence. For a moment I knew not what nor how to reply, while Prairie Flower dropped her eyes to the ground and seemed hurt to the very soul.

"Forgive us, sweet Prairie Flower!" I at length exclaimed, to the promptings of my better nature. "Forgive us both, for having done you wrong! I cannot exonerate myself, whatever my friend may do. I had no right to doubt you—no right to wound your feelings by leaving in a manner so cold, so contrary to the dictates of friendship and gratitude. But still, dear Prairie Flower, if you knew all my motives, you would, perhaps, blame me less."

She looked up at the last words, caught the expression of my eye, and seemed to comprehend my meaning at a glance; for she colored deeply, turned aside her head, and quickly answered:

"I do not blame you. Let it pass. But whither were you bound?"

"To Fort Laramie."

"I trust, then, I have saved you that journey."

"Indeed!" I exclaimed in surprise, as a new idea suddenly flashed across my mind.

"You have been there, then?"

"I have."

"And all or us?"

"But for you, I do not think I should have gone at present."

"God bless your noble, generous soul!" I cried, feeling more condemned than ever. "How fortunate that we have met you, that we can at least make the slight reparation of apology and regret for having misconstrued your motives! What must have been your feelings, had you returned, your heart bounding with delight at having done us a service, and found we had repaid you by leaving in your absence, without even so much as thanks for your kindness!"

"I should have felt hurt and grieved I must own," she answered, quietly.

"It is my fault, Prairie Flower," said Huntly, riding up to her side. "Blame me for all, and not my friend! To speak plainly, I fancied my presence was hateful to you, and that you had gone away, merely to put a slight upon me, by avoiding even to the last, as you had avoided me all along."

"You—you think this?" cried Prairie Flower, turning upon him a look of anguish I shall never forget, and becoming so agitated she could scarcely sit her horse. "You think this? O, no, no, no! you did not, could not, think I intended to insult you!" and she buried her face in her hands and shook violently.

"Great Heaven! what have I done!" cried Huntly in alarm. "Look up, sweet Prairie Flower—look up and forgive me! If I thought so then, I do not think so now, and God pardon me for harboring such a thought at all! But I could not understand why you avoided me, unless it was through dislike—in which case my absence would be little likely to cause a regret. I see my mistake now, and am satisfied that, whatever your motive might have been, it was one which you at least felt to be right and pure."

"Indeed it was!" returned Prairie Flower, raising her sweet, sad face, and her soft, dark eyes to his, and then modestly dropping her gaze to the ground.

Huntly seemed about to reply, but paused and gazed silently upon Prairie Flower, who, again raising her eyes, and meeting a peculiar glance from him, blushed and turned her head quickly away. It was evident that both were getting embarrass-

ed, and I hastened to relieve them by saying:

"And what news from Fort Laramie, Prairie Flower? What of our friends?"

"I could learn nothing definite, save that eight only, of the sixteen with whom you went into battle, returned, and that the rest, including yourselves, were supposed to have been killed or taken prisoners. One of the former, I think they called him an Irishman, made great lamentations over you, declaring that the Indians or wild beasts had destroyed you."

"Poor Teddy!" I sighed; "he did indeed love us. But what became of him?"

"He left a few days after, with a party of trappers."

"Then it may be a long time before we meet again, if ever. But do you think we can procure a regular outfit at the fort?"

"What do you require?"

"Two good horses, a brace of rifles, plenty of ammunition, and three or four buffalo skins. By the way, this reminds me that we left our possibles at the fort, stuffed with clothes, which will now be of valuable service."

"Come with me to the village," rejoined Prairie Flower, "and we will talk the matter over."

"Why, as we are so far on the way, it will only cause us unnecessary delay; besides, we have spoken our farewells to all, and turning back, when once started on a journey, is said to give bad luck."

"Yet I have but one observation to make to all your objections," returned Prairie Flower, peremptorily; "and that is, you *must* come with me."

"If you insist on it, certainly."

"I do."

On this we turned, without more ado, and took our way back, wondering what new mystery or surprise would greet us next. The Indians appeared more rejoiced than astonished at seeing us again, and crowded around us, and shook our hands, with as much apparent delight as if we had been absent a month.

"What is the utmost limit of your stay with us, my friends?" inquired Prairie Flower.

"An hour is the extreme," I replied.

Upon this she turned and addressed a few words to the young Indian who had volunteered to act as our guide, and then bidding us dismount and follow her, she led the way into the lodge of Great Medicine. Making some excuse, she went out, and shortly returned, bringing with her our rifles and plenty of powder and ball.

"Now that you are going," she said, "I will restore you your arms, with a sincere prayer that, with the aid of Heaven, they may prove sufficient to preserve your lives from your natural enemies, the savages and wild beasts."

Here was another unexpected kindness, and both Huntly and myself were profuse in our thanks. Prairie Flower then inquired the route we intended to take, and being answered that this would depend much upon circumstances, she advised us to cross the Black Hills some ten miles south of our present location, and hold our course westward over Laramie Plains, Medicine Bow Mountains, and the North Fork of Platte, to Brown's Hole on Green River, where doubtless we should find many trappers, and perhaps some of our old acquaintances—giving as a reason for directing us thus, that there would be less danger from the Indians, who, notwithstanding our signal victory at Bitter Cottonwood, still continued in parties along the regular Oregon route, killing the whites, whenever they could do so without too much risk to themselves.

Thanking Prairie Flower for her advice, I replied that, having reached Fort Laramie, it would be doubtful if we returned this way—that in all probability we should join some party of emigrants—or, failing in this, take a middle course and run our risks.

"But I see no necessity of your going to Fort Laramie," she rejoined.

"You forget, Prairie Flower, that we have no horses, and it would be foolish at least to attempt such a journey on foot."

To this she made no direct reply, but went on suggesting various things for our convenience and safety, with as much apparent concern for our welfare, as if her own life and fortunes were bound up in ours.

At length the conversation slacked, and thinking it a good opportunity, I declared that our time had expired, and that we must start forthwith.

"Well, I will not detain you longer," replied Prairie Flower, leading the way out of the cabin.

To our surprise, we found at the door two beautiful steeds, (not the ones we had just ridden,) richly adorned with Spanish saddles, bridles and apishamores,* with two sacks of jerked meat hanging to the horns, and four large buffalo skins strapped on behind, while along side stood the handsome pony of our fair benefactress, each and all ready for a start.

"What mean these?" I inquired, turning to Prairie Flower.

"Simply," she answered, with the utmost naivete, "that you must accept from me these horses and trappings, without a word, and allow me to be your guide to the point where you will turn off to cross the mountains."

"But, Prairie Flower——"

"Not a word—not a single word—such are the conditions."

"But we have money, and——"

"Surely you would not insult me," she interrupted, "by offering to *pay*?"

I saw by her manner that to say more would only be to offend, and seizing her hand, I pressed it, with a hearty "God bless you!" while my eyes, in spite of me, became dimmed with tears. Huntly was too deeply affected to speak at all, and therefore only pressed her hand in silence, during which the features of Prairie Flower grew very pale, and she was forced to turn aside her head to conceal her emotion. We now comprehended all—why she had gone to Fort Laramie, and had insisted on our return with her to the village—and as we recalled her former kindness and generosity, and our own base suspicions of her intention to slight us, the result was to make both Huntly and myself very sad. She had her revenge, we felt, and a noble one it was too.

Mounting our horses, we again bade a

* Saddle blankets of buffalo calf-skin, dressed soft.

silent adieu to the Mysterious Tribe, and in company with Prairie Flower, quitted the village the second time, with more regret than the first, and took our way southward, in a direction almost opposite our previous one.

As we rode on, I noticed that our fair guide became exceedingly abstracted, and when she fancied herself unobserved, that she frequently sighed. Poor girl! she was laboring to suppress feelings, which, like the pent up fires of a volcano, were preparing to rend the tenement which confined them; and the very thought clouded my path with melancholly. Huntly, too, was abstracted and silent, so that little was said on the way; and though every thing above, around and beneath, seemed conspiring to make us cheerful, yet our thoughts only rendered our hearts the more gloomy by contrast.

A ride of less than three hours brought us to a spot of the mountain that seemed of easy ascent, when Prairie Flower drew in rein, and said with a sigh:

"Your route lies yonder. Keep a little to the south of west, and avoid travelling after dark, or you may plunge over some precipice and be dashed to pieces."

Huntly now appeared too agitated to reply, and it was with difficulty I could myself summon words to my aid.

"And so, dear Prairie Flower," I at length articulated, "we are to part here?"

"I fear we must."

"Shall we ever meet again?"

"God only knows," she answered, trembling nervously, and dropping her eyes to the ground.

"To attempt to express our gratitude to you," I rejoined, "would be worse than vain; words could not speak it; the heart alone can, and that you cannot see, only through external expressions. Of one thing, fair being, rest assured: that in the secret chambers of the souls of Francis Leighton and Charles Huntly, is engraved a name that will never be erased—that of the noble and generous Prairie Flower."

"Say no more—I—I—beg of you!" she gasped, waving her hand, and then placing

it to her heart, as if to still its wild throbbings.

"Prairie Flower," said Huntly, in a tremulous voice, "if I part without a word, you may think me ungrateful. It is not so. Do not think so. I—Could you know this heart——"

"No more—no more!" cried the other. "I see—I know—I understand all. Too much—too much. Go! go! I—Go, and God's blessing attend you both! I——"

She paused, and grasped the mane of her beast to save herself from falling.

"Then farewell," rejoined Huntly, riding up to her side and extending his hand. "You will never be forgotten by me; and should we meet not again—then—farewell—-for-ever."

Prairie Flower clasped his hand, but her own trembled violently, and her lips refused a reply. The next moment, fearing doubtless the effect of a longer trial of her feelings and nerves, she turned her pony, and signing me an adieu with her hand, dashed rapidly away, and in two minutes disappeared from our view in the deep forest.

Huntly sighed, but made no remark, and silently and slowly we began our ascent of the mountain.

That night we slept on the brow of the Black Hills, at a point overlooking a large extent of the Laramie Plains.

CHAPTER XXI.

IN SIGHT OF BROWN'S HOLE—A DASH DOWN THE MOUNTAIN—APPEARANCE OF THE PLACE—THE OLD TRAPPER—DISAPPOINTMENT—EXORBITANT PRICES—A GAMBLING QUARREL—A MOUNTAINEER DUEL—HORRIBLE RESULT.

It was a beautiful morning, not far from the middle of September, that, ascending a hill at the base of which we had encamped the night previous, we overlooked a charming green valley, completely shut in by hills, through the very center of which, like a long line of molten silver, we beheld a bright stream taking its de-

vious course. Not the least agreeable and enchanting to us, was the sight of a few shanties, erected along the margin of the river, and the moving to and fro of several white human beings. And not the less pleasant the sight, that we had been some two weeks on a fatiguing journey of more than two hundred miles, over mountains, plains, and rivers, without having seen a solitary individual but ourselves.

The valley we now beheld was the point of our present destination, a rendezvous for the trappers, hunters and traders of this part of the country, and known as Brown's Hole. I have not described our journey hither, after parting with Prairie Flower, as but little of interest to the general reader occurred on the route, beyond fatigue of travel, an occasional escape from a fatal plunge over some precipice, and one violent storm on the Medicine Bow, which proved far more disagreeable than dangerous.

Here, then, we were at last, in full view of what seemed to us a paradise; and a simultaneous shout of delight, not only told our feelings, but that our lungs were still in good order.

"Well, Frank," exclaimed Huntly, with great animation, "we are now in a fair way of coming in contact with somebody besides Indians, and so let us down the mountain with all the haste possible."

"Here goes, then, for a race," I cried; and urging my noble animal forward, I dashed down the declivity, to the imminent danger of myself and horse, followed by Huntly in the same reckless manner, both shouting and wild with excitement.

Reaching the base of the mountain, we galloped swiftly over the valley, and brought up at last in the center of the encampment, where curiosity soon surrounded us with a medley of various nations and complexions, all eager to learn who we were and what our business. Here we beheld Indians of different tribes, Spaniards, Mexicans, Englishmen, Frenchmen, Creoles, Canadians, together with Anglo-Americans from all parts of the United States. Some of these were trappers, hunters, traders, *coursur des bois*, and speculators in general—all congregated here to

carry on the traffic of buying and selling—this one to make money, and that one to squander his hard earnings in gambling and dissipation. Already had the trade of the season opened, although the greater part of the trappers were not yet "in" from the mountains with their furs, pelts and robes.

Outside the shanties, of which there were some half a dozen—belonging, the principal one to the agent of the Hudson's Bay Company, and the others to different traders—were built fires, around which groups of bronzed mountaineers were squatted, lost to all consciousness of the outer world, in the exciting games of "euchre," "poker," "seven up," &c., &c. In one place was meat in the process of jerking, in another skins stretched over hoops for drying, while here and there was a rude block for graining, together with various other implements used in the fur trade.

All these I noted with a hasty glance as I drew in rein, and while the medley crowd, before spoken of, was gathering around us. I looked keenly at each as he came up, but failed to recognize a single face, much to my disappointment, as I had been rather sanguine of here finding some of my old acquaintances.

"Whar from?" asked a tall, dark, athletic mountaineer—eyeing us, as I fancied, a little suspiciously.

"Over the mountains," I answered.

"Whar's your traps and beavers?"

"We have none."

"Injins raise 'em?"

"We never carried any."

"Traders, hey?"

"No."

"What then?"

"Adventurers."

"That's a new callin, spouse!"

"That is ours, at all events."

"Fine hosses you got thar."

"Very good, I believe."

"Going to stop?"

"Think we shall."

"Well, ground yourselves, put your hosses to feed, and let's see how you look."

Upon this we dismounted, and while doing so, Huntly observed:

"I say, friend, do you know most of the trappers?"

"Know a heap—all I ever seed."

"Did you ever see one, then, called Black George?"

"D'ye ever see your own mother, stranger? Didn't I use to trap with him fifteen year ago!—and hain't I fit him out of many a Injin snap? Ef that ain't knowin him, jest tell me what is."

"That is knowing him, certainly," returned Huntly, smiling. "But have you seen him of late?"

"Not sence two year come calf time. B'lieve he went over to the States, or some sich outlandish place or other."

"Then I have seen him since you."

"Whar d'ye leave him?" inquired the other with interest.

"In an Indian fight, at Bitter Cottonwood."

"I'd swear it. When Injins is about he's al'ays in, and a few at that, or I'm no snakes. But what become on him? Hope he didn't go under!"

"That is more than I can say, as my friend here and I were carried off the field for dead, and have not been able to get the particulars of the battle since."

"He didn't die, I'll bet my life on that! Ef he did, it's the fust time he ever knocked under to sich varmints."

"I suppose, then, you have seen none who were in the fight?"

"Never heard on't till now—so reckon I havn't."

"We fondly anticipated meeting some of them here."

"It's like you may yit; for ef they're about in this part o' creation, they're sure to come. But turn out them critters, for they looks hungry, and make yourselves at home here. And while I thinks on't, ef you've got any bacca, I'll trouble ye for a chaw."

As I had some of the desired article, I proffered it, and received his warmest thanks in return. We now set about removing our saddles and other appendages, and hobbling our horses, while the crowd, having stared at us to their satisfaction, and found nothing particularly remarkable in our persons or equipments, gradually

sauntered away, until we were left entirely to ourselves.

Brown's Hole, at certain seasons of the year, becomes a place of considerable note, and presents many of the features of a western settlement on a holiday. It was interesting to us to note the avariciousness of the traders, and the careless indifference of the trappers, in disposing of their commodities. Dropping in daily—sometimes singly and sometimes in parties from two to ten, loaded with pelts and furs, in value from one hundred to several thousand dollars—the latter would barter them for powder, lead, tobacco, alcohol, coffee, and whatever else they fancied, receiving each article at the most exorbitant price, without uttering a word of complaint. I have seen powder sold to the mountaineers at the enormous sum of from three to four dollars a pint; alcohol at double this price, the same measure; coffee ditto; tobacco two and three dollars per plug, and every thing else in proportion. Money here was out of the question, as much as if it had never been in existence—furs, pelts and robes being substituted therefor. Here I witnessed gambling on every scale, from the highest to the lowest—from thousands to units—while every doubtful or mooted point was sure to result in a bet before decided. It was nothing uncommon to see a trapper "come in" with three or four mules, and furs to the amount of several thousand dollars, and within a week from his arrival, be without the value of a baubee he could call his own—furs, mules, rifle, every thing, sacrificed to his insatiable love of gambling. The mountaineer over his cups is often quarrelsome, and an angry dispute is almost certain to be settled in an honorable way (!)—that is, rifles at thirty yards—when one or the other (sometimes both) rarely fails to pay the forfeit of his life. I had not been many days in Brown's Hole, ere I witnessed a tragedy of this kind, which even now, as I recall it, makes my blood run cold with horror.

The actors in this bloody scene were two trappers of the better class, of intelligent and respectable appearance, neither of whom had seen over thirty years, and who, as a general thing, were of very so-

ber and quiet habits. They were from the same part of the country—had been boys together—had started together upon their adventurous and perilous occupation, and were, moreover, sworn *friends*.

Some three days after our arrival, they had made their appearance, well packed with pelts and furs, which they immediately proceeded to dispose of to the traders. As their trip had been an unusually profitable one, they of course felt much elated, and taking a drink together, sat down to a friendly game of cards, to while away their leisure hours. More strict in their habits than most of their associates, they rarely gambled, and then only for diversion. On the occasion alluded to, they at once began playing for liquor, and having at length drank more than their wont, proceeded to stake different articles. As the game progressed, they became more and more excited, until at last their stakes ran very high. One was peculiarly fortunate, and of course the luck of the other was exactly the reverse, which so mortified and vexed him, that he finally staked all his hard earnings and lost. On this his companion took another drink, grew more and more merry at his own success, which he attributed to his superior skill in handling the cards, and finally bantered the other to put up his mules. No sooner said than done, and the result was the same as before. He was now, to use the phrase of some of the bystanders, who had crowded around the two to watch the game, "Han'somely cleaned out." He had staked all, and lost all, and was of course rendered not a little desperate by the circumstance.

"Why don't you bet your body fixins?" cried one.

Like a drowning man at a straw, he caught at the idea, and the next moment he and his companion were deciding the ownership of his costume by a game of euchre. As might have been supposed, the result was against him, and he was at last completely beggared.

Seizing the half emptied can of liquor by his side, he drained it at a draught, and in a tone of frenzy cried:

"Somebody lend me somethin! By ——! I must have my fixins back."

"Luck's agin ye now," answered one. "Better wait till another time."

"No! now—now!—by ——! now!" he fairly screamed. "I'll show Jim yet, that I'm his master at cards any day he —— pleases. Who'll lend me somethin, I say?"

None seemed inclined, however, to assist one so signally unfortunate; and having waited a sufficient time, and finding his appeal likely to prove fruitless, the disappointed man rose, and in a great passion swore he would leave "such outlandish diggings, and the heathenish set that inhabit them."

"Whar'll ye go?" asked his companion, in unusual glee.

"Whar no such —— scamps as you can find me."

"But afore you leave, I spose you'll pay your debts!" retorted the other.

"What debts?"

"Didn't I jest win your body fixins?"

"Well, do you claim them, too? I thought as how you'd got enough without them."

"Claim all my property wharever I can find it," returned the other, more in jest than earnest. "Of course, ef you're goin to leave, so as I won't see you agin, I can't afford to trust."

"You're a villain!" cried the loser, turning fiercely upon his friend: "A mean, dirty, villainous thief, and a liar!"

"Come, come, Sam—them's hard words," replied the one called Jim, in a mood of some displeasure.

"Well, they're true, you know it, and you darn't resent 'em."

"By ——!" cried the other, his eyes flashing fire, and his whole frame trembling with a newly roused passion, "I dare and will resent it, at any time and place you please."

"The time's now, then, and the place hereabouts."

"And what the way?"

"Rifles—thirty paces."

"Enough, by ——!" and both proceeded to get their rifles and arrange themselves upon the ground—a spot some forty yards distant from the encampment—whither they were followed by a large crowd, all

eager to be witnesses of a not uncommon, though what often proved a bloody scene, as was the case in the present instance.

Selecting a level spot, the parties in question placed themselves back to back, and having examined their rifles, each marched forward fifteen paces, and wheeled face to his antagonist. Sam then called out:

"All ready?"

"Ready," was the reply.

"Somebody give the word, then," returned the first speaker, and at the same instant both rifles were brought to the faces of the antagonists.

For a moment a breathless silence succeeded, which was broken by the distinct, but ominous word,

"Fire!"

Scarcely was it uttered, when crack went both rifles at once; and bounding up from the earth, with a yell of pain, Sam fell back a corpse, pierced through the brain by the bullet of his friend. Jim was unharmed, though the ball of the other had passed through his hat and grazed the top of his head. Dropping his rifle, with a look of horror that haunts me still, he darted forward, and was the first to reach the side of the dead. Bending down, he raised the body in his arms, and wiping the blood from his face with its hands, called out, in the most endearing and piteous tones:

"Sam! Sam!—look up!—speak to me!—it's Jim—your friend. I did not go to do it. I was mad, or drunk. Sam! Sam! speak to me!—for Heaven's sake speak, if only once, and say you forgive me! Sam, why don't you speak? Oh! I shall go distracted! My brain seems on fire! You know, dear Sam, I would not murder you—*you*—my friend—my dearly loved friend—the playmate of my childhood! Oh, speak! speak! O God! speak, Sam, if only once! It was the cursed liquor that did it. Oh speak! if only to curse me! O God! O God! he don't answer me!" cried the wretched man, turning an anguished, imploring look upon the spectators, as if they could give him aid, and then wildly straining the dead man to his heart.

"He'll never speak agin," said one.

"Oh, no! do not say that!" shrieked the duelist. "Do not say that! or I shall go mad. I feel it here—here—in my head—in my brain. I killed him, did I? I killed him—murdered him—the only friend I had on earth! And you all stood and saw me do it. Yes, I murdered him. See! see! *thar's* blood—his blood—I did it—ha, ha, ha!" and he ended with a maniacal laugh, threw himself upon the ground, and hugged the corpse of his friend to his heart.

"Poor feller!" said one, "he'd better be taken into one o' the lodges, for he looks like he'd lost his sense."

"No, no, no! you shan't—you shan't part us!" cried the frenzied man, drawing his dead companion closer to his heart, as some of the party sought to carry out the suggestion just made. "No, no! you shan't part us—never, never, never! This is Sam, this is—Sam Murdoch—he's my friend—and we're goin a long journey together—aint we, Sam? We'll never part agin—will we, Sam? Never! never!—O, never!—ha, ha, ha! *Thar! thar!*" he continued, dropping the body, rising to a sitting posture, and staring wildly at some imaginary object: "I see, Sam—I see! You're in great danger. That rock's about to fall. But hang on, Sam—hang on to that root! Don't let go! Jim's a-comin. O God! who put that chasm *thar*—that mountain gorge—to separate us? I can't git across. Help! help! or Sam will die. Yes, he's fallin now! *Thar! thar!* he's goin—down—down—down. But heyar's what'll meet ye, Sam. Comin! comin!" and whipping out his knife as he said this, before any one was aware what he was about, or had time to prevent him, he plunged it into his heart, and gasping the word "Comin," rolled over upon the earth and expired beside his friend.

I had been a silent witness of the whole bloody, terrible scene—but my feelings can neither be imagined nor described. Speechless with horror, I stood and gazed like one in a nightmare, without the power to move, and was only roused from my painful revery by Huntly, who, tapping me on the shoulder, said:

"Come away, Frank—come away!"

Complying with his request, I turned, and together we quitted the ground, both too deeply affected and horrified at what we had seen to make a single comment.

The mountaineers, with whom such and similar scenes were of common occurrence, proceeded to deposit the dead in a rude grave near the spot where they had fallen. They then returned to the encampment, to take a drink to their memories, coolly talk over the "Sad mishap," as they termed it, and again to engage in their usual routine of amusement or occupation. In a week the whole affair was forgotten, or mentioned only to some new comer as having happened "some time ago."

Upon the mind of myself and friend, it produced an impression never to be erased; and for a long time, apparitions of the unfortunate trappers, haunted my waking senses by day, and my dreams by night.

CHAPTER XXII.

RESOLVE TO DEPART—DISCOURAGING OBSERVATIONS—FAIL TO GET A GUIDE—SET OUT—UINTAH FORT—OUR JOURNEY TO UTAH LAKE—RESOLVE TO CROSS THE GREAT INTERIOR BASIN—FIRST DAY'S PROGRESS—CAMP—KILL A RABBIT—SUDDEN ATTACK FROM THE DIGGERS—REPULSE AND FORTUNATE ESCAPE.

We had been a month in Brown's Hole, without having seen or heard any thing concerning our old acquaintances—during which time another mountaineer had been the victim of a quarrel, though his death we did not witness—when I proposed to Huntly to set forward at once, and leave a place so little adapted to our tastes and feelings.

"But where do you propose going, Frank?" inquired my friend,

"To California."

"But can we find the way by ourselves?"

"We shall hardly find a place less to our liking than this, at all events," I replied.

"But we are safe here, Frank,"

"I presume Charles Huntly does not fear danger, or he would not have ventured westward at all."

"Enough, Frank! Say no more! I am your man. But when shall we start?"

"What say you for to-morrow morning?"

"Agreed. But perhaps we can hire a guide!"

"We will try," I rejoined.

But our trial proved fruitless. No guide could be found, whose love of money would tempt him, at this season of the year, to undertake the conducting of us to California: while on every hand we were assailed by the mountaineers, with the most startling accounts of dangers from Indians, from snows, from floods, from storms, and from starvation.

"You never can fetch through," said one. "It's a fixed impossibility."

"You're fools if you undertake it," joined in another.

"It's like jumpin on to rocks down a three hundred foot precipice, and spectin to git off without no bones broke," rejoined a third.

"Ef you know what's safe, you'll jest keep your eyes skinned, and not leave these here diggins," added a fourth.

But these remarks, instead of discouraging us, produced exactly the opposite effect, and roused our ambition to encounter the formidable dangers of which all were so eager to warn us. To Huntly and myself, there appeared something bold and manly in attempting what all seemed to dread; and to each and all I accordingly replied:

"It is useless, gentlemen, trying to discourage us. We have decided on going, and go we shall at all hazards."

"All I've got to say, then, is, that it'll be the last goin you'll do in this world," rejoined the friend of Black George, who seemed uncommonly loth to part with us.

The next morning rose clear and cold—for the air in this part of the country had become quite frosty—and agreeably to our resolve of the preceding day, we equipped ourselves and horses once more, and bidding our mountaineer friends adieu, set forward in fine spirits—shaping our course,

to the best of our judgment, so as to strike the southern range of the Bear River Mountains, in the vicinity of the Utah Lake, which connects with the Great Salt Lake on the north.

To give our progress in detail, would only be to describe a succession of scenes, incidents and perils, similar to those already set before the reader, and take up time and space which the necessity of the case requires me to use for a more important purpose. I shall, therefore, content myself with sketching some of the most prominent and startling features of our route—a route sufficiently full of perils, as we found to our cost, to put to the test the temerity and try the iron constitution of the boldest and most hardy adventurer.

While in Brown's Hole, we had succeeded in purchasing of one of the traders, at a high price, a map and compass, which he had designed especially for his own use, and similar to those we had provided ourselves with on starting, but which, together with many other valuable articles, had been left in our possible sacks at Fort Laramie.

On our compass and map we now placed our whole dependence, as our only guide over a vast region of unexplored country—or explored only by a few traders, trappers and Indians—Fremont's celebrated expedition, which created at the time such universal interest throughout the United States, not being made till some three or four years subsequent to the date of which I am writing. And here, *en passant*, I would remark, that in determining our course for California, we had particular reference to the southern portion of it; for as every reader knows, who is acquainted with the geography of the country, or who has taken the trouble to trace our route on the map—we were already within the northeastern limits prescribed to this mighty territory.

Leaving the delightful valley of Brown's Hole, we dashed swiftly onward in a south-westerly direction, and our horses being in fine travelling order, we were enabled to pass a long stretch of beautiful country, and camp, at close of day, on the banks of a stream known as Ashley's Fork. Cross-

ing this the next morning, we continued on the same course as the day previous, and night found us safely lodged in the Uintah Fort—a solitary trading post in the wilderness—which was then garrisoned by Spaniards and Canadians, with a sprinkling of several other nations, together with Indian women, wives of the traders and hunters, who comprised the whole female department.

Here we sought to procure a guide, but with the same success as before—not one caring to risk his life by an experiment so fool-hardy, as undertaking a journey of many hundred miles, with a force so small, over a pathless region of territory, and either peopled not at all, or by hostile tribes of savages.

The accounts we received from all quarters of the dangers before us, were certainly enough to have intimidated and changed the designs of any less venturesome than we, and less firmly fixed in a foolish determination to push to the end what at best could only be termed an idle, boyish freak. But as I said before, our ambition was roused to perform what all were afraid to dare, and we pressed onward, as reckless of consequences as though we knew our lives specially guaranteed to us, for a term of years beyond the present, by a Power from on high. I have often since looked back to this period, and shuddered at the thought of what we then dared; and I can now only account for our temerity—our indifference to the warnings we received—as resulting from a kind of monomania.

A travel of some two or three days, brought us to a stream called the Spanish Fork, and pushing down this, through a wild gorge in the Wahsatch Mountains, we encamped the day following on its broad, fertile bottoms, near its junction with, and in full view of, the Utah Lake. We were now in the country of the Utah's, a tribe of Indians particularly hostile to small parties of whites, and the utmost caution was necessary to avoid falling into their clutches. On either hand, walling the valley on the right and left, rose wild, rugged, frowning cliffs, and peaks of mountains, lifting their heads far heavenward, covered with eternal snows.

✓ At this particular spot was good grazing for our horses; but judging by the appearance of the country around us, and the information we had received from the mountaineers, we were about to enter a sterile region, with little or no vegetation—in many places devoid of water and game (our main dependence for subsistence)—peopled, if at all, by the Diggers only—an animal of the human species the very lowest in the scale of intellect—in fact scarcely removed from the brute creation—who subsist upon what few roots, lizards and reptiles they can gather from the mountains—sometimes in small parties of three and four, and sometimes in numbers—and who, being perfect cannibals in their habits, would not fail to destroy us if possible, were it for nothing else than to feast upon our carcasses. Take into consideration, too, our education—our luxurious habits through life—our inability to contend with numbers—that the only benefit we could derive from our expedition would be in satisfying our boyish love of adventure—and I think even the most reckless will be free to pronounce our undertaking fool-hardy in the extreme.

So far, we had been very fortunate in escaping the savages; but from all appearances we could not do so much longer; and what would be the result of our meeting, God only knew. We were now on the borders of the Great Interior Basin, a region of country containing thousands on thousands of miles, never yet explored by a white man, perhaps by no living being! Should we make the attempt to cross it? We could but lose our lives at the worst, and we might perchance succeed, and find a nearer route to Western or Southern California than the one heretofore travelled. There was something inspiring in the thought; and the matter was discussed in our lone camp, in the dead hours of night, with no little animation.

“What say you, Frank?” cried Huntly the next morning, rousing me from a sweet dream of home. “Westward or southward?”

“Why,” I replied, “there is danger in either choice—so choose for yourself.”

“Well, I am for exploring this region left blank on the map.”

“Then we will go, live or die,” I rejoined; “for I long myself to behold what has never as yet been seen by one of my race.”

The matter thus decided, we mounted our horses, and keeping to the south of the Utah Lake, crossed a small stream, and about noon came to a halt on the brow of a high hill, forming a portion of the Wahsatch range. Below us, facing the west, we beheld a barren track of land, with here and there a few green spots, and an occasional stream sparkling in the bright sunlight, which led us to the inference that there might be oases, at intervals of a day’s ride, across the whole Great Basin, to the foot of the Sierra Nevada or Snowy Range, which divides it from the pleasant valleys of the Sacramento and San Joaquin.

It was a delightful day, and every thing before us, even the most sterile spots, looked enchanting in the soft mellow light. Descending the mountain with not a little difficulty, we set forward across the plain, shaping our course to the nearest point likely to afford us a good encampment. But the distance was much farther than we had anticipated, when viewing it from the mountain; and although we urged our beasts onward as much as they could bear, night closed around us long ere we reached it. Reach it we did at last; and heartily fatigued with our day’s work, we hobbled our horses, and without kindling a fire, or eating a morsel of food, rolled ourselves in our robes of buffalo, and fell asleep.

The sun of the succeeding morning, shining brightly in our faces, awoke us; and springing to our feet, we gazed around with mingled sensations of awe and delight. Doubtless we felt, in a small degree, the emotions excited in the breast of the adventurer, when for the first time he finds himself on ground which he fancies has never yet been trod nor seen by a stranger. We had entered a country now, which the most daring had feared or failed to explore, and we felt a noble pride in the thought that we should be the first to lay before the world its mysteries.

The point where we had encamped, was

green and fertile, abounding with what is termed buffalo grass, with trees unlike any I had before seen, and with wild flowers innumerable. Like an island from the ocean, it rose above the desert around it, covering an area of a mile in circumference, and was watered by several bright springs of delightful beverage.

Turning our gaze to the eastward, we beheld the snowy peaks of the Wahsatch Mountains, which we had left behind us, looming up in grandeur; while to the westward, nothing was visible but an unbroken, barren, pathless desert. Here was certainly a prospect any thing but charming—yet not for a moment did we waver in our determination to press onward.

It will be remembered, that on leaving the village of the Mysterious Nation, Prairie Flower had taken care to furnish us a good supply of jerk; and this, by killing more or less game on our route, we had been enabled to retain in our possession, to be eaten only in cases of extreme necessity; consequently we did not fear suffering for food, so much as for water; and even the latter we were sanguine of finding, ere any thing serious should occur. The only matter that troubled us sorely, was the fear our noble animals would not be as fortunate as we, and that starvation might compel them to leave their bones in the wilderness, and thereby oblige us to pursue our journey on foot—an event, as the reader will perceive, far more probable than agreeable.

As we had eaten nothing the previous night, we now felt our appetites much sharpened thereby, and looking around in the hope of discovering game, my eye chanced upon a rabbit. The next moment the sharp crack of my rifle broke upon the solitude, and the little fellow lay dead in his tracks.

Hastily dressing him and kindling a fire, we were already in the act of toasting the meat, when whiz-z-z came a dozen arrows through the air, some of them actually penetrating our garments without wounding us, and others burying themselves in the ground at our feet. Springing up with a cry of alarm, we grasped our rifles, though only one was loaded, and turned to look

for the enemy. Upon a steep bluff, some thirty paces behind us, we beheld some fifteen or twenty small, dirty, miserable looking savages, with their bows and arrows in their hands, already in the act of giving us another volley.

“By heavens! Frank,” cried Huntly, “it is all over with us now.”

“Never say die to such dirty curmudgeons as them,” I rejoined, more vexed than alarmed. “Quick! Charley—dodge behind this tree! and while I load, be sure you bring one of them to his last account!”

While speaking I ran, followed by my friend, and scarcely had we gained shelter, when whiz-z-z came another flight of arrows, some of them actually piercing the tree behind which we stood.

“Quick! Charley—they are looking toward our horses! (These were feeding within ten paces of us.) There! they are on the point of shooting them. Take the leader! For heaven’s sake don’t miss—or we are lost!”

As I spoke, the rifle of my friend belched forth its deadly contents, and the foremost of our foes, who was just on the point of discharging an arrow at one of the horses, shot it at random, and, with a loud yell, fell headlong down the bluff, and was dashed to pieces on the rocks below. Several others had their bows drawn, but on the fall of their companion, they also fired at random, and approaching the bluff, gazed down upon his mangled remains, uttering frantic yells of rage and grief.

By this time my own rifle was loaded, and taking a hasty aim, I tumbled a second after the first. The savages were now alarmed in earnest, and retreating several paces, just made their faces visible, apparently undecided whether to retreat or attack us in a body. This was an important moment; but fortunately for us, the rifle of Huntly was now again loaded, and taking a more careful sight than before, he lodged the ball in the head of a third. This created a terrible panic among our enemies, who fled precipitately.

Now was our chance, and perhaps our only chance, to escape; for we knew nothing of the number of our foe, nor at

what moment he might return with an overwhelming force; and calling to Huntly, I darted to my horse and cut the tether-rope with my knife; and so rapidly did both of us work, that in three minutes we were in our saddles and galloping away.

As we turned the southern point of this desert island, we heard an ominous succession of yells, and some forty rods away to the right, beheld a band of at least fifty Indians, of both sexes, together with some twenty miserable huts. This was evidently their village, and, from what we could judge, they were preparing to renew the attack, as we had feared, when our appearance apprised them of our escape.

To the best of our judgment, they were Diggers, and on this oasis dragged out their miserable existence. Being divided from us by a ridge, neither party had been aware of the proximity of the other, until the discharge of my rifle at the rabbit. This it appears had alarmed them, and excited an immediate attack, from the fatal consequence of which kind Heaven had so providentially delivered us. We thought seriously of giving them a parting salute—particularly as they seemed to grieve so much for our departure—but on second consideration, concluded we would reserve our powder and ball, not knowing how necessary to self-preservation these might yet become; and so taking off our hats, and waving them a kind farewell, we dashed away over the plain.

CHAPTER XXIII.

A BARREN DESERT—NO WATER—ALARMING CONDITION OF OUR HORSES—CAMP—A LITTLE REFRESHED—A SANDY DESERT—INCREASED SUFFERINGS—DEATH OF MY FRIEND'S HORSE—A DRAUGHT OF BLOOD—CONSULTATION—RESOLVE TO PERSIST ON—DEATH OF MY OWN HORSE—A FOOT—A TERRIBLE NIGHT—HOPE—IN SIGHT OF AN OASIS—GRATITUDE—ALMOST SUPERHUMAN EXERTIONS—A STREAM—INSANITY—EXHAUSTION—RELIEF.

Our progress through the day was over an arid waste of calcareous formation, de-

void of all vegetation, with the exception of a few tall, stiff, wire-like weeds, that grew here and there, where the soil appeared a little moist and loomy. Deep ravines, or cracks in the earth, in some places to the depth of it might be a thousand feet, cut across the ground in every direction, and rendered every thing like speed, or travelling after night, out of the question. These gullies, when very narrow, we forced our horses to leap—but frequently had to ride around them—on account of which our progress westward was slow and tedious. The sun here seemed at least twenty degrees warmer than on the highlands we had left behind us, and not having come to any water, we began about mid-day to feel the oppression of a burning thirst, while our well fed and well watered animals of the morning, showed alarming signs of experiencing the same sensation, by lolling their tongues, occasionally smelling the earth, and snuffing the dry air. Oh! what would we not have given, even then, for a bucket of water, cool from some deep well!

We found no place to noon, and consequently were forced to push forward, in the hope of reaching an oasis for our night's encampment.

On, on we went, our thirst increasing to a great degree, while the sun rolled slowly down toward the west, and yet nothing around and before us but this same dull, arid waste. We now began to experience the effects of our rashness, and, if truth must be told, secretly wish ourselves safely clear of our undertaking, though neither breathed a word to the other of the thoughts passing in his mind. Our horses, too, seemed very much fatigued, and required considerable spurring to haste them forward.

The sun had now sunk within an hour of the horizon, and yet the same cheerless prospect lay before us. We looked back, and far in the distance, like a mole-hill, could faintly trace the outline of the oasis of our last encampment; while beyond, the snowy peaks of the Wahsatch glistened in the sunbeams. Advancing a couple of miles, we found ourselves compelled to camp for the night, without water, and

with nothing for our horses to eat; and the fact of this was any thing but cheering.

"What is to be done?" asked Huntly. "We can not long exist without water, and our poor beasts are already suffering to an alarming degree, and will not be likely to hold out more than one day more at the most."

"Well, I fancy by that time we shall come to a spot similar to the one behind us."

"Then you think we had better go forward?"

"I dislike the idea of turning back. Besides, we should probably fall into the hands of the savages, and death here looks full as tempting as there."

"But our horses, Frank—poor beasts! see how they suffer."

"I know it, and would to Heaven I could relieve them! But we cannot even help ourselves."

"Do you think they can go through another day like this?"

"I am unable to say."

"Oh! it would be awful to be put afoot in this desert."

"By no means a pleasant matter, I must own. But, my friend, this is no time to get alarmed. We have set out, after being duly warned, and must therefore make the most of the circumstances we have brought upon ourselves. If our horses die, we must use their blood to quench our thirst."

"Heavens! Frank," exclaimed Huntly, startled with a new idea, "what if another day's travel like this should still leave us in the bare desert, with no haven in sight?"

"Why, I should consider our case nearly hopeless; but we will trust to having better fortune."

We now ate some of our meat with but little relish, and throwing ourselves upon the earth, at length fell into a kind of feverish slumber. A heavy dew falling during the night, refreshed us not a little. At the first streak of daylight, we were again in our saddles, and found, much to our joy, that although our poor beasts had eaten not a morsel since the morning previous, they, like ourselves, were consider-

ably invigorated by a night of repose. Setting forward again, as cheerfully as the circumstances would permit, we travelled some two or three hours at a fast amble; but now the sun began to be felt rather sensibly, and our beasts to flag and droop, while our sensations of thirst seemed increased ten-fold. If this was the case in the morning, what would be the result ere another night! We shuddered at the thought.

About noon, the appearance of the ground began to change for the worse, which, in spite of ourselves, was productive of no little alarm. Gradually it became more and more sandy, and an hour's farther progress brought us to a desert more barren than ever, where not a living thing, vegetable or animal, could be seen, over a dreary expanse, that, for all we knew, might be hundreds of miles in extent.

To add to the horrors of our situation, our horses were evidently on the point of giving out—for as they buried their feet in the white, hot sand, they occasionally floundered, and reeled, and seemed inclined to lie down—while our own throats, lips, and tongues began to swell, and the skin of our faces and hands to blister and crack. I recalled to mind the accounts I had read of bones being found in the great Arabian deserts, and I fancied that many years hence, some more fortunate traveller might so discover ours.

Cheering each other as well as we could, we kept on for another hour, when the horse of Huntly reeled, dropped upon his knees, and fell over upon his side.

"O God!" cried my friend in despair, "we are lost—we are lost!—and such a death!"

"Our last hope is here," I rejoined, dismounting and plunging my knife into the dying beast; and as the warm blood spouted forth, we placed our parched lips to it, and drank with a greediness we had never felt nor displayed for any thing before.

This gave us no little relief for the time, and added vigor to our already drooping and weakened frames. But what could it avail us? It might relieve us now—might prolong our lives a few hours—only to go

through the same terrible tortures and find death at last. Unless we could reach a spring by another day's travel, or come in sight of one, our case was certainly hopeless; and to carry us forward, we now had nothing to depend on but our own limbs and strength, while our path must be over a bed of hot, loose sand, where every step would be buried ankle deep.

"Well, Frank," sighed Huntly at length, "what are we to do now? I suppose we may as well die here as elsewhere."

"No! not here, my friend; we will make one trial more at least."

"And have we any prospect, think you, of saving our lives—of seeing another green spot!"

"Why, you remember when on the Wahsatch, we saw some hills away in the distance; and unless it was an optical illusion, I have a faint hope of being able to reach them before this time to-morrow."

"God grant it, my friend!—for though I fear not death more than another, there is something horrible in the thought of leaving my bones here in the wilderness."

"Well, well, cheer up, Huntly! and trust in Providence to carry us safely through."

A farther consultation resulted in the decision to await the night, and if my horse proved able to proceed, to let him carry our sacks, rifles, &c., while we were to keep him company on foot.

By the time the sun had fairly set, we resumed our journey; but after a laborious travel of half a mile, my horse gave out. Taking from him a portion of the jerked meat, our rifles, and such small articles as we could not well do without, we left him to his fate with many a sigh of regret.

It was a clear, starlight night, and the air just cool enough to be comfortable; but unlike the preceding one, we no longer had the refreshing dew to moisten our bodies and renew our strength. Still we succeeded better than I had anticipated, and, by exertions almost superhuman, placed many a long mile between us and our starting point, ere the first crimson streak in the east told that day was again dawning. To add hope to our drooping spirits, we now found the ground becoming more

and more solid, and ere the sun peered over the mountains, which were almost lost to view in the distance, we set our feet once more upon hard earth, similar in appearance to that we had quitted for the sands. Struggling on a mile or two farther, we ascended a slight elevation, and, joy inexpressible! beheld far away before us a ridge of green hills. All the extravagant, unspeakable delight of the poor, shipwrecked mariner, who has been for days tossed about by the angry elements, without food to save him from starvation, without water to slake his consuming thirst, on beholding, in the last agonies of despair, the green hills of his native land suddenly loom up before him—all his unspeakable emotions, I say, were ours; and silently dropping upon our knees, our hearts spoke the gratitude to our All-wise Preserver which our tongues were unable to utter. True, the famished, worn-out mariner might die in sight of land—and so might we in view of our haven of rest—yet the bare hope of reaching it alive, gave energy to our sinking spirits and strength to our failing limbs.

Again we pressed forward, our now swollen and bloodshot eyes fixed eagerly upon the desired spot, which, like an ignis-fatuus, seemed only to recede to our advance. The sun, too, gradually rolling higher and higher, till he reached the zenith of his glory and began to descend toward the west, poured down his scorching rays, (for they seemed scorching to us in the desert) dried up as it were the very marrow of our bones, blistered our parched and feverish skins, and caused our limbs to swell, till every step became one of pain almost unbearable. All our previous sufferings were as nothing, seemingly, compared to our present; and when we reached the bank of a stream, which wound around the base of the hills, the sun had already hid himself for the day, and we sunk down completely exhausted!

Huntly, for the last two or three miles, had shown symptoms of confirmed insanity—had often raved about home, which he declared was just below him in a pool of clear water, which he, being chained to a rock, was not permitted to reach, although

CHAPTER XXIV.

dying of thirst—and had often turned to me, with much the look of a ravenous beast about to spring upon his prey—so that, with the greatest difficulty, in my then weak state, I had succeeded in getting him to the stream, where, as I said before, we both sunk down in a state of exhaustion. Had the stream been a mile, or even half a mile farther off, we must both have perished in sight of that water which alone could save us. Weak and worn-out as I was, I still, thank God! had my senses—though sometimes I fancied they were beginning to wander—and I knew that for either to indulge his appetite freely, would be certain to produce death.

As my friend seemed too feeble to move, and as I was in a little better condition—though now unable to walk—I crawled over the ground to the stream, which was not deep, and rolled into it, restraining myself even then from tasting a drop, until my body was thoroughly soaked, and I felt considerably revived. After a bath of some five minutes, I took a few draughts of the sparkling element, and never in my life experienced such a powerful and speedy change for the better. Almost instantly I felt the life-renewing blood darting through my veins, and I came out of the water, as it were another being.

Hastening to my friend, I partially raised him in my arms, and dragging him to the stream, tumbled him in, taking care to keep a firm hold. In a few minutes I had the satisfaction of seeing him slowly revive. Then scooping up the water with my hand, I placed it to his lips, which he drank eagerly. Gradually his strength and consciousness returned, and with feelings which none but one in my situation can ever know, I at length heard him exclaim:

“Water! water! Thank God! Frank, we are saved!” and falling upon the breast of each other, overcome with emotions of joy, our tears of gratitude were borne away upon the river which laved our feet.

Eating sparingly, ever moistening our food, we at last found our former strength much restored; and fording the stream, we threw ourselves upon the grassy earth, and slept soundly that night upon its western bank.

EFFECTS OF OUR JOURNEY—THE MYSTERY SOLVED—EXPLORATION—GAME—A SUPPOSED DISCOVERY OF GOLD—TRAVELS RESUMED—IN SIGHT OF THE SIERRA NEVADA—JOY—INDIANS—REACH THE MOUNTAINS—ASCENT—TEN THOUSAND FEET ABOVE THE SEA—SNOW—SUFFERINGS—AN INDIAN HUT—HOSPITALITY—IN SIGHT OF THE SACRAMENTO—ARRIVAL AT SUTTER'S.

On the following morning, we found our limbs so stiff and sore, as scarcely to be able to move about. With great difficulty we gained the river, and bathed ourselves in its cool, refreshing waters, as on the evening previous. The result of this seemed very beneficial; but still we suffered too much from our recent almost superhuman exertions, to think of leaving our present locality for a day or two at least.

Looking back over the desert which had nearly cost us our lives, we could barely perceive the shadowy outline of some of the highest peaks of the Bear River and Wahsatch Mountains; but not a trace of that ridge whereon we had stood before entering this unexplored territory, from whence we had beheld distant oases and streams, none of which, save the first, had been found on our route. How this could be, was a matter of serious speculation, until Huntly suggested the fact of our having looked more to the southward than westward. His observation struck me quite forcibly; for I now remembered having examined our compass, shortly after leaving the Indians, and of altering our course to the right, although previously I had thought ourselves going due west. I remembered, too, feeling somewhat surprised at the time, that we had become so turned, but had afterwards forgotten the trifling circumstance—at least what then appeared trifling—though, as events proved finally, a circumstance of life and death.

This then solved the mystery! We had come due west, instead of west by south, and consequently had missed the very points we thought before us, and which

would have saved the lives of our poor beasts.

For two days we remained on the bank of the stream, which we not inappropriately named Providence Creek, without venturing away the distance of thirty rods during the whole time. On the morning of the third day, we found our limbs so pliable, and our strength so far recruited, as to think ourselves justified in resuming our travels, or at all events in making an exploration of the ridge above us.

Accordingly, ascending to the summit of the hill—which was densely covered with a wood somewhat resembling ash, though not so large—we made out the uplands here to cover an area of five miles in breadth by twenty in length, running almost due north and south, and composed of two parallel ridges, full of springs of fine water, some of which ran outward and formed the stream we had first gained, and others inward, forming another in the valley between, both of which, taking a southerly course, united on the way, and entered at last into a beautiful lake, barely visible from the highest point, and which also appeared the grand reservoir of the surrounding country.

Our present locality was a rich and beautiful desert island, and had our horses been here, they would have fared sumptuously on the green, luxuriant grass of the valley. To the best of our judgment, this spot had never before been visited by human being, as no signs indicative thereof could be found. The only game we could discover, were a few ground animals resembling the rabbit, and some gay plumaged birds. We killed a few of each, and on dressing and cooking them, found their flavor, especially the former, very delicious and nutritive.

In this manner we spent a week on Mount Hope, as we termed the ridge, making explorations, killing game, &c., and at the end of this time found our wonted health and spirits nearly restored. We knew not what was before us, it is true; but as kind Providence had almost miraculously preserved us through so many dangers, we no longer had dread of our journey, nor fears of safely reaching the val-

ley of the Sacramento, at which point we aimed.

One thing in our rambles struck us quite forcibly—that in the beds of nearly all the streams we examined, we found a fine yellow substance, mixed with the dirt and sands, which had every appearance of gold. As we had no means of testing this, we resolved to take some along as a specimen, and should we escape, and our surmises regarding it be confirmed, either return ourselves, or put some hardy adventurer in possession of the secret. If this were indeed gold, it must of course have its source in some mine in the vicinity, and this important discovery alone, we felt, would amply compensate us for all we had dared and suffered in venturing hither.

The next morning, like each of the preceding, being clear and serene, we resolved to depart, and again try our fortunes. Looking toward the west, we beheld in the distance another camping ground, and hastening down the western slope of the hills, we made our way directly towards it, over a slightly undulating country, less sterile in its appearance than the desert we had crossed the previous week. We were not able to reach it till after nightfall, and suffered more or less through the day for want of water. Here we again found a rich soil, wooded with what I believe is termed the sage tree, and watered by several delightful springs and streams, in some of which we bathed, and of which we drank, much to our relief.

To follow up our progress in detail, would be to take up more space than can now be spared for the purpose, and, in a great measure, to repeat, with trifling variations, what I have already given.

Suffice it, therefore, that our journey was continued day after day—sometimes over sandy deserts of two days' travel, which blistered our feet, and where we again suffered all the horrors of burning thirst—sometimes over rough, dangerous and volcanic grounds, along side of giddy precipices, and yawning chasms, and adown steep declivities, where a single misstep would have been fatal—sometimes across streams too deep to ford, and which we were obliged to swim—subsisting, a part

of the way, on roots and such game as we could kill, (our supply of jerk having given out) and sleeping at night on the sands, in the open air, or perhaps under the shelter of some overhanging rock—occasionally drenched with a storm of cold rain, without a fire to dry our wet garments, and suffering more or less from hunger, and drought, and weariness, and violent rheumatic pains.

Such was our pilgrimage, over an unexplored country; and yet through all our sufferings, save the first, when we lost our horses, our spirits were almost ever buoyant, and we experienced a rapturous delight known only to the adventurer.

Some six weeks from our leaving the Wahsatch range, we came in sight of the lofty peaks of the Sierra Nevada, which we hailed with a shout of joy, similar to that of the sailor discovering land after a long, tedious voyage, and which awoke echoes in a wilderness never before disturbed by the human voice. Five hundred miles of an unknown region had been passed, almost the whole distance on foot, and now we stood in full view of our long looked for desideratum. During this time we had seen not a human being—always excepting our unfortunate friends, the Diggers—which led us to the inference, that the larger portion of this Great Interior Basin was uninhabited—or, at all events, very thinly peopled.

From this point to the Sierra Nevada, our course now lay over a rough, mountainous country, well watered and timbered; and on the second day, we came upon one or two miserable, dilapidated huts—which, from all appearance, had long been untenanted—and a mile or two farther on, saw a small party of savages, who, on discovering our approach, fled precipitately to the highlands—we probably being the first white human beings they had ever beheld.

About noon of the third day we came to a beautiful lake, and going around it, reached the foot of the mountain chain bounding the Great Basin on the west, just as the sun, taking his diurnal farewell of the snowy peaks above us, seemingly transformed then, by his soft, crimson

light, into huge pillars of burnished gold. We now considered ourselves comparatively safe, though by no means out of danger; for our route, over these mighty erections of nature, we were well aware must be one of extreme peril. Unlike the desert, we might not suffer for want of water—but, unlike the desert too, we might with cold, snows, storms, and from hostile savages.

On the succeeding day we began our ascent. Up, up, up we toiled—through dense thickets of dwarfish, shrubby trees—through creeping vines, full of brambles, that lacerated our ankles and feet, (we had long been shoeless,)—up, up, up the steep mountain sides we struggled—over rocks which sometimes formed precipices that only yielded us here and there a dangerous foot-hold—occasionally leaping across canons, in which the torrent of the mountain rolled murmuring over its rocky bed a thousand feet below us,—on, on, up and on we pressed eagerly—sometimes suffering with fatigue, and with cold, and with hunger—up and on we bent our steps, for two, long, wearisome days, ere we reached the regions of eternal snow.

At last we stood upon the very backbone of the Sierra Nevada, ten thousand feet above the sea, surrounded by a few cedars, loaded with snow and ice, the former underneath us to the depth of many feet—and gazed downward, far, far below us, upon the broad, barren plains, fertile uplands, lovely valleys, and bright, silver streams and lakes—with feelings that are indescribable.

A mile or two farther on, we came to a pleasant valley, through which rolled a beautiful stream. Here, collecting a supply of drift-wood, we kindled a bright fire, and disposing ourselves around it, toasted our already swollen and frost-bitten feet, made our supper of a few roots and berries which we had collected on the way, and occupied most of the night in constructing some rude moccasins out of a quarter buffalo robe which we fortunately had brought with us.

Thus for several days did we continue our perilous journey—passing through scenes of danger and hardship, that, if

detailed, would fill a volume—sustained, in all our trials, by a holy Being, to whom we daily and nightly gave the sincere orisons of grateful hearts.

Once, during our mountain journey, we came very nigh being buried in a furious snow storm; and but for the providential shelter of an Indian hut, ere darkness settled around us, this narrative in all probability had never been written. The hut in question, stood on the side of the mountain, and was constructed of sticks, willows, and rushes, well braided together, in shape not unlike a modern bee-hive. The tenants were an Indian, his squaw, and two half-grown children, all miserable and filthy in their appearance. Our sudden entry (for we did not stop for etiquette) alarmed them terribly, and they screeched and drew back, and huddled themselves in the farthest corner. However, on making them friendly signs, and intimating we only sought protection from the storm, they became reassured, and offered us some nuts of a pleasant flavor, peculiar to the country, and which, as I learned, formed their principal food. We spent the night with them, and were treated with hospitality.

On leaving, I presented the host with a pocket-knife, which he received with an ejaculation of delight, and examined curiously. On opening it, and showing him its uses, his joy increased to such a degree, that, by signs, he immediately volunteered to act as guide, and was accepted by us without hesitation. He proved of great service, in showing us the shortest and best route over the mountains, and as a kind of body guard against other savages, whom we now occasionally met, but whom he restrained from approaching us with any undue familiarity.

On arriving in sight of Sutter's settlement—situated near the junction of the Rio Sacramento and Rio de los Americanos, or River of the Americans—we gave a wild shout of joy, and our guide made signs that he would go no farther. As he had been with us several days, and had proved so faithful, we could not bear he should part from us without a further testimonial of our generosity and gratitude.

Accordingly, drawing from my belt a silver mounted pistol, I discharged it, showed him how to load and fire it, and then presented it to him, together with a belt-knife and a good supply of powder and ball; and he went back with all the pride of an emperor marching from the conquest of another kingdom.

Hurrying forward, with feelings which are indescribable, we passed through a beautiful valley, green with blade and bright with flowers—through an Indian village, where every person appeared neat and comfortable, and well disposed toward us—and at last, ascending a slight eminence, just as day was closing, beheld before us, not half a mile distant, an American fortress, though in a Mexican country and garrisoned by Indians.

In fifteen minutes more we had passed the dusky sentinel at the gate, and entered an asylum of rest from our long pilgrimage. We were received by Capt. Sutter himself, who, gathering only a brief outline of our adventures and sufferings, expressed surprise to see us here alive, shook our hands with all the warm-heartedness of an American *friend*, and gave us a most cordial invitation to make his citadel our home, so long as we might feel disposed to remain in the country.

CHAPTER XXV.

OUR APPEARANCE—SUTTER AND FORT—LEAVE IN THE SPRING—REFLECTIONS—A YEAR PASSED OVER—ON OUR RETURN—THE ANTELOPE—CHASE—LOSS OF MY FRIEND—TERRIBLE FEARS—DESPAIR—FEARFUL RESULTS, ETC.

Worn-out and starved-out—our garments all in tatters—our frames emaciated—our faces long, thin and sallow—with sunken eyes and a beard of some two months' growth—we presented any thing but an attractive appearance on our first arrival at Sutter's. But with the aid of soap and water—a keen razor—new raiment, and a couple of weeks' rest—we began once

more to resemble civilized beings, and feel like ourselves.

✓ Captain Sutter we found to possess all the refined qualities of a hospitable American gentleman. He had emigrated to this country, from the western part of Missouri, a year or two previous to our arrival, and had already succeeded in establishing a fort, on a large grant of land obtained from the Mexican government. He had succeeded, too, in subduing and making good citizens the surrounding Indians, many of whom were already in his employ—some as soldiers, to guard his fortress—some as husbandmen, to till his soil—and some as *vaqueros*, or cow-herds, to tend upon his kine and cattle; so that every thing around gave indications of an industrious, wealthy and prosperous settler.

The fort itself was a large, quadrangular *adobe* structure, capable of being garrisoned by a thousand men—though at the time of which I speak, the whole force consisted of some thirty or forty Indians, (in uniform) and some twenty-five American, French and German *employes*. It mounted some ten or twelve pieces of ordnance, and was well supplied with other munitions of war, most of which, together with a large number of stock, agricultural and other stores, Sutter had purchased from a neighboring Russian establishment, prior to its being withdrawn from the country. Its internal appearance—its arrangement of carpenter and blacksmith shops, store-rooms, offices, &c.—so closely resembled Fort Laramie, as to make further description unnecessary.

Here we remained through the winter, amusing ourselves in various ways—sometimes in hunting among the mountains, exploring the country, and fishing in the streams—and at others, in making ourselves masters of the Spanish tongue, which was spoken by many of the Indians and all of the natives. This last, however, was more for our benefit than amusement—as we had determined on a visit to the seaport places in the lower latitudes of Mexico, so soon as the annual spring rains, being over, should leave the ground in a good condition for travelling.

It was some time between the first and middle of May, that, mounted upon a couple of fiery horses, which, decked off with all the showy trappings of two complete Spanish saddle equipments, had been pressed upon us as a present by our generous host, we bade adieu to the noble hearted Captain Sutter and family, and set out upon our southern journey.

As we rode along, it was with feelings of pleasant sadness we looked back over the eventful past, and remembered that about this time a year ago, two gay youths, fresh from college, were leaving friends and home for the first time, to venture they scarce knew whither. And what of those friends now? Were they alive, and well, and in prosperity? Had their thoughts been much on the wanderers? Had they looked for our return? Had they wept in secret for our absence, and prayed daily for our preservation? Ah! yes, we well knew all this had been done; and the thought that we were still keeping them in suspense—that we were still venturing farther and farther away—could not but make us sad. But, withal, as I said before, it was a pleasant sadness; for we secretly felt a delight in going over new scenes—beholding new objects. Moreover, we were now in good health; our constitutions felt vigorous; and this tended to raise our spirits.

What an eventful year had the past one been! Through what scenes of trial, privation, suffering and peril had we not passed! And yet, amid all, how had we been sustained by the hand of Omnipotence! How had we been lifted up and borne forward over the quicksands of despair! And when all appeared an endless, rayless night, how had our trembling souls been rejoiced by the sudden light of hope beaming upon our pathway, and showing us a haven of rest!

But where would another year find us? In what quarter of the habitable globe, and under what circumstances? Should we be among the living, or the dead? The dead! What a solemn thought, to think that our bones might be reposing in the soil of the stranger—thousands of miles from all we loved, and from all that loved

us! What a startling idea! And yet, in our journeyings, how indifferent, how careless had we been of life! With what foolhardiness had we even dared death to meet us! And still, with all the frightful warnings of the past before us, how recklessly were we plunging on to new scenes of danger! Why did we not turn now, and bend our steps homeward? Had we not seen enough, suffered enough, to satisfy the craving desires of youth!

Home! What a blessed word of a thousand joys! With what pleasing emotions the thought would steal upon our senses! What a world of affection was centered there! What happy faces the thought recalled, and how we longed to behold them! Longed, yet took the very course to put time and distance between us and them! And this to gratify what our sober reason told us was only a foolish, boyish passion—a craving love of adventure!

Home! In that word I beheld the loved faces of my parents. In that word I beheld the welcome visages of my friends. In that word, more than all, I beheld the sweet, melancholy countenance of Lillian!

Lillian! How this name stirred the secret emotions of a passionate soul! Had I forgotten her? Had I, through all the varied scenes I had passed, for a moment lost sight of her lovely countenance—of her sweet eyes beaming upon me the warm affections of an ardent soul? No! I had not forgot, I never could forget, her. She was woven among the fibres of my existence. To tear her hence, would be to rend and shatter the soul itself. Thousands of miles away, she was not absent. She was with me in all my trials, sufferings and perils. Present by day, with her eyes of love. Hovering around me in the still watches of night, as it were the guardian angel of my destiny. Lillian was loved. Time and distance proved it.—Loved with a heart that could never forsake—never so love another. I had done her wrong. But should God spare my life, and permit us again to meet, how quickly, by every means in my power, would I strive to repair it.

Such and similar were our thoughts, as we again bent our steps upon a long jour-

ney. But I will not test your patience, reader, with more. Neither am I going to weary you with a long detail of commonplace events. In other words, I am not going to describe our journey to the south. Like similar journeys, it was full of fatigue, with here and there an incident, or a curiosity, perhaps a danger—which, were I making an official report to government, would be necessary to note—but over which you, doubtless, would yawn and call the writer stupid.

Suffice it, then, that with me you let a year pass unnoted. That you imagine us having gone, a thousand miles into the heart of Mexico, and, heartily sick and disgusted with our travels, the people, and for the most part the country, you now find us on our glad journey to the north—fully determined, in our own minds, from this time forward, to let such as choose, go among barbarians worse than savages, so they seek not us for companions. From this sweeping clause of condemnation, let me save the Mexican ladies; who, for the most part, exercise Christian virtues, worthy of a better fate than being yoked and bound to such lazy, filthy, treacherous brutes as hold over them the dominion of lord and master. But enough! The bare thought of the latter puts me in a passion; and so to get an even temper once more, let me consign them to oblivious contempt.

You will fancy, then, that a year has passed, and that we, having so far escaped with our lives, are now on our return to Upper California, thence to shape our route to Oregon, and then, ho! for the far distant land of our childhood.

Little did we dream in that happy moment of contemplation, of the terrible calamity about to befall us. Little did we think that our hearts, bright with hope and joy, were soon to be clouded with wo unutterable—grief inconsolable. And why should we? We who had been through so many perils, and made so many miraculous escapes, where death seemed inevitable—why should we now, comparatively safe, already on our return, for a moment harbor the thought that a misfortune, before which all we had suffered sunk into insignificance, was impending us? How

little does man know his destiny! Poor, blind mortal! what presumption in him to attempt to read the scroll of fate! But let me not anticipate.

It was a bright, warm day in the spring of 1842, that we arrived at Pueblo de los Angeles, where the Great Spanish Trail comes in from Santa Fe. We had been on the move day after day for nearly a month, during which time we had travelled some five hundred miles, and our horses were very much fatigued in consequence. Besides, their shoes being worn out and their feet sore, we resolved to remain here a few days, to have them shod, recruited, and put in a good travelling condition, while our time was to be spent in hunting, and examining the country round about.

Giving our beasts in charge of a responsible person, with orders to see them well attended to, we set forward with our rifles, and taking the Spanish Trail, which here ran due east and west, we followed it some two miles, and then leaving it to the right, struck off into the mountains known as the Coast Range.

About noon we came to a point where the country assumed a very rough and wild appearance. Cliff upon cliff rose one over the other, above which, still, a few peaks shot up far heavenward, capped with everlasting snows. Tremendous precipices, deep caverns, and wild gorges, could be seen on every hand, full of danger to the unwary explorer.

Making a halt, we were already debating whether to advance or retrace our steps, when, as if to decide and lure us forward, a fine antelope was discovered on a rock above us, not over a hundred yards distant, coolly eyeing us from his supposed safe retreat. Scarce a moment elapsed, so quick were the motions of each, ere our pieces, speaking together, told him too late of his error. He was wounded, this we could see, but not enough to prevent his flight, and he turned and bounded over the rocks up the steep.

"By heavens! Frank," cried Huntly, with enthusiasm, "here is sport in earnest. Nothing to do but give chase. He must not escape us. Dart you up the mountain,

while I, by going round, will perhaps head him off on the other side. At all events, we will soon meet again."

On the impulse of the moment, I sprang forward in one direction and Huntly in another. To the great danger of my neck, I clambered up the steep acclivity, over precipitous rocks, gaping fissures, and through a dense brushwood, and stood at last upon the spot where we had first seen the goat. Here was a small pool of blood, and a bloody trail marked the course of the animal; and I pressed on again, rightly judging, from the quantity of blood left behind, that he could not hold out any great distance. But the distance proved farther than I had anticipated, and half an hour found me completely out of breath, on the brow of one of the lower ridges, without having come in sight of the antelope. Here the trail, more bloody than ever, took a downward course, and I counted on finding the chase between me and the foot of the hill. At this moment I heard, as I fancied, the shout of my friend; and thinking it one of delight, on being the first to reach the goat, I gave an answering one of joy, and descended rapidly on the red trail.

Within fifty yards of the valley, I discovered the object of my search, lying on his side, pierced by two bullets, and in the last agonies of death. Applying my knife to his throat, I made an end of his sufferings, and then looked eagerly around for my friend. He was no where to be seen. I called—but no answer. This somewhat surprised me, as I felt certain of having heard his voice in this direction. Thinking he could not be far off, I repeated his name at the top of my lungs, but with no better success.

Although somewhat alarmed, I consoled myself by thinking I must have been mistaken in the sound I had heard, and that at all events he would soon make his appearance. With this, I seated myself on the ground, and throwing the breech of my rifle down the mountain, occupied myself in loading it.

Minute after minute went by, but no Huntly appeared, and I began to grow exceedingly uneasy. For a while I fancied

he might be watching me from some near covert, just to note the effect of his absence; but when a half hour had rolled around, and nothing had been seen nor heard of him, I became alarmed in earnest.

Springing to my feet, I shouted his name several times, with all the accents of fright and despair. Then darting down to the valley, I ran around the foot of the mountain, making the woods echo with my calls at every step. In half an hour more I had gained the point where we parted—but still no Huntly. God of mercy! who can describe my feelings then! Nearly frantic, I retraced my steps, shouting until my lungs were sore—but, alas! with no better success. There lay the antelope, as I had left it, showing that no one had been here during my absence.

Until the shades of night began to settle over the earth, I continued my almost frantic search; and then, thinking it possible Huntly might have returned to the settlement, I set out for los Angeles, with the speed and feelings of a madman.

✓ When I arrived there, it had long been night. To my eager inquiries, each and all shook their heads, and replied that my friend had not been seen since we departed in the morning. Who could describe, who imagine, my anguish on hearing this!—Huntly, my bosom companion, was lost. Captured it might be by guerrillas, or by ✓ Indians. Destroyed, perhaps, by some wild beast, or by falling down some precipice, or into some chasm. Gone he was, most certainly; and I wrung my hands in terrible agony, and called wildly upon his name, though I knew he could not hear me. So great was my distress, it excited the pity of the spectators, several of whom volunteered to go back with me and search for him with torches. The proposition I accepted eagerly, and that night the mountains sparkled with flaming lights, and their deep recesses resounded the name of my friend, and cries of anguish. All night long we searched faithfully, and shouted with all our might. But, alas! all to no avail. My friend came not—answered not—perhaps never would again.

When daylight once more lighted that fatal spot, and those who had assisted

me, declared it useless to search longer—that Huntly was either dead or a prisoner—my anguish exceeded the strength of my reason to bear, and I became a raving maniac.

For two months from that date, I had no knowledge of what transpired; and when, by the grace of God, consciousness again returned, I found myself in a feeble state, a close prisoner at Pueblo de los Angeles.

To a noble hearted Mexican lady, wife of a Mexican military officer, for her kindness to, and care of, a forlorn stranger, is due a debt of gratitude, which perhaps I may never have power to cancel, but which, it is my daily prayer, may be found written upon the eternal pages of the Great Book of All-Good.

In June, a sad, emaciated, almost heart-broken being, I resumed my journey to the north. But alas! alas! poor Charles Huntly! His fate was still unknown.—His last words to me, spoken gaily, "*At all events, we shall soon meet again,*" had never been fulfilled.

CHAPTER XXVI.

ON THE ROCKY MOUNTAINS—HOMEWARD BOUND—SAD REFLECTIONS—RAPID DESCENT—TWO ENCAMPMENTS—MEET OLD FRIENDS—INCOG.—THEIR FRIENDSHIP TESTED—MAKE MYSELF KNOWN—FRANTIC JOY—VISIT THE SICK—PAINFUL AND UNEXPECTED MEETING.

I stood upon the summit of the Rocky Mountains. I stood upon that point of land which divides the rivers of the Atlantic from the Pacific oceans. Upon that mighty barrier, which bids its gushing rivulets roll eastward and westward. Where, springing from the same source, as children from the same parents, they are separated by the hand of fate, to end their course thousands of miles apart.

I stood upon the great dividing ridge of the North American Continent, and cast my eyes over a mighty expanse of territory. But with what feelings did I gaze

around me! Were they feelings of joy? No! they could not be joyous. There was one absent from my side, that made them sad. I needed the bright eye, noble face, commanding form, warm heart and strong hand of one who was now perhaps no more. Had *he* been by—my now melancholy gaze had been one of intoxicating, enthusiastic rapture. In every hill, in every tree, in every rock, in every rill, I would have beheld something to make my heart bound with delight—for now I was homeward bound.

What a strange creature is man! It is said that he sees with his eyes—but I contend that his heart gives color to his vision. If not, why do the same scenes, unchanged in their appearance, to him present different aspects? Why does that which to-day he beholds *couleur de rose*, to-morrow wear the sable hue of gloom? Is not the scene the same? Are not his eyes the same? Ay! but yesterday his heart was light and bounding with joy—to-day it is dark and oppressed with grief. All the change, then, lies in the heart.

Yes! here I stood—*alone*—my face set eastward—my steps bent to the still far distant land of my youth. What had I not been through, what had I not suffered, since quitting that roof under which I had known nothing but happiness and ease? In little more than two years, I felt I had lived an age, and even fancied my hair growing gray at twenty-two.

Yes! I was wending my way to my native land; but should God permit me to reach there alive, what an unenviable lot was mine, to make the home of my friend the house of lamentation and wo! And Lillian, dear Lillian—to whom, would to God, I could bring nothing but joy—I must be doomed, too, to make her weep, to fill her bright eyes with tears, and robe her fair form in funeral weeds. Alas! alas! what bitter necessity! How my soul groaned in anguish at the thought, until I envied the supposed cold death-sleep of him I wept.

Such were some of my thoughts and feelings, as I commenced descending the eastern slope of the Rocky Mountains. I have said nothing of my route hither, since leaving Pueblo de los Angeles, and for the

very reason there was little or nothing to say. My horse had borne me hither; my hand had guided him; my food had been such as came in my way; my sleep had been mostly upon the hard earth in the open air; my route had occasionally been pointed out to me—occasionally had been taken at a venture: I had sometimes had companions—sometimes had travelled by myself: and, lastly, I was here now, alone, and that was the most I knew. Oppressed with a burden of grief almost insupportable, I had taken little note of external objects. With a sort of instinct, I had, day after day, pursued my journey, perfectly reckless of that life which to me seemed more an affliction than a comfort. I had been surrounded by dangers at all times; I had been less cautious than previously in guarding against them; and yet here I was—alive—in fair bodily health—preserved how, and for what purpose, God only knew.

It was near the close of August, and the day was clear and cold. The sun, some three hours advanced towards noon, streamed over the scene his bright light, but without much apparent warmth. The north wind, sweeping down from the icy peaks of the Wind River Mountains, looming up in rugged masses away to the left, seemed to chill my very blood; and spurring my noble horse onward, I dashed down the long slope before me at a fast gallop. A little after nightfall, I came to a romantic valley, shut in by hills, through which a bright stream rolled, and foamed, and murmured over its rocky bed. Here I beheld the fires of two encampments. The one nearest the bank of the river, was evidently a party of emigrants; for by the dim light, I could just trace the white outline of several covered wagons, and a few dark, moving objects near them, which I took to be their animals. I could also see a few figures flitting to and fro, some round the fire-lights, and some more distant—engaged, to all appearance, in preparing the evening's repast, and settling themselves down for the night. The other encampment, separated from the first some thirty or forty rods, consisted of only one fire, around which were squatted a small

group of mountaineers. To this I directed my horse, and, on coming up, said:

"Gentlemen, will you permit a solitary traveller to mess with you for the night?"

"Well, we won't do nothin' else," replied a voice, which I fancied was not unfamiliar to me.

Although this answer signified I was welcome to join them, yet not a man moved, nor appeared to notice me at all. This, however, did not disconcert me in the least, as I knew so well the morose, semi-social habits of the mountaineer, that, to gain a grunt of assent to my request, was the utmost I could expect. I therefore dismounted, and approaching the fire, scrutinized the faces of the party closely, as, rolling out clouds of tobacco smoke, they remained fixed like posts in a circle, their eyes apparently seeing nothing but the flames. Judge of my astonishment, reader, on discovering in this party of five, two of my old acquaintances—Black George and Teddy O'Lagherty. My first impulse was to spring forward, and make myself known at once. But on second thought, I concluded to remain incog., and see what would be the result.

Removing the saddle and trappings from my horse, I hobbled and left him to crop the green grass of the valley. Then drawing near the fire, I squatted myself down in the ring, just far enough back to have a shade upon my face. The trappers were engaged in conversation of more than ordinary interest, and appeared not to notice me; while, for my own part, I determined not to interrupt them.

"Think she'll hev to go under," observed Black George, with an ominous shake of the head. "Thar's many places better to be sick in nor this here."

"Ah, jabbers! but it's har-r-d now, so it is," rejoined Teddy, looking very solemn. "Howly murder! but I wish mesilf a doctor now—barring the physicing, that I don't like at all, at all—if ounly to make the face of that swaat crathur glad, by tilling her I knows her mother's ailment. Ochone! but she's the purtiest live one I've saan since laving ould Ireland, where I wish mesilf back agin. I could love her, for looking so much like me young

masther, that's dead and gone, pace to his bones. Ochone! this is a sorry world, so it is."

"How she looked, when she axed for a doctor of me," observed another. "Ef I hadn't left soon, I'd a done somethin' womanish, sartin."

"Augh!" grunted Black George, knocking the ashes from his pipe; "sich sights as them aint fit for us mountainers."

"Of whom are you speaking, friends?" I now inquired, deeply interested.

"A beauthiful lady, sir, and her mother as is sick," replied Teddy, turning toward me an eager look.

I instantly shaded my face with my hand, as if to keep off the heat, and saw I was not recognized.

"And where is the lady you speak of?"

"In the wagin, yonder. The ould lady is sick, and they've not a spalpeen of a doctor among 'em, and the young miss is crying like she'd break her heart, poor thing! For the matter of that, there's two young females, now, that's crying—but only one saams to be the daughter. Maybe it's a doctor you is, now, by your wee look and thinness?"

"I was educated to the profession, but have never practised."

"Troth, it's no difference—ye must go an' sae the lady—for it's Heaven sint ye here, I'm knowing mesilf."

"But, T—(I was on the point of speaking his name)—but I have no medicine."

"Divil a bit difference for that. Ye must be ather saaing her, if ye's a doctor—and can spaak the Latin names they gives whin physic's short—if ounly to comfort the young lady that's dying of grief."

"Well, well, I will go," I said, finding myself fully in for it, and my curiosity being a good deal excited, also, to see the lady whom all agreed in describing as beautiful.

"Ah! that's a good sowl ye is, now!" said the warm, generous hearted Teddy, who seemed as much interested for the fair stranger as if she were his own sister. "It's a good sowl ye is, now, to go and sae her! Faith! ye puts me in mind of a young masther I once had—voice and all

—barring that he was a wee bit bether looking nor you is."

"Indeed! And what was your master's name?"

"Och! I had a pair of 'em. One was Misther Huntly, a lawyer—and the other, Misther Leighton, a docthor. It's the docthor ye puts me in mind of now."

"Well, what became of them?"

"Oh! sir," cried Teddy, wiping the tears from his eyes, "they got killed, sir. The devilish, murdering, baastly tiefs 'of Injin's killed and ate 'em. Ochone! ochone!" and he wrung his hands at the bare thought, and sobbed for very grief.

"Why, you seem to take it to heart as much as if they were related to you."

"And so would you, an' ye'd a knowed 'em, sir. They was two sich swaat youths! Perfict gintlemen, and jist from college, as I heard 'em say meself. Ochone! but I'd a died for 'em asy, and no questions axed, an' they'd a towld me too."

"Leighton! Leighton!" repeated I, musingly, as if trying to remember where I had before heard the name. "Leighton! fresh from college, say you? Was the one you term docthor, from Boston?"

"Ah, troth was he!" cried Teddy, jumping up in excitement. "Then ye know him, sir, it may be, by your way of spaking, jist?"

"I know enough of him," I answered, now fully determined on putting Teddy's friendship to the test.

"Arrah! sir, and what d'ye maan by saying the likes of that, now?"

"What do I mean? Why, my meaning is very simple. I know that this fellow you are so fond of lauding, is not a whit better than I am."

"And I maan ye're a dirty, spalpeen blaggard—docthor or no docthor—jist for spaking in that contimptible manner of the finest gintleman as was iver saan, and no exceptions made to your dirty self, that's not wort the snap of me finger!—Whoop! ye blaggard! don't be grinning that way at your bethers—but jist come out here like a man, ye cowardly tief! and sae what I'll teach ye! Whoop!"

Here the Irishman jumped up and cracked his heels, and made several warlike de-

monstrations with his fists, much to my amusement and satisfaction. The trappers, too, gathered themselves upon their feet, in anticipation of a fight; and as showed no disposition to reply to Teddy, Black George turned his dark visage to me, and said, gruffly:

"Come, young chap, you've got to chaw them words you've jest put travellin, or git licked afore you ken say beans."

"What have I said?" I replied, finding the matter becoming serious, and pretending to exculpate myself. "I merely intimated that Mr. Leighton was no better than myself; and what more could I say, when of course I think myself as good as any body?"

"Yes, it's all very well, boy, for you to talk," returned Black George; "but heyar's what knows a insult from a beaver, I reckons; and ef you don't chaw them words in less nor two minutes, and own up you aint no equal to him you've spoke aginst, I'll ram some fodder down your gullet you won't swoller easy—ef I don't, I hope I may be dogged for a dirty skunk all my life;" and he ended by shaking his fist rather nearer my face than was agreeable.

"Yes, and now be taking thim back!" roared Teddy, making preparations to spring upon me, "or I'll turn ye inside out, and shake ye as I used me mather's carpet-bag, that's dead and gone—not the bag, but the mather, ye blaggard, ye!"

I now found, that to restore myself to the good graces of my friends, I should be obliged to own myself a falsifier, or make myself known. As I had fully tested their friendship for my absent self, I chose the latter.

"Gentlemen," I rejoined, mildly, "I can prove every thing I have said; and even you will acknowledge it, when I tell you who I am. You behold before you, nct the calumniator of Francis Leighton, but Francis Leighton himself, your old friend."

Had a bomb suddenly fallen and burst at their feet, it could not have caused more surprise and wonder with Teddy and Black George, than did this simple declaration.

At first they both took a step or two back, and then springing forward, each caught me by an arm, and, drawing me

close to the fire, peered eagerly into my face. One full, penetrating glance sufficed.

"Him, by ——!" cried Black George.

"Howly Mary!" shouted Teddy, throwing his arms around my neck, and weeping like a child. Then taking another long look into my face, he sprang away, and shouting, "Be howly St. Pathrick! it's him—it's him!—me young mather's alive!" he danced and capered around me, with all the wild gestures of joyful insanity—sometimes weeping, and sometimes laughing, and occasionally catching hold of me, as if to assure himself of my identity, and that it was no vision, no hallucination of the brain.

Black George, meantime, pressed my hand warmly, and said, in a voice slightly tremulous with emotion:

"Boy, I never reckoned seein you agin. Thought you'd gone under—I'll be dog-gone ef I didn't! You fit well—I'll be dogged ef you didn't! But whar d'ye float to, and whar's your partner?"

Some half an hour was now spent in questions and answers, during which I learned that Fiery Ned and Rash Will had both been killed at Bitter Cottonwood; that Daring Tom had been severely wounded, and shortly after left for the States; that Carson had escaped, and was at the present time acting as guide to Fremont; that Teddy had been on a trapping adventure with Black George and two or three others; that, having recently made a trip to St. Louis, they were now on their way to the mountains; and that neither myself nor Huntly had been heard from since that eventful night—in consequence of which they had supposed us killed or made prisoners. In turn, I gave them a brief outline of my own adventures, up to the loss of my friend, at which both expressed deep sympathy, and Teddy wept freely.

"Spakin' of Misther Huntly," said Teddy at length, "puts me in mind that you havn't yit saan the sick woman, your honor."

"True, Teddy—I had forgot. Lead the way!"

At the word, we quitted the trappers, and set forward to the larger encampment,

where I found some six or eight heavy covered wagons, arranged in a circle. In the center of the area stood a group of men, conversing in low tones, and glancing occasionally at one of the vehicles, around which several women were collected, the faces of all, as far as I could see, expressive of deep sympathy and sorrow. Close to the wagon, in which on a rude bed the invalid was lying, were two young females, apparently of the better class, one of whom, clasping the thin hand of the sick person, particularly arrested my attention, by her display of violent grief. The other appeared to be weeping also; but the faces of both were from me, so that I could only conjecture.

Taking the lead, Teddy forced his way through the crowd, and lightly touching the shoulder of the one who held the invalid's hand, said, in a gentle tone:

"Here's a docthor, marm."

The next moment I found myself the cynosure of many eyes, while the one addressed, turning short round, gave one glance, and uttering a fearful scream, sank to the earth in a swoon. What this meant I was at a loss to comprehend; for her features had been in the shade of the same light which revealed mine to her.

"Nervous excitement," I said to myself; "joy at beholding a physician at hand;" and springing forward, I bent down to raise her.

Already had my arms encircled her slender form—already was I on the point of lifting her from the earth—when the light of a torch flashed full on her pale countenance. One look! one sudden start! one exclamation of agonized wonder! and I remained fixed, with eyes half starting from their sockets—speechless—motionless—seemingly transformed to stone—my arms encircling—merciful Heaven!—the lovely form of—*Lilian Huntly!*

CHAPTER XXVII.

INDESCRIBABLE FEELINGS—QUESTIONS FOR THE METAPHYSICIAN—DIGRESSION—PAINFUL AFFLICTIONS OF MY FRIEND'S FAMILY—WESTERN FEVER—CAUSES INDUCING EMIGRATION—AN IMAGINARY CITY—A MYSTERIOUS LADY AND DAUGHTER, ETC.

There are feelings that cannot be described. There are emotions too deep for utterance. There are times when the mind has power to paralyze the body. When racking thought forces us to live an age in a minute. When we see and know all that is going on around us, and yet seem to be separate from the world—to exist in a world of ideality—a spiritual state. When our whole life, like a map, seems laid before us, and we behold at a single glance, in a second of time, what has taken us years to enact. When, leaping over the past and the present, we seem to pierce the great veil of the future, and behold our destiny.

May not this be a foretaste of death? May we not so see, and feel, and know, when the spirit shall have become separated from its frail tenement of mortality?

I have said there are such feelings and emotions; but they can only result from the most powerful causes. Neither do they effect all in the same manner. While a few experience the sensations just described, to others the same or similar causes, may be productive of death, insanity, or the death-like swoon of utter forgetfulness.

Of the former class, was I—of the latter, Lilian. The same emotions which forced her to unconsciousness—paralyzed my physical powers, and forced me to a consciousness beyond the natural.

Bending over her—my eyes seemingly glazed, and fixed upon her sweet face, now pale and death-like—I remained spell bound—all my animal faculties suspended. I heard a trampling of feet, as several persons hurried to our assistance. I heard voices expressive of alarm and dismay—and, above all, the voice of the invalid calling Lilian by name. I was conscious of being removed—of seeing the idol of

my heart raised and borne away also. I felt my limbs chafed by half a dozen hands, and water dashed in my face. I saw thus, felt thus, comprehended all—and yet my mind was wandering far away to other scenes.

Have we power to think of more than one thing at the same time? I contend that we nave—or else that thought, swift beyond comparison, sets before us different scenes, with such rapidity, that we seem to behold two at once—sometimes half-a-dozen—and yet each, perhaps, as opposite and distant, as the north and south poles.

While I comprehended what was going on around me, my mind flew back to youth—to the time when I first felt a passion for Lilian—and traced every event of my life, up to the present moment. Even the dream—wherein I had seen her bowed down by poverty, and finally murdered by my supposed rival—was not overlooked; and it now recurred to me as a vision of prophecy. Something fearful had happened, and I had been warned of it in my sleep.

How is it that in our sleep events are made known to us, that really are, or are about taking place? Can it be that the spirit then roams at will, in all the freedom of disembodiment, and returns freighted with intelligence to communicate to the physical senses? Let the philosopher and metaphysician answer! Enough for me the effect, without at present seeking the cause.

And here, to keep my narrative straight before the reader, let me digress one moment, to place him in possession of facts which I gleaned afterwards—partly from Lilian—partly from her companions of the journey.

It will be remembered, that in the opening of this story, I mentioned, as my own father, and the father of my friend, as being wealthy merchants in the city of Boston. Shortly after our departure—it might be on that very night of my singular dream—news of the failure of three large houses in New York, gave Huntly the astounding information that he was not worth a thousand dollars beyond his obligations. I am

not going to describe his feelings, nor those of his family, on finding themselves thus suddenly plunged from a state of unlimited wealth to one of comparative poverty. The effect upon the elder Huntly, was to ruin him in his own estimation for life; and it soon became apparent to his friends, that he would not long survive the shock. All his energy, his ambition, went with his property; and a cloud of melancholy and grief settled over his once bright and joyous countenance. Several warm hearted friends, among whom was my father, came forward and offered to assist him—but all to no avail. He refused assistance—declaring it the chastening hand of God, to prepare him to depart to his long home. Oppression of spirits brought on physical debility, and the winds of the succeeding autumn sung a dirge over his grave.

A father and husband dead—a brother and son away, perhaps dead also—made the home of Lilian and her mother a house of mourning indeed; and what they suffered for the next two years, I must leave to the imaginations of those who have felt a similar visitation of the hand of Providence.

After paying the debts of the estate, a remnant of property remained, to which a few friends, on pretence they owed the deceased for this favor or that, generously added more; so that, although comparatively poor, they were in a measure above want. They left their fine mansion, to reside in a small but pleasant house, owned by my father, but for which he would receive no rent. Here they remained for eighteen months, laboring under a weight of affliction which those only can know who have lost friends by death, been suddenly reduced from affluence to poverty, and seen the cold stinging look of scorn and contempt upon the lips of these heartless beings who were wont to play the fawning sycophant, and utter words of flattery and deceit as worthless as themselves.

✓ During the winter of 1841-42, much was said concerning Oregon, and, as generally happens with every new place to which public attention becomes particularly directed, there were not lacking exaggerated accounts, which set it forth as the real El

Dorado of the world. Whether these owed their origin to the prolific brains of certain romantic editors, or to the more designing ones of speculators, or to both combined, (the most probable) matters not; but the effect was to set on foot a tide of emigration, which, had it continued to the present time, without check, would have made Oregon a populous country.

Among those who had caught this "western fever," as it is frequently not inappropriately termed, were a few wealthy farmers in the vicinity of Boston, with one family of whom Mrs. Huntly had an intimate acquaintance. Being on a visit there in the winter, she soon learned, much to her surprise, that they were already making preparations to start, on the opening of spring, for this great El Dorado—this *Ultima Thule* of western emigration. Several of their acquaintances were going to join them, and, above all, an eccentric lady of wealth and refinement, who, with her beautiful daughter, had for the past year been the lioness and belle of the aristocratic and fashionable circles of Boston. Of this lady—who was known as Madame Mortimer, as also her daughter, who had received the sobriquet of Belle Eva, the latter being her Christian name—Mrs. Huntly had more than once heard; and it was with no little surprise, as may readily be imagined, she now learned of her determination to venture upon such a long, tedious, and dangerous journey; and she mentally said, "When such a personage resolves to leave all the allurements of civilization, there must be something worth going for;" and this, probably, proved one of the strongest arguments to induce her to make one of the party herself. In addition to this, her country friends were enthusiastic on the subject of Oregon, of which they had received the most glowing, and of course exaggerated accounts, and were eager in urging her to join them. Oregon City, a name which sounded well to the ear, was to be their destination. O this they already had maps, whereon the beautiful streets and squares looked very enticing. Here each and all were to make their fortunes; and in the visionary excitement of the moment, they overlooked

the sober fact, that Oregon City then existed on the map only, drawn up by some speculator, and that its handsome streets and squares, were simply imaginary locations in an utter wilderness.

But why prolong—why enter into detail of the hundred little causes which, combined, decided Mrs. Huntly (a lady whose main faults were an enthusiastic love of new projects, an overweening confidence in her own judgment, and a wilful adherence to her own decisions, right or wrong,) in joining this ill-timed expedition, contrary to the advice of her friends and of Lillian—the latter of whom consented to accompany her that she might not be separated from her only parent. Enough, that she had so decided; and that early in the spring succeeding, having disposed of all her effects, she and Lillian, in company with Madame and Eva Mortimer, (whom the fashionable world of course considered insane) and some eight or ten families, had set out on their long journey to the far, Far West.

And here apropos of Madame Mortimer and her lovely daughter, of whom much remains to be said at no distant period. Although they had appeared in the fashionable circles of Boston, reputed wealthy, nothing of their private history was known; and of course, as regarded them, curiosity was excited to a great degree, but without avail. They had been met among the *bon ton* of New York, and invited to Boston. They had accepted the invitation, had passed the ordeal of fashionable criticism, had conducted themselves on all occasions with strict propriety, and had departed, right in the face of all the gossips, without a single one being the wiser for his or her inquiries.

As to who and what they were, and how connected with the foregoing and succeeding events of this life-history, the reader who continues to the end of the narrative, will doubtless be enlightened.

It is needless for me to touch upon the journey of my friends westward. Like all emigrants who seek Oregon for a home, they had experienced severe trials and vicissitudes, which upon them had fallen the more heavily, from being the first hard-

ships they had ever known. Some three or four days previous to my joining them, Mrs. Huntly had been taken sick; and although Lillian had been greatly alarmed from the first, yet with the others the matter had not been thought serious, until the evening in question, when her symptoms had taken an unfavorable turn. Having no doctor among them, application for one had been made by Lillian to some of the trappers—who chanced to be passing—and this, providentially, had brought us once more together, after the long and eventful separation of more than two years.

Having now, reader, put you in possession of facts important for you to know, I will return from my digression, and go on with my narrative.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

RECOVER FROM MY PARALYSIS—THE INVALID—CAUSE OF ILLNESS—REMEDY—HAPPY RESULTS—JOY OF LILLIAN—AN EVASION—FAMILIAR FACES—STRANGE MEETING—REFLECTIONS.

It was several minutes before I recovered from my paralysis, and this was doubtless much accelerated by Teddy, who, having tried various ways to restore me, at last threw his arms around my neck, and placing his mouth close to my ear, shouted:

“I say, your honor, is it dead ye is, now—or is it dead ye’s jist agoing to be—the way ye’s stare so, and says nothing at all, at all?”

With a start, as if suddenly awakened from a dream, I looked around me, perceived myself the center of all eyes, and heard my name several times pronounced, coupled with that of Lillian, as here and there one, who had gained the secret of our strange behavior, sought to explain it to others. To most, my name was already familiar, as the companion of young Huntly, and son of the wealthy Leighton of Boston—and this, probably, had no tendency to lessen curiosity.

My first feeling on regaining myself, (if I may so express it) was one of confusion, that I had so publicly laid myself open to gossip; my second, indignation at being so stared at; my third, alarm as to what might be the effect of all this upon Mrs. Huntly; and to her I immediately turned, without a word to the others. Perhaps the reader, if a lover, is surprised that my first alarm was not for Lilian.—Ay! but, dear sir, I saw at a glance that Lilian was in good hands, and in a fair way of recovery, and it would have been injudicious, at that moment, to draw any more attention to her.

Mrs. Huntly I found lying upon a feather bed, in a large, covered wagon, underneath which was attached a furnace for warming it; so that, all things considered, the patient was more comfortably situated than I had expected to find her.

In appearance, she had altered much since I last saw her. Her naturally rather florid complexion, and full, round face, had given place to pallor and thinness, and here and there I could trace deep lines of care; but I failed to note a single symptom portending immediate danger. Grief, fatigue of travel, and many anxieties of mind, together with a touch of influenza, had brought on a splenetic affection, something like what is vulgarly termed "hypo." She had fancied herself very ill, and in fact nigh unto death; and I saw at once, that could she be persuaded the crisis had passed, and that the danger was over, she would speedily recover—and upon this I acted with decision. The cause of her grief and of her being here, I did not then know—for the information which I have given the reader on the subject, was not obtained till afterwards—and I saw it would not do to question her. It was necessary I should appear cheerful, whether I felt so or not; and accordingly I approached her with a smile. Instantly her eye brightened as it met mine, and I perceived, to my great satisfaction, that the alarm occasioned by the swoon of Lilian, had proved beneficial, in drawing her thoughts from herself to another, and arousing all her dormant faculties. Extending her hand as I approached, she said, with a sigh:

"Ah! Francis, I never thought we should meet thus."

"True," I replied, "I had thought to meet you under other circumstances—though I presume all has happened for the best."

"You find me very low, do you not?"

"You *have* been ill," I answered, emphasising the word *have*; "but every thing I see has turned in your favor."

"How!" she exclaimed, quickly, raising her head, and fixing her eyes intently upon mine; "would you imply that I am not in a dangerous condition?"

"I would not only imply it," I rejoined, with energy, pretending to judge by her pulse, "but I will assert it, as an indisputable fact. If in a week from this you are not as well as you ever were in your life, I will give you leave to call me an imposter."

"Really, Francis, you surprise me!" she said, with animation. "In fact, I believe I do feel better. But I *have* been sick—you admit that?"

"O, most certainly," I said, rejoiced to perceive the beneficial effects of my mental prescription. "You *have* been very sick, and within an hour have been nigh unto death; but, thank God! the crisis has passed, and you have nothing to do now but recover as fast as possible."

"But what is, or has been, my ailment?"

Here I remembered the suggestion of Teddy, and quickly mumbled over a long string of Latin names, with scientific explanations, much to the satisfaction of every body but myself. The spectators who had crowded around to hear what I had to say—being, with but two or three exceptions, good honest farmers and farmers' wives—nodded approvals to each other, and gave me many a respectful glance, equivalent to telling me, that my first case, without a single dose, had, with them, established my reputation as a skillful physician. O, the humbug of big sounding words! I would advise doctors and lawyers to use them on all occasions.

News of my decision, regarding the patient, flew rapidly from one to another—lighting each countenance, before gloomy, with a smile of pleasure—until it reached

the ear of Lilian, who, just recovering from the effects of her swoon, uttered a cry of joy, and, much to the surprise and satisfaction of those engaged in restoring her, suddenly sprang away from them and rushed to her mother.

"O, mother," she cried, "I have heard such good tidings!"

"All true, every word," returned her mother, gaily. "My physician has pronounced me out of danger;" and she playfully pointed to me.

"God be praised!" cried Lilian, fervently. "What a miracle is this! and how it relieves my anguished heart!"

Then turning upon me her sweet, pale, lovely countenance—her full, soft blue eyes, moist with tears—she partly extended her hand, and gasped my name.

The next instant, regardless of the time, place, and the presence of others, she was clasped in my arms, strained to my heaving breast, and my lips were pressed to hers in the holy kiss of mutual love. It was a blissful moment, notwithstanding all we had both suffered. But it was a moment only; for the next she sprang away, blushing and abashed at what she doubtless considered her own boldness.

"You're a wonderful docthor, your honor," whispered Teddy in my ear. "Faith! ye jist looks at 'em, and jabbars a few Latin names, and they're betther'n they iver was—afore they've time to know what ailed 'em, jist—and, troth! a hugging ye at that, too, the purtiest one among 'em. Is it knowing thim ye is—or does the likes of her kiss by raason of yees being a docthor? Jabbers! it's what I'd like done to meself, now, in any perfhishion."

"Hush! Teddy. These are the sister and mother of my lost friend."

"Howly St. Pathrick in the morning! ye don't say!" exclaimed Teddy, staggering back with surprise.

"Hush!" I whispered in his ear, catching him by the arm, with a grip sufficient to impress the importance of my words. "Not a syllable concerning Huntly, as you value your life!"

"Och!" returned Teddy, placing his finger to his lips, winking his eye, and

nodding his head, "I'm dumb as a dead nager, I is."

This caution was not made any too soon; for the next moment Mrs. Huntly exclaimed:

"But, Francis, where is my son—where is Charles—that he does not make his appearance?"

"O, yes, my brother!" cried Lilian.

I was suddenly seized with a serious fit of coughing, so as to gain time for a reply. It would not do to let them know the true state of the case, and I could not think of telling them a falsehood. A happy thought struck me, and I answered:

"Charles is not with me."

"Indeed! Where is he, then?" cried both in a breath.

"We parted in California; I left him going eastward; and, for what I know, he may be now in Boston."

"God help him, then, when he hears the awful news, and finds himself homeless and friendless, poor boy!" cried Mrs. Huntly, with a burst of grief, in which Lilian joined.

I now inquired what had happened, and learned, in the course of conversation, much of that which I have already given the reader.

"Poor Charles!" I sighed to myself, "it is well if thou art dead. Better be dead, than return to thy once happy home, only to find thy friends gone and thyself a beggar!"

With Lilian and her mother, in their misfortunes, I sympathised deeply; but fearing these saddening thoughts might prove injurious to Mrs. Huntly, I hastened to console her by saying:

"We should bear in mind that all are born to die; that riches are unstable; and that whatever happens, is always for the best, though we be not able to see it at the time."

"That I believe to be the true philosophy of life," said a middle aged lady at my side, whom, with her daughter, a meet companion for Lilian, I had more than once noticed, as possessing superior accomplishments; but under the excitement I was laboring, I had failed to closely scan the features of either. I now turned at once to the speaker, and was immediately

introduced, by Lilian, to Madame Mortimer, and her daughter Eva.

"Strange!" I said to myself, as, bowing to each, I became struck with the familiarity of their features. "I have seen these faces before, methinks—but where I cannot tell."

The name, however, perplexed me—for I had no remembrance of ever before being introduced to a Mortimer.

"Your countenance seems familiar," I said, addressing the elder lady.

"And so does yours, sir!" she replied; "and for the last half hour, I have been trying to recall where I have seen you—but in vain."

Suddenly the whole truth flashed upon me.

"Were you not in New York with your daughter, some two years since?" I inquired, eagerly.

"I was."

"At the National Theatre, on the night it was burned!"

"I was."

"Did not some one rescue your daughter from the flames?"

"Good heavens! yes! I remember now—I remember!" she exclaimed, a good deal agitated. "It was you, sir—you! I thought I knew those features!" and excited by powerful emotions, she seized both my hands in hers, and pressing them warmly, uttered a "God bless you!" while her eyes filled with tears of gratitude. Eva was too much affected to trust her voice in the utterance of a single word—but her look spoke volumes.

What a strange combination of startling events had this night revealed to me! How mysteriously had Providence arranged and put them together for some great design! Who could have imagined that the mere act of saving a fellow-creature's life—a stranger at that, in a strange city—and leaving her without knowing her name, or even her residence, for a long journey of many thousand miles—was to have a direct bearing upon my future destiny, and that of my friend? Yet such was the fact; and however unimportant the incident might have appeared at the time to the reader—however irrelative to the main

story—yet on that very circumstance, unknown to any, was depending many of the important events which followed those already described, and which in due time will be given.

It was with sensations peculiar to each, that these matters were narrated and commented upon for the next two hours; and doubtless not one, who heard the strange and romantic story of how I saved the life of Eva Mortimer, but felt his most trivial act to result from the hidden design of a Higher Power. As for myself, such chaos of ideas crowded my brain, as made it impossible for me to describe what I thought, or what feeling had the preponderance, unless it were a mingling of pleasure and sadness. But one thing seemed wanting to make me joyful; and that, alas! was my friend. Had he been present, notwithstanding all adverse circumstances, my heart would have bounded with rapture. And he! what would have been his feelings, thus to have met, in *propria persona*, the idol of his dreams!—thus to have been placed *te-te-a-te* with Eva Mortimer—the beautiful unknown!

CHAPTER XXIX.

STANDING SENTINEL—DROWSINESS—INTERRUPTION—SUDDEN APPEARANCE OF PRAIRIE FLOWER—HER WARNING, SURPRISE, AGITATION AND ABRUPT DEPARTURE—ALARM THE CAMP—HOSTILE PREPARATIONS—ATTACK—REPULSE—VICTORY—ARRIVAL IN OREGON—CONCLUSION.

It was late in the night, and all had become still in the encampment. The animals—consisting of mules, horses, oxen and cows—had been driven together and tethered, and were taking their repose. In the area, formed by the wagons, two fires were burning, at one of which sat Teddy and myself, half dozing, with our rifles resting against our shoulders. We had volunteered our services as sentinels for the night—but our watch could hardly be termed vigilant. In the surrounding vehicles, the emigrants were already giving evidence of that sound sleep which indi-

cates health and weariness, and a cessation of the physical and mental faculties. I was, as I said before, in a half dozing state. I had been conning over the many singular pranks of fortune connected with myself, and particularly the wonderful revelations of the last six or eight hours. I had been musing upon the complicated web of man's existence, and already had my thoughts began to wander as in a dream.

A rumbling sound, like the roaring of a distant waterfall, caught my ear. Gradually it grew louder and nearer, until I fancied I could detect the pattering of a horse's feet upon the hard earth. Nearer and nearer it came, and I found my impression confirmed. It was a horse at full speed—but what could it mean? Suddenly Teddy sprang up, and tightly grasped his rifle. We now both darted outside the circle of wagons. By the dim light, we beheld a horse and rider rapidly dashing up the valley. The next moment the beast was reined in to a dead halt, some twenty yards distant.

"Who goes there?" I cried.

"A friend," was the answer, in a clear, silvery voice. "Be on your guard, or you will be surprised by Indians!"

Heavens! I should know those tones! Could it be possible?

"Prairie Flower!" I called.

"Ha! who are you?" was the answer; and the next moment the coal black pony, and his beautiful, mysterious rider, stood by my side.

"Prairie Flower! and do we indeed meet again?"

"Who are you?" said she, bending down to scrutinize my features. "Ha! is it indeed possible!" she continued, with no little agitation, as she recognized me. "How you have altered! I—I—but I have no time to talk. must not be seen here. It would cost me my life. I may see you again. Be on your guard! How strange! I never thought to see you again. I must go!"

These sentences were uttered rapidly, almost incoherently, while the voice of the speaker trembled, and there seemed a wildness in her manner. On concluding, she

tightened her rein a to depart—but still lingered, as if to add something more.

"Heaven bless you, Prairie Flower! you are always seeking the good of others."

She sighed, turned her head away, and strove to say, carelessly:

"Your friend—I—I—is well—is he?"

"Alas! I cannot answer."

"Ha! what! how!" she cried, quickly, turning full upon me and grasping my arm, which chanced to be resting on the neck of her pony. "Explain!" and I felt her grasp tighten.

I hurriedly narrated our last parting.

For some moments she did not reply, while her whole frame trembled violently. At length she withdrew her hand, tightened the rein again, and gasped the single word,

"Farewell!"

Ere I had time for another syllable, her horse was speeding away like the wind; and ere I had recovered from my surprise, both were lost in the darkness.

So sudden had all this happened, that I felt completely bewildered. Was I dreaming? A word from Teddy aroused me. Despatching him to the trappers, to ask their assistance, I flew back to the larger encampment and gave the alarm. Instantly the whole camp was in commotion; and amid the screams of women and children, the men grasped their arms, and sprung from their coverts, excited and pale, but ready to meet danger without flinching, in defence of those whose lives they prized above their own.

I hurried round the camp, to quiet the fears of the weaker members, by telling them there was little or no danger—that the Indians, if they came at all, finding us ready to receive them, would not risk an attack. In this, much to my surprise, I was shortly aided by Lillian and Eva, both of whom displayed a heroic coolness, and presence of mind, and fearlessness of danger, for which, among all the virtues I had allowed them, I had given them no credit whatever. Had I been required, before this event, to select the most timid of the party, I should have pointed them out first. Modest, unassuming, retiring in their manners, weak in physical powers, unused to

hardships and dangers, with a superior refinement in thought and feeling—I had supposed them the first to shrink at any alarm. Judge of my astonishment, then, when I saw them gliding over the earth, as over a soft carpet, and, with scarcely an appearance of fear, by their acts and language, shaming the more frightened to silence. The arrival of the trappers, too—well armed—and their seeming indifference to danger, reassured all in a measure, and served to restore order and quiet.

Hastily organizing, we marched outside the wagons, and took up our position so as to watch and guard any point of compass, not knowing at which the foe might make his appearance and onset.

All relapsed into silence, in which manner an hour was passed, and we were beginning to think the alarm false, when one of the men espied a dark object, as he fancied, slowly nearing him.

Without a second thought, crack went his rifle, and instantly, as if by magic, a dark spot to the north of us became peopled by some fifty savages, who, finding themselves discovered, and doubtless thinking this the alarm of the sentinel, uttered frightful yells, and sprang forward in a body. Rushing to the point of attack, we hastily formed a line, and placing our rifles to our shoulders, silently waited until not more than twenty yards divided us from the main body of our enemies.

“Fire!” cried a voice; and instantly a dozen rifles poured their deadly contents among the dusky horde, with good effect, as could be told by several frightful groans of pain.

This was a reception the savages had not counted on, and they in turn became alarmed. Suddenly pausing, they uttered yells of dismay, and discharging their pieces at random, the balls of which whistled past us without a single injury, they turned and fled precipitately. The victory was ours, and to Prairie Flower we owed our lives. The remainder of the night we kept to our arms, but were not again disturbed, and by sunrise the whole party was on the move up the mountain.

As I could not think of parting with my

friends (above all with Lilian) in the wilderness, I resolved to accompany them to their destination, and then to—to—I scarcely knew what. Teddy of course went with me, and the trappers, out of friendship, bore us company many days.

I shall not weary you, reader, with a detail of all the little incidents of our tedious progress to Oregon City. Suffice, that it was such as all emigrants experience in a greater or less degree, and was attended with a succession of scenes similar to those described throughout these pages. As I had predicted, the health of Mrs. Huntly was gradually restored; and within ten days from the commencement of her convalescence, she declared herself as well as at any period of her life, and that the word of her young doctor, as she jokingly termed me, was equal in effect to the combined virtues of the whole *materia medica*.

The return of Mrs. Huntly's strength and spirits, brought pleasure to the eye and bloom to the cheek of Lilian, which my daily presence, as I was vain enough to flatter myself, did not tend to dissipate. Be that as it may, (and I leave the reader to judge) this long journey, so full of hardship and peril, however unpleasant it might have proved to her and to others, I must ever look back to with pleasure, as one of the happiest periods of my so far eventful life.

Crossing the Rocky Mountains at the well known South Pass, we continued on the regular Oregon route—passed Fort Hall—went down the Snake river and over the Salmon Mountains to Fort Boise—through the country of Shoshones, or Snake Indians, over the Blue Mountains to Fort Walla Walla, on the Columbia—down the Columbia, over the Cascade Range, to Oregon City, on the pleasant little Willamette—where we all safely arrived about the middle of December.

At this period, as I before remarked, Oregon City existed only in name—being, with the exception of a few log houses, (erected during the summer and fall previous, by a few emigrants who had reached here in advance of our party,) a complete wilderness. The appearance of the place,

so different from what they had expected to find it, disheartened my worthy friends not a little; and had such a thing then been possible, I believe they would at once have returned to their native land. But this was out of the question; there was no help for their oversight now, only by making the best of a bad bargain; and so, after having grumbled to their hearts' content—wished Oregon for the thousandth time at the bottom of the sea, and themselves back home as many—they set to work in earnest, to provide themselves homes for the winter, declaring that spring should see them on their way to the States.

With proper energy, properly directed, a great deal may be accomplished in a very short time; and in less than two weeks from their earnest commencement, no less than eight or ten cabins were added to the few already there. Into these the different families removed, Teddy and I taking up our abode in that appropriated to Mrs. Huntly.

Although without any effects save such as had been brought with them, and short of provisions also, yet, by one means and another, all managed to get through the winter as comfortably as could be expected; and instead of preparing to return, spring found the majority of the new settlers entering lands, determined on making this their future residence, be the consequences what they might.

Some three or four, among whom was Madame Mortimer and her daughter, were still disaffected, and would gladly have retraced their steps; but they could not find companions enough to make the journey safe, and therefore, against their will, were forced to remain.

Oregon City I found beautifully located on the eastern bank of the Willamette, and, from what I could judge, destined, at no very distant period, to become the great mart of the Far West. Here I remained through the winter, and as it proved open and mild, employed my time in hunting and fishing, and conversing with the only being I truly loved. Had my friend been with me, I should have looked upon the place as a perfect paradise; but thoughts of him—of what might be his fate—would

steal over me in my most joyous moments, and cloud my brow with gloom. These singular changes were noted by Lilian and others with feelings of surprise, and frequently was I questioned by the former regarding them—but I ever avoided a direct answer.

Neither Lilian nor her mother knew the true cause of Charles Huntly's absence; and though I often meditated telling them, yet, when it came to the point, I ever shrunk from the painful task of making both wretched. He *might* be living; and the bare possibility of such a thing, I thought sufficient to justify me in keeping them in blissful ignorance of what I supposed to be his real fate. Both fondly anticipated seeing him the coming summer—not doubting he had gone east, and that so soon as he should receive tidings of their locality, he would set out to join them. I had no such hopes—but I dared not tell them so.

It was a lovely day in the spring of 1843. On the banks of the romantic Willamette, under the shade of a large tree, I was seated. By my side—with her sweet face averted and crimson with blushes, her right hand clasped in mine, her left unconsciously toying with a beautiful flower, which failed to rival her own fair self—sat Lilian Huntly. It was one of those peculiar moments which are distinctly remembered through life. I had just offered her my hand and fortune, and was waiting, with all the trembling impatience of a lover, to hear the result.

"Say, Lilian—sweet Lilian! will you be mine?"

Her lily hand trembled—I felt its velvet-like pressure—but her tongue had lost the power of utterance. It was enough; and the next moment she was strained to my heart, with a joy too deep for words.

"And when shall it be—when shall my happiness be consummated, dear Lilian!" I at length ventured to ask.

For a time she did not reply; then raising her angelic face, and fastening her soft beaming eye, moist with tears of joy,

upon mine, she said, in a low, sweet, tremulous tone:

"On the day when we are all made glad by the presence of my brother."

"Alas!" groaned I, mentally, "that day may never come!"

The fate of Charles Huntly—of the mysterious Prairie Flower and others—will be given in the Sequel to these ADVENTURES IN THE FAR WEST.

AUTHOR'S NOTE.

As almost every one who takes any interest in a book, has some desire or curiosity to know how or why it came to be written, and as there are some things of which he desires to speak particularly, the author, compiler, or editor of *Prairie Flower*, (whichever you please, reader,) has, after due consideration, decided on giving the information alluded to, in a note to the present volume. While engaged in putting the finishing touches upon "*KATE CLARENDON*,"* a tall, dark-visaged, keen-eyed individual entered his sanctum, early one morning, bearing in his hand a bundle of no inferior size. Having stared around the apartment, as if to assure himself there was no mistake, he coolly took the only remaining seat, when the following conversation occurred.

STRANGER.—Mr. Scribblepen, I presume?

AUTHOR.—My name, sir!

STRANGER.—He-e-m! (A pause.) Write novels, presume, Mr. Scribblepen?

AUTHOR.—When I have nothing better to do.

STRANGER.—(After a little reflection.) Found them on fact, eh?

AUTHOR.—Sometimes, and sometimes draw rather freely on the imagination, as the case may be.

STRANGER.—How would you like the

* A Tale of the Little Miami, recently issued in a very neat cheap form by Stratton & Barnard, Cincinnati.

idea of writing one THAT SHOULD CONTAIN NOTHING BUT FACT!

AUTHOR.—(Becoming interested and laying down his pen.) Have no objections, provided there is fact enough, and of a nature sufficiently exciting to make the story interesting to the general reader.

STRANGER.—(Smiling complacently, and tapping his bundle.) Got the documents here, and no mistake. Every word true, I pledge you my honor. Promise to work them up faithfully, and they are at your service.

AUTHOR.—(In doubt.) But how am I to know they contain *only* facts?

STRANGER.—You have my word, sir!

AUTHOR.—Did you write them? Do they comprise a journal of your own adventures!

STRANGER.—(A little testily.) No matter about either! They contain nothing but facts, and that is enough for any reasonable man to know.

AUTHOR.—But how am I to know this? You must remember you are a stranger to me, sir!

STRANGER.—(Coloring, and carelessly placing his hand upon the breech of a pistol, barely seen protruding from beneath his waistcoat.) I allow no one to doubt my word, sir!

AUTHOR.—(A little nervous, and not caring to doubt such *powerful* testimony.) O! ah! I see—it is all right, of course.

STRANGER.—(Again smiling pleasantly.) So you will undertake the job, Mr. Scribblepen, and give facts in every thing but the most important names?

AUTHOR.—I will try.

STRANGER.—(Placing the package upon the table and rising as if to go.) You can have them, then. All I ask is, that you will be a faithful chronicler. The names I wish changed, you will find marked. I have a desire to see the whole in print, and you may take all the profit and whatever credit you please, so you keep fact in view. The incidents are romantic, and sufficiently exciting for your purpose, without embellishment. I shall keep an eye upon the publication, and you *may* see me again, or you may not: I make no promises. Good morning, sir!

AUTHOR.—(Rising to bow him out.) But your name, stranger, if you please!

STRANGER.—(Hesitating.) I am called the Wanderer. Good morning, Mr. Scribblepen!

AUTHOR.—Good morning, Mr. Wanderer! (Returns to the mysterious package, opens, examines it, begins to read, gets interested, and goes to bed the night following minus dinner and supper.)

Having shown you how he became possessed of the *facts* of the story, the author would say a few words more and close.—As regards the characters set forth in the preceding pages, he would state, that, *being all real*, some represent a class, and some an individual only. Prairie Flower is of the latter, *and is drawn from real life*. That the proceedings of herself and tribe may appear mysterious, and, to some, at first thought, (her locality and every thing considered) out of place—the author does not doubt; but he believes that no one who is conversant with Indian history, and especially with that relating to the Northwestern Tribes and the Moravian Missions, during the early settlement of Ohio, will find in this character or her tribe any thing that may be termed overstrained or unnatural. That she is a marked character, distinct and peculiar, and liable to be misconstrued by those who do not take every thing into consideration, but allow a first

fancy to have full sway—he admits; but at the same time would desire such to withhold an expression of opinion, until they shall have read to the end, when he trusts they will find the explanation satisfactory.

It was the intention of the writer of the foregoing, at the commencement, to shorten the materials on hand, so as to embody the whole in a single volume; but when he had accumulated some two hundred manuscript pages, he found, much to his regret, that this could not be done, without striking out some of the best scenes, and otherwise materially impairing the work; and as he feared both his mysterious friend and the reader would not be fully satisfied, he at last decided on giving the whole, by adding a *Sequel*, which in reality is only a second part of the volume in hand. In the *Sequel* to this, the same characters already introduced will be continued, together with others, and the whole be terminated by a *grand denouement*.

With these remarks, and the simple statement that the reader may look upon the scenes described as *real*, the author would take his respectful leave for the present, hoping the reader may find, if nothing else of interest, information regarding life in the Far West, sufficient to repay a perusal.

CINCINNATI, Jan., 1849.

THE END.

LENI-LEOTI;

OR,

ADVENTURES IN THE FAR WEST.

BY EMERSON BENNETT.

AUTHOR OF THE "BANDITS OF THE OSAGE," "THE RENEGADE," "MIKE FINK," "KATE CLARENDON," ETC., ETC.

But O, the blooming prairie,
Here are God's floral bowers,
Of all that he hath made on earth
The love iest. * * *
This is the Almighty's garden,
And the mountains, stars, and sea,
Are naught compared in beauty,
With God's Garden prairie free.

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LENI-LEOTI.

CHAPTER I.

STILL IN OREGON CITY—THE SECRET UNDIVULGED—A DILEMMA—RESOLVE TO MAKE IT KNOWN—A STROLL—INTERRUPTION—EVA MORTIMER—BRIEF ACCOUNT OF THE MORTIMERS—RESOLVE TO GO IN SEARCH OF MY FRIEND.

It was the last day of May, in the year of our Lord, 1843. Already the earth felt the genial air of summer, and looked as smiling as a gay maiden in her teens. The blade had covered the ground with a carpet of matchless green, amid which, their lovely faces half concealed, bright flowers of a hundred varieties peeped modestly forth to render the landscape enchanting, giving their sweet breath to a southern breeze that softly stole over them. The trees in every direction were in full foliage, and already among them could be seen green bunches of embryo fruits. It was in fact a delightful day, a delightful season of the year, and a delightful scene upon which I gazed, with feelings, alas! that had more in them of sadness than joy.

I was still in Oregon City; but two months had flown since on the banks of the romantic Willamette I offered my hand, heart and fortune to Lillian Huntly, and was accepted, only to find the nuptial day prolonged to an indefinite period—the

return of my friend and her brother. I did not describe my feelings then to the reader; but, as he or she must have imagined, they were very painful. I had deceived Lillian and her mother I knew, in leading them to hope, even, for the return of Charles Huntly, and I felt stung to the very soul as one guilty of a crime. What was I to do? Should I avow all to Lillian and make her wretched by destroying all hope of ever seeing Charles again? or should I still let her remain in blissful ignorance of his fate, and look in vain to the future for the consummation of her ardent wishes? It was a painful dilemma. The first was the most open, upright and straight-forward manner of settling the matter, most undoubtedly; and conscience and a first impulse urged me to it; but then, a doubt in my own mind that he was really dead—a faint, a very faint hope that he might sometime return to his friends—a loathing to inflict a wound upon the affectionate heart I loved, which time alone could heal, perhaps cause needless suffering to one who had already suffered enough—restrained me; and between a desire to do right, and a fear to do wrong, I did nothing but muse abstractedly, the result of which was, in my own mind, to take a day for thought and then decide. But the next day found me in the same quandary, and the next, and the next.

Thus days rolled on, one after another, and at the end of a month I was as undecided as ever; and though daily basking in the smiles of Lilian, listening to her artless words of musical sweetness, not even a hint had I ever thrown out regarding what I knew of her brother. Often would she mention him, but always in a way to denote she scarcely had a doubt of seeing him the coming summer; and the thought that she must be disappointed, ever tended to make me sad and melancholy. I had never objected to the indefinite period fixed on for our wedding, for the simple reason that, to object, was only to subject myself to an inquiry into the cause, and this I feared. What was I to do? The question came up night and day, at all times and in all places, and troubled me sorely—so much so, in fact, that I began to fear its effects upon my constitution.

At last I resolved to tell her all, and for this purpose invited her one morning to our usual stroll on the banks of the Willamette. The day was fine, and every thing around beautiful. We took our way directly to the falls, and paused upon a bluff immediately over the rolling, sparkling waters. This bluff, which is the bank of the stream at Oregon City, varies from twenty to eighty feet in height, and, running back, forms the level upon which the town was then just beginning to be laid out. The scene was charming, notwithstanding it was in the wilderness. A beautiful forest stretched away on either hand—below us rolled the river, roaring over the falls—and on the opposite side rose similar bluffs, and another pleasant forest. It seemed a place fitted for the communion of lovers; and here Lilian and I had whiled our happiest hours. Here I had offered my hand to her—here been accepted—and of course the scene could not but recall pleasant associations. Hither then we strayed; and as we paused above the bright river, Lilian exclaimed, with a look of joy:

“O, it will be so delightful when Charles joins us! Do you know what I have determined on, Frank?”

“Surely not,” I answered.

“Do you see that level yonder, (point-

ing down the stream) which sets off so pleasantly below this, shaded by those tall old trees?”

“Ay, I see, Lilian.”

“Well, there I have planned having such a pic-nic, on the day when—when we——”

She paused, and blushed, and glanced timidly at me, as if expecting I would complete the sentence. I did not, for my mind was busy with sad thoughts. Now, thought I, is the time to tell her all. But how should I begin to pain her! I was uneasy, and felt miserable, and doubtless looked as I felt, for the next moment she added, in some alarm:

“Why, Francis, what is the matter!—You look so pale! Has any thing happened?”

“Nothing new.”

“What then? You always look so pained when I allude to brother Charles!—Surely there must be some cause! Have you kept any thing hidden from me? Speak, Francis!—you left him well, did you not?” and she grasped my arm, and looked earnestly in my face.

“I did, Lilian.”

“Well, what then? You must have no secrets from me now, you know.”

I must tell her, I thought, and there can never be a better time than this.

“Lilian,” I began, and my voice trembled as I spoke: “Lilian, I——”

“What ho! my lovers, are you here?” shouted a merry voice. “I thought I should find you here;” and the next moment we were joined by the gay, light-hearted Eva Mortimer. “In the name of humanity,” she said, as she came bounding up to us, “what makes you both look so pale? Not making love again, I hope;” and she ended with a ringing laugh, which, however pleasant it might have sounded at another time, now jarred most discordantly with the feelings of both.

“No, not exactly making love, Miss Mortimer,” I answered, turning to her with a forced smile, and, if truth must be owned, rather rejoiced than otherwise that she had broken off what must have proved a painful interview.

“Well,” she rejoined, playfully, brush-

ing back her dark ringlets with one of the prettiest white, dimpled hands in the world—mind I say *one* of the prettiest, reader, for of course I considered Lillian's equal, if not superior: "Well, I am glad to hear that, for I feared, from your sober looks, you were either getting into a lover's quarrel, or going over a nameless scene that was enacted here some weeks ago;" and she looked meaningly, first at Lillian, who colored deeply, and then at me, who I fancied stood it like a philosopher.—"Come," she added, in the same gay tone, "I have use for you both all day. We—that is I, and my good mother, and yours, Lillian, and some others—have decided on going to see a beautiful lake, which, we are told, ornaments a certain fern bluff that you see away yonder, some half mile back of this magnificent city. City indeed!" she continued, with a curl of the lip. "Why, it might be stolen from the suburbs of Boston, or any other place of note, and never be missed. But mother would come in spite of me, and when she takes a notion in her head she must carry it out. She wishes herself back now, and I join her with all my heart; but, heigh-ho! I suppose I shall have to spend my days here, for I see no means of getting away. But I will tease her, though—I am pledged to that—and that will be some comfort, and save me dying of *ennui*.—Oregon City! Umph! I thought it would turn out to be woods before I came, and I told her so—but she would not believe me. Come, Mr. Leighton, don't be standing there looking so sober! nor you, my bonny Lillian. I am going to have you along, and if I don't make you laugh, why, I will turn in and cry myself. Only to think of being here without a lover! It don't matter with you, Lillian, for you have got one; but think of me, in pity do! Nobody here but some thick headed rustics, that don't know how to make love. I wish your brother would come, Lillian—I am dying to see him. He saved my life, you know, and so I am bound, by all the rules of novels, to fall in love with him, out of pure gratitude."

"You will not need gratitude, I fancy," added I, with a sigh at the thought of him,

"should you ever be fortunate enough to see him; for he is a noble fellow, and one I think to your liking."

"Ah!" she replied, "you need not tell me he is a noble fellow—for none but such would have risked his life as he did for a stranger. I have been in love with him ever since I heard about it, though I had long ago given up all hope of ever seeing him."

"And he will be ready, I will vouch for him, to reciprocate the tender feeling."

"Do you think so?" she said, slightly blushing, and her eyes sparkling. "O, that will be so romantic! and I love romance dearly. I will have him down upon his knees at every frown, and will frown twenty times a day, just to have him down on his knees: Now that will be making love to some purpose, eh?" and giving vent to a ringing laugh, she added, taking my arm: "Come, don't let us keep the good people waiting, or they may get off the notion, and I would not miss seeing that lake for a costly ruby."

My design of telling a sad tale was thus broken off, and, as I said before, I was not sorry for it. Arm in arm with the two, I returned to what was denominated the village, Eva the while chatting away gaily, flying from one thing to another, but ever adroitly returning to Charles Huntly, showing that he now occupied no small share of her thoughts.

From the specimen given, it will be seen that Eva Mortimer was a very different being from Lillian Huntly; and as she is destined to figure more conspicuously in these pages than the previous ones, I consider the present a good opportunity to describe her.

In person, Eva Mortimer was slightly above medium, with a form well developed, and a bust of rare beauty. Her complexion was clear and dark, though scarcely sufficient to entitle her to the appellation of brunette. Her soft, hazel eyes, shaded by silken lashes, were very expressive, and could look love languishingly, or sparkle with the poetry of mirth, anger, or any of the passions of impulse. Her features were regular and very prepossessing, with a nose slightly aquiline, and mouth and

lips as tempting as one would care to look upon. Her disposition accorded with her looks. At heart she was open and generous, with a desire to please and be pleased, let fortune smile or frown. Her spirits were almost ever buoyant, and it required a strong cause to depress them. Very different from some, she could not easily be brought to consider this bright earth as only a grave-yard, and herself a mournful inhabitant, ever stalking among tombs. She did not believe in storm, and cloud, and dreariness, so much as in an open sky, sunshine, cheerfulness and joy. It would have required great depth of reasoning to convince her that God had placed man here expressly to mope out his days in gloom and sorrow, either real or imaginary. She did not fancy the dark side of the picture; and full of the poetry of an ardent temperament, there was to her in the sunshine, the breeze, the leaf, the blade, the flower, the mount, the vale, the storm, and, in fact, in every thing of nature, something to excite joy rather than sadness. Whatever her fortune, she took care to make the best of it and not repine. She was lively even to gaiety, and could rattle on for hours in a light, frolicsome strain, calculated to mislead such as look not below the mere surface; but those who judged Eva Mortimer by this, judged wrongly; for beneath was a heart as warm, as earnest, as pure, as true, as ever beat in the breast of woman. This was the drift, the foam, that floated along on the strong current of a noble mind. Had you seen and listened to her in her merry moods, you would have thought, perhaps, she had no mind above trifles, or beyond the mere present; that she was vain and coquettish to a fault; that she would take no delight in serious meditation; and yet you could not easily have erred more in judgment. I have seen her alone, in the night, gazing at the stars for hours, when she thought no human eye beheld her. I have watched her musing over a flower, while leaf by leaf she dissected it, as if to lay bare its mysteries—over the pebbles which she had gathered in some ramble—over a leaf, a blade of grass, and, in fact, over whatever had chanced in her path—in a way

to show her possessed of *mind*, and that of the highest order.

There were but few in her present locality who really knew Eva Mortimer, and none who seemed to appreciate her as did Lillian. In their short acquaintance, these two bright beings had become *friends*; not the cold, unmeaning term of the world—but friends sincere and true, and bound by a tie beyond the power of death itself to sever. Like the magnet and the needle had they come together, to be held by attractions peculiar to themselves. To each other their hearts were ever open, and the joys and sorrows of the one, were the joys and sorrows of the other. They talked together, walked together, read together, (each had brought a few choice books) sang together, and both ever seemed happier on all occasions for the other's presence. They were nearly of the same age, of different temperaments, and united like the different strings of a harp, to bring forth nothing but music. In short, they loved each other—not with the evanescent love of fiery passion, which burns and freezes alternately—but with that deeper and truer love which springs from admiration of, and dependence on, in a measure, the qualities we do not possess ourselves. It was a holy love—the love of two fair maidens just budding into womanhood.

Am I getting tedious, reader—presuming too much upon your indulgence—keeping you too long from the more exciting part of my story? Well, then, I will press forward; for much is to be said and done ere my task be finished.

Of the early history of Eva Mortimer, I at this time knew but little, and this I had gleaned from Lillian. Her mother, a woman between forty and fifty years of age, was a native of England, of wealthy parentage, but not of noble birth. Some twenty-five years before the date of these events, she had clandestinely married a French exile, apparently without name or fortune, rather for the love of romance, and because she was strongly opposed by her friends, than for any real affection which she felt toward the individual himself. This proceeding had so incensed her:

parents, that they had cast her off; but unlike most parents in such cases, unwilling she should suffer too much, had offered her a life annuity above want, on condition she quitted the country immediately and returned to it no more. To this she had readily assented, and shortly after, with her husband, had embarked for America, and had finally settled at Quebec, in Canada, where for several years they had continued to live together, though not, it must be confessed, in the most harmonious manner. Being rather head-strong and self-willed, and without possessed of an independence, Madame Mortimer sought to have every thing her own way, and had not scrupled occasionally to make her husband feel he was her debtor for every luxury he enjoyed. Of a proud spirit, and a temper somewhat irritable, he had not displayed any too much Christian humility, meekness and resignation, and many a bitter quarrel had been the consequence.

Time rolled on, and at the end of five years she had given birth to female twins. Both had been hoping for a male heir; and consequently this event, instead of mending, had rather served to widen the breach. Quarrel succeeded quarrel, and as love was wanting to harmonize two opposing spirits, it was at last found necessary to separate. Two years had passed meantime, when one morning Mortimer came into the presence of his wife, with a letter in his hand, and abruptly announced his intention of leaving her.

"As you like," returned Madame Mortimer, coolly.

Mortimer turned and left her, nor had she ever beheld him since. The night following, the twin sister of Eva disappeared, and the most diligent inquiries, together with the offer of a large reward, had failed in restoring her to her anxious mother. The effect of this upon Madame Mortimer proved very severe—for she loved both her children dearly—and a nervous fever was the result, which nearly cost her her life. Soon after this she received news of her father's death, and that, having repented his rashness, he had left her a rich legacy, with permission to return to England. To England, therefore,

she went, and there had remained, superintending the education of Eva, until a desire of travel had brought her once more to this country, whither she had come in company with her daughter and a wealthy American lady, whose acquaintance had been made across the water, and who subsequently introduced her into New York society, simply as Madame Mortimer, without a word of explanation, this being at her own earnest request. Thus it was, as I have before mentioned, none who met her in society had been able to learn who she was or whence she came, and this had doubtless added to her popularity. This was all I had been able to gather from Lillian, and all, in fact, she knew; and this had been picked up at different times, from remarks that had escaped the lips of Eva in her more communicative moods.

In person, Madame Mortimer was large, with a full, handsome countenance, expressive black eyes, and a bearing dignified and queen-like. At heart she was kind and affectionate; and doubtless, had she been properly mated, would have made an exemplary wife. Her passions, when excited, were strong to violence, with a temper haughty and unyielding to an equal, but subdued and mild to an inferior. She loved passionately, and hated madly. With her, as a general thing, there was no medium. She liked or disliked, and carried both to extremes. She was a woman of strong mind, much given to thought and reflection, an acute observer of every thing around her, and just sufficiently eccentric to throw the freshness of originality over all she said or did. She would do what she thought was proper, without regard to the opinions of others, or what the world would say. She had resolved on a journey to Oregon, not for any particular purpose, but merely to carry out a whim and see the country. She had done both, was dissatisfied with her present locality, and now designed returning to the States the first favorable opportunity.

But to return from this digression.

Of the fate of her brother, Lillian still remained ignorant; for after the interruption of Eva, I could never summon enough moral courage to again attempt the sad

narration. As time rolled on, I became more and more depressed in spirits, and more perplexed as to the course I should pursue. It was not impossible, I began to reason, that Charles Huntly might be living; and the more I pondered on this, the more I was inclined to believe it the case. He had been lost mysteriously, in a part of the world notoriously infested with robbers and Indians. If captured by the former, there was no argument against the supposition that he had been plundered and sold into slavery. If by the latter, might he not have been adopted by some tribe, and now be a prisoner? In either case, was I not in duty bound to go in quest of him—and, if found, rescue him from a horrible doom, either by ransom or force? At all events, I said to myself, I can but fail, and *may* succeed.

On leaving home, I had supplied myself with a large amount of gold, to meet all contingencies, and but little of this had been expended. I could, perhaps, engage a party, for a reasonable sum, to accompany me; and this, after duly weighing all the circumstances, I had decided to attempt, on the morning I have chosen for the opening of this chapter. I would let Lillian and the others suppose I had gone home, and that I should probably return with Charles Huntly. Having settled the matter in my own mind, I resolved on immediate action, and for this purpose called Teddy aside to communicate my intention.

"Teddy," I began, gravely, "did you love your former master?"

"Me mather!" repeated the Irishman, with a look of curious inquiry; "and sure, of who is't ye're spaking, your honor?"

"Of Charles Huntly."

"Did I love him, is't? Faith, and does a snapping turkle love to bite, or a thrunkard to thrink, that ye ax me that now?—Love him? Troth, and was he living, I'd go to the ind of the world and jump off jist to plase him, and so I would."

"Maybe, Teddy, you can serve him more effectually than by a proceeding so dangerous."

"Sarve him, is't! Och, now, I'd be afther knowing that same!"

"I have taken a fancy into my head that he is living."

"Howly St. Pathrick! ye don't say the likes!" exclaimed the Hibernian, holding up both hands in astonishment. "Ye're joking, sure, your honor?"

"No, Teddy, I am serious as a judge. I have always had some faint doubts of his death, and now those doubts have grown strong enough to induce me to set off in search of him;" and I proceeded to give my reasons.

"Ah, sure," said Teddy, as I concluded, "this is a happy day for me mother's son, if nothing comes on't but parting wid—"

"But, Teddy, I had designed taking you along."

"And, sure, Misther Leighton, isn't it going I is wid ye, now? D'ye think I'd be afther staying behind, like a spalpeen, and ye away afther Misther Huntly, pace to his ashes, barring that he's got no ashes at all, at all, but is raal fish and blood like your own bonny self, that's one of the kindest gentlemen as iver wore out shoemaker's fixings, and made the tailor blush wid modesty for the ixcellent fit of his coat?"

"But you spoke of parting, Teddy?"

"Ah, troth, and ye a gallant yourself, your honor, and not sae it was a wee bit of a female parthing I's mintoning, jist?"

"Female parting! I do not understand you."

Here Teddy scratched his head, and looked not a little confused.

"Why, ye sae, your honor," he replied, hesitatingly, "ye sae the womens (Heaven bliss their darling sows!) is all loveable crathurs, and it's mesilf that likes to maat 'em wherever I goes; but somehow, your honor, a chap's like to be thinking of one, more in particular by reason of his nathur; and that's the case wid mesilf now, and Molly Stubbs that lives yonder, barring that it's hardly living at all she is in this wild country."

The truth flashed upon me at once.—One of the settlers, who had come here in advance of my friends, had a large, buxom, rosy-cheeked daughter of eighteen, who went by the euphonious appellation of

Molly Stubbs—sometimes Big Molly—and I now remembered having seen Teddy idling about the premises, though at the time without a suspicion of the real cause.

“And so, Teddy, you have been making love, eh?”

“Divil a bit, your honor.”

“How? what?”

“No! ye sae it was all made to me hand, and I’ve ounly been acting it out, jist.”

“Aha! exactly. And so you think you can part with your *belle ami*, eh?”

“And sure, if it’s Molly Stubbs ye maan by that Lathin, it’s mesilf that can say the farewell handsome, now.”

“Well, make your parting short, and then see to having the horses got ready, for in less than three hours we must be in our saddles.”

With this I turned away, and with slow steps and a heart by no means the lightest, sought the residence of Lilian, to communicate the unpleasant intelligence, that in a few minutes we must part, perhaps to meet no more.

CHAPTER II.

INFORM MY FRIENDS OF MY RESOLVE—THEIR SURPRISE—DEPARTURE POSTPONED ONE DAY—PREPARATIONS—GENERAL LEAVE-TAKING—TRYING INTERVIEW WITH LILIAN, AND FINAL ADIEU.

As I neared the residence of Mrs. Huntly and Lilian, (which had also been mine for some months) for the purpose of bidding my friends another long adieu, I heard the merry voice and ringing laugh of Eva Mortimer. Another time this would have been music to my ears, but now my spirits were greatly depressed, and I was not in a mood to appreciate it. The cabin—it would scarcely bear a more exalted title—seemed surrounded with an air of gloom. It was as good as any, better than most, which formed the village of Oregon City; but yet, what a place to be the abode of those who had been used all their lives to the luxurious mansion of wealth!—and I could not avoid making a

comparison between the condition of the tenants now, and when I had approached to bid them farewell some three years before—nor of thinking with what Christian-like resignation they had borne, and still bore, their misfortunes. Their present dwelling was built of unhewn logs, whose crevices were filled with clay, had a thatched roof, puncheon floors, and three apartments. One of these had been assigned to Teddy and myself, another to Lilian and her mother, and the third answered the treble uses of parlor, sitting-room and kitchen. A few beds and bedding, a table, one or two chairs, together with a few benches, and the most common household utensils, comprised the principal furniture. And this was the abode of the lovely and once wealthy heiress, Lilian Huntly! And she could seem contented here! What a happy spirit, to adapt itself to all circumstances—to blend itself, if I may so express it, with every fortune!

With this reflection I crossed the threshold, and beheld Lilian and Eva in gay conversation, and Mrs. Huntly seated by the table, perusing a book. Both the young ladies turned to me as I entered, and Eva at once exclaimed:

“So, Mr. Francis, you have just come in time—we have it all settled.”

“May I inquire what?” returned I, gravely.

“May you inquire what?” she repeated, with a playful curl of the lip. “Did you ever see such a starch, ministerial look, Lilian?—as grave is he as a sexton. Why, one would suppose all his friends were dead, and he had come to invite us to the funeral. Heigh-ho! if ever I get a lover, he shall wear no such look as that; if he do, it will be at the risk of having his hair combed and powdered, I assure you.”

“But I have reason for looking grave,” I replied.

“Eh! what!” cried Eva, changing instantly her whole expression and manner: “Surely you have no bad news for us?” and she approached and laid her hand upon my arm, with a troubled look, while Lilian sunk down upon a seat, as if she had some sad foreboding, and Mrs. Huntly turned her eyes upon me inquiringly.

"Give yourselves no alarm," I hastened to reply. "I have only come to say we must separate for a time."

"Indeed!" exclaimed Eva, looking serious.

"You have heard tidings of Charles?" added Mrs. Huntly.

I glanced at Lillian, but she said not a word, though all color had forsaken her features.

"No, I have not heard from Charles," I rejoined, in answer to Mrs. Huntly; "but presume I shall ere I return."

"Good heavens! then you are going far?" cried Eva, in astonishment.

"I contemplate making a journey to the east, and may meet Charles on the way, in which case I shall return at once—otherwise, I may be absent the summer."

"Why, Francis, what has made you resolve thus so suddenly?" inquired Mrs. Huntly. "How are we to do without you? I thought—(she paused and glanced toward Lillian, who had turned her head aside and seemed deeply affected,)—that—that you intended to pass the summer with us."

"Cruel man," said Eva, in a whisper, "how can you leave the sweetest being on earth? O, you men!" And then she continued aloud: "I wish we were all going with you. Can you not take us all along?"

"Why, I fear it would not be safe."

"As safe as it is here, I am certain.—Surely we could not be more than killed if we went, and who knows but some of these Indians, that are in the habit of visiting our great city here, may take a notion we have lived long enough, and so murder us all, or marry us, which would be the same thing! But whoever knew a gentleman gallant enough to do what was asked of him? Ah! I see—you don't even listen now—your thoughts are all with somebody else—and so I will retire. Let me know when it is over, as I wish to bid you adieu;" and she darted out of the room.

Mrs. Huntly was on the point of interrogating me farther, but perceiving by a sign from Lillian that the latter wished to see me alone, she made some excuse and went into an adjoining apartment. The

moment she had disappeared, Lillian sprang up and flew into my arms.

"Is this true, Francis?" she exclaimed. "Are you really going to leave me?"

"I fear I must for a time," I said, in a not very firm voice.

"A long time then," sighed the fair girl; "a long time, if you are going east. O, Francis, I did not think we should part so soon! What have you heard? Something, surely—for you have never intimated this before—and you would not deceive one who loves you!"

This was said so touchingly, with such *naivete*, that for a time I only replied by pressing her more closely to my heart, and imprinting a kiss upon her ruby lips.

"I cannot tell my Lillian every thing," I at length made answer. "Suffice, that I have important reasons for going; and sometime, God willing, you shall know all. My resolution to leave was formed to-day, and to-day we must part."

"To-day!" she gasped, and I felt her whole form quiver like a reed shaken by the wind. "O, no! not to-day, Francis! that would be too much—too sudden! You must not go to-day!"

"Why not, dearest? I shall return one day sooner for it, doubtless; and it will be as hard to part to-morrow as to-day."

"But it is so sudden—so unexpected," she pleaded. "Delay till to-morrow, Francis!"

"Well, any thing to please you;" and I stamped the promise with the seal of love. "Be cheerful as you can in my absence, Lillian, and when I return with your brother—"

"O, then you are going to find him!" she exclaimed, interrupting me. "That return will be joyful indeed! Poor Charles! If you do not meet him on the way, most likely you will in Boston. Cheer him all you can, Francis, and tell him we are as happy as circumstances will allow us to be."

"Beg pardon, your honor," said the voice of Teddy at this moment, startling Lillian, like a frightened roe, from my arms. "Beg pardon for interrupting yees—but the baast ye buyed this while age is not inywhere, to me knowing."

"Never mind, Teddy—go and hunt it. It must be about, unless the Indians have stolen it, in which case I must get another. Hunt for it—I shall not leave to-day."

"Troth, thin, I'll 'av another parthing meself, jist," returned Teddy, as he disappeared with a pleased look.

At this moment Mrs. Huntly, hearing another voice, reappeared, and my *tele-atele* with Lilian was for the present broken off. The former had a great many questions to ask me—why I had decided leaving so suddenly—when I expected to reach Boston, and the like—so that I had no little difficulty in replying in a way not to commit myself. Then she had letters to write to her friends, and Lilian had letters to prepare also, and the news of my departure having circulated quickly through the village, numbers called to see me, to send messages and letters to their native land—so that with listening to their requests, to an extra amount of advice as to the proper mode of conducting myself under all circumstances, and attending to my own affairs, I was kept busy all day, without the opportunity of another private interview with Lilian.

A fine horse, which I had purchased a few days before of an Indian, was lost—the owner I suppose, or some of his friends, thinking it best to recover the animal without troubling me in the matter at all.—Consequently, another beast was to be procured; and as this was for Teddy, I allowed him to make his own selection—the one I had ridden hither still being in my possession.

At last, every thing being prepared, I retired to my couch, heartily fatigued with my day's work. But thought was too busy to allow me much sleep; and I question if at least *one* other did not pass a restless night from the same cause; for on appearing in the morning, I noticed the features of Lilian were very pale, and her eyes red as if from recent weeping. But she seemed firm, ready to endure the separation, and uttered not a single word of complaint. I could have loved her for this, if for nothing else—her conduct was so womanly and sensible. She did not feel the less, that she

did not show it more, I knew. She was about to part with one she had loved from childhood—one to whom her heart and hand were given—and this in a strange, wild country, for a long separation, full of peril to both, with no certainty of ever seeing him again. It could not but be painful to her in any situation—doubly so in the one she was placed—and I fancy I appreciated her noble firmness as it deserved.

The countenances of Mrs. Huntly, Madame Mortimer, Eva, and many others, all were grave; and I read in their looks, unfeigned sorrow at my close-coming departure. The morning meal was partaken in silence, as all were too sad and full of deep thought for unnecessary conversation.—Ere it was finished, my friends had all collected to bid me farewell and God speed; and the announcement by Teddy that the horses were ready, was the signal for me to begin the parting scene. Commencing with those I cared least about, I shook each heartily by the hand, and passed from one to the other as rapidly as possible.

"Francis Leighton," said Madame Mortimer, when I came to her, and her hand pressed mine warmly, and her voice trembled as she spoke, "remember that to you and your friend my daughter owes her life, and I a debt of gratitude that may never be cancelled. If my prayers for your safe and happy return be of any avail, you have them. God bless you, sir! and remember, that whatever may happen in this changing world, in me, while living, you have a warm friend; and (approaching and whispering in my ear) so has Lilian and her mother. While I have aught, they shall never want. Farewell, my friend! farewell—but I hope, only for a time."

It may not surprise the reader, if I say the pressure of my fingers was none the less for this information, nor my heart any heavier, unless it was by the additional weight of tears of joy.

Madame Mortimer stepped aside, and I turned to Eva. There was no merriment in her look—nothing light upon her tongue.

"You have heard the words of mother," she said, impressively. "They are not;

meaningless. To you and your friend I am indebted for my life. My conversation at times may have seemed light and trifling; but notwithstanding, Francis, I would have you believe, there is a *heart* beneath all that does not overlook the merits of its friends, nor feel lightly for their welfare. When you see your friend, tell him that he is prayed for daily, by one who, though she never saw, can never cease to remember him. Adieu! and may God bear you safely through all peril!" and she turned away, as if to hide a tear.

"Francis," said Mrs. Huntly, striving to command her voice, which trembled not a little, as she held both my hands in hers: "Francis, it is hard—very, very hard—to part with you. But I suppose I must, and hope it is all for the best. I have had so much trouble within a few years—have seen so many of those I once supposed my friends forsake me—that it really becomes grievous to part with any of the few I have tried and not found wanting. But go, Francis, and God protect you!—Should you be fortunate enough to meet with dear Charles (here her voice faltered to a pause, and she was forced to dash away the tears dimming her eyes,)—tell—tell him all. Break the matter gently, if he does not already know it—and—and comfort him the best way you can. My love, my deepest, undying love, to your parents and all my friends. There—there—I can say no more—no more. Go, Francis, and God's blessing and mine attend you! Good-by! farewell!" and shaking my hands warmly, with her head averted, she dropped them and disappeared into another apartment, seemingly too much affected to tarry longer in my presence.

With a proper delicacy, for which I gave them ample credit, one after another departed, until I was left alone with Lillian. While these several partings were taking place, she had remained seated, watching the whole proceedings, with what feelings I leave lovers to judge. I now turned to her, and felt the grand trial was at hand, and my heart seemed in my very throat. Her sweet countenance was pale and death-like, her very lips were white, and her eyes full of tears. There was no

shyness—no trembling—no apparent excitement. She seemed, as her heavenly blue eyes fixed upon mine, rather a beautiful figure, cut from the purest marble, cold and motionless, than a living, breathing, human being. But oh! what thoughts, what agonies, were rending that soul within, mastered only by a most powerful will! With a step none of the firmest, I approached and took a seat by her side, and laid my hand upon hers.

"Lillian," I said, in a scarcely articulate voice: "Lillian, the time has come to—to—part."

She did not reply in words—she could not; but she sprang to her feet, her ivory arms encircled my neck, and her feelings found vent in tears upon my heaving breast.

Smile if you will, reader—you who have passed the romantic bounds of a first pure and holy passion, and become identified with the cares and dross of a money-getting, matter-of-fact, dollar-and-cent-life—smile if you will, as your eye chances upon this simple passage, and curl your lip in proud disdain of what you now consider foolish days of love-sick sentimentality; but remember, withal, that in your long career of painful experience, you can refer to no period when you felt more happiness, more unadulterated joy, than that when the being of your first ambition and love lay trustingly in your arms. It is a point in the life of each and all, who have experienced it, (and to none other are these words addressed) which can never be erased from the tablet of memory; and though in after years we may affect to deride it as silly and sentimental, it will come upon us in our reflective moments, like a warm sunshine suddenly bursting upon a late cold and gloomy landscape; and insensibly, as it were, our spirits will be borne away, to live over again, though briefly, the happiest moments of our existence. The man who has passed the prime and vigor of manhood without ever having felt this—without this to look back to—I pity; for he has missed the purest enjoyment offered to mortal; and his whole path of life must have been through a sterile desert, without one green blade or flower to relieve its barren aspect.

For some moments the heart of Lillian beat rapidly against mine, and her tears flowed hot and fast. I did not attempt to restrain the latter, for I knew they would bring relief to an overcharged soul, and I rejoiced that she could weep. At length they ceased, and Lillian spoke.

"I will not detain you longer, dear Francis. Between you and I, who know each other so well, words are idle and unmeaning—or at least unexpressive of our feelings. Avoid danger for your own sake, and for the sake of her who loves you; and do not forget that she will count the days, the hours, ay, the *minutes* of your absence."

"I will not, dearest Lillian," I exclaimed, straining her to my breast, and pressing my lips again and again to hers. "I will not forget what you have told me. I will not forget there lives an angel to make happy my return, and God send my return may make her happy also! Adieu, dearest—take heart—do not despond—and Heaven grant our meeting may be soon! There, God bless you! and holy angels guard you!" and taking a farewell salute, I gently seated her as before, and rushed from the cottage.

Two fiery horses stood saddled and bridled at the door, pawing the earth impatiently. Every thing was ready for a start; and snatching the bridle of one from the hand of Teddy, I vaulted into the saddle. The next moment I was dashing away through the forest at a dangerous speed, but one that could scarcely keep pace with my thoughts.

CHAPTER III.

A RECKLESS RIDE—LUDICROUS APPEARANCE OF TEDDY—KILL A BUCK—INDIANS—FRIENDLY SIGNS—CLOSE QUARTERS—A TALK—GIVE THEM TOBACCO—TREACHERY—DEATH OF THE TRAITOR—PURSUE OUR COURSE.

With the mind completely engrossed, the body often acts mechanically, or by instinct, and performs, without our knowledge at the time, exactly what reason

would have dictated; and when some trifling circumstance recalls us to ourself, we arouse as from a dream, and are surprised at what has been accomplished during our brief alienation.

So was it with myself in the present instance. On, on I sped, as if riding for life, my hand firmly upon the rein, guiding unerringly my high-mettled beast, and yet unconscious of any thing external, with thoughts wild and painful rushing through my brain. How long or far I had ridden thus, I do not exactly know—though miles now lay between me and Oregon City—nor how much longer I should have continued at the same break-neck speed, had my horse not stumbled and thus broken the monotony of a steady ride, by unseating and nearly throwing me over his head.

Recovering my position, and reining my steed to a halt, I found him covered with foam, and very much blown from his late run; and that I was upon a narrow upland prairie, which stretched away before me for several miles, fringed on either hand, at no great distance, with a beautiful wood.

"Where am I?" was my first involuntary exclamation—"how did I get here, with a whole neck? and where is Teddy?"

The last question found a more ready answer than either of the preceding, in a shout from the veritable Teddy O'Lagherly himself. I looked behind and beheld him coming, as if on a race with death for the last half hour of his existence. His appearance was not a little ludicrous. His body was bent forward at an angle of forty-five degrees, so as to allow him to grasp the mane of the beast—his only hope—his feet having slipped from the stirrups, which were dangling against the animal's flanks, and serving the purpose of spurs—while his hat, for security being held in his teeth, smothered the shouts he was making to attract my attention. Add to this, that the horse had no guide but his own will—that at every spring Teddy bounced from the saddle, to the imminent danger of his neck, and greatly to the aid of his digestive organs—and an idea of the discomfiture of the poor fellow may be formed, as

his horse dashed up along side of mine, and came to a dead halt.

It is said there is but one short step from the sublime to the ridiculous, and I certainly felt the force of the proverb on the present occasion. I had been half mad with distracting thoughts; but every thing was now forgotten, and I burst forth in a roar of laughter, such as I am certain had never startled those solitudes before.

"Be howly jabers!" cried Teddy, regaining an upright position, with a face the hue of a boiled lobster, "is ye mad now, ye divil—beg pardon!—your honor I maan. Howly jabers! what a ride! Och! I'm done for—claan murdered intirely—all pumice from me toes upwards, barring me body and head-piece, jist."

"Why, Teddy," returned I, as soon as I could get calm enough to command my voice, "what new feature of horsemanship is this you have adopted? I am sure you would make your fortune in any circus, with such a heroic display of your animal capacities."

Ah! ye may laugh and be d—plased to yees; but it's me mother's own son as feels more as crying, so it is. Fortune, is it, ye mintoned! Be howly St. Patrick's birth-day in the morning! it's not mesilf that 'ud do the likes agin for twinty on 'em. Och! I'm killed intirely—all barring the braathing, as lingers still."

"Well, well, Teddy, I trust you will not have to repeat it," pursued I, laughing.—"But come—where do you think we are?"

"Think, is it? Ye ask me to think?—Sure, divil of a think I 'av in me now. I lift it all on the road, that was no road at all, but the worst travelled counthry I iver put eyes on. We may be among the Hindoo haathen, for all me knows conthra-wise; for not a blissed thing did I sae on the journey, but r-rocks, traas and stumps, and the divil knows what all, and thim a going so fast I's couldn't git time to say good-by to 'em."

To the best of my judgment, we had come about five miles, in a direction due east. Far in the distance before me, I now beheld the lofty, snow-crowned peak of Mount Hood; and toward this, without farther delay, we bent our steps, at a pace

strongly contrasting the speed which had had borne us hither.

"Why did you not call to me, when you saw me riding at a rate so fearful?" I inquired, as I rode along at a brisk trot.

"Call, is it?" replied Teddy. "Faith! jist ax me lungs if I didn't call, till me breath quit coming for the strain upon 'em."

"And so you could not make me hear eh?"

"Make the dead hear! Och! I might as well 'av called to a grave-yard, barring the looks of the thing. Was ye mad, your honor?"

"O no, Teddy; only a little excited at parting with my friends."

"Ah! thim same parthings is mighty har-r-rd, now, so they is," rejoined Teddy, with a sigh.

"So you can speak from experience, eh?"

"Be me troth can I, now; and so can Molly Stubbs—the swaat crathur that she is."

"Did it break her heart, Teddy?"

"It's not asy for me to say, your honor; but it broke her gridiron, and the ounly one she had at that, poor dear!"

"Her gridiron!" I exclaimed, struggling to repress my risible faculties, and keep a grave face—for I saw Teddy was in sober earnest, and apparently totally unaware there was any thing ludicrous in his remark. "How did it affect the gridiron, Teddy?"

"Why, ye sae now, she was jist holding it betwaan her two fingers, and fixing for a fry maybe, whin up I comes, and tapping her under the chin, by raason of our ould acquaintance, I sez:

"It's a blissed day I saw ye first, me darling."

"That it was, Misther O'Lagherty,' sez she.

"I wish that first maating could last forever,' sez I.

"And so do I,' sez she.

"But it won't,' sez I; and thim I sighed, and she axed me what was the mather.

"Oh! worra! worra!' I sez; "it's about to part we is, Molly, dear."

"Ye don't say the likes!' sez she; and

thin down come the gridiron, as if the Ould Scratch was a riding it, smash upon the stone harth, and into my arms pitched Molly, wid a flood of tears that made me look wathery for a long occasion.

"Now it's not what we did afterwards, I'm going to till at all, at all; but whin we both come sensible, our eyes besaw the gridiron all broke, and not wort a ha'pence. Molly cried, she did, and I gin her a month's wages to ase her conscience. Musha, now, but parthings is har-r-rd, they is."

In this and like manner I managed to relieve my mind of many gloomy thoughts, which otherwise must have depressed it. I had parted the second time with Lillian, for a journey equally as full of peril as the first, and, if any thing, of a more indefinite character. I was going in search of my lost friend, it is true; but what little chance had I, I thought, when I came to look at it soberly, of finding him, even if alive. I might travel thousands on thousands of miles—be months, even years, on the search—and yet be no nearer revealing his locality than when I set out. If living, it was a mere chance we should ever meet again; and nothing, perhaps, but a kind Providence could bring us together. As may be inferred, when I quitted my friends in Oregon City, I had no definite plan arranged; and now that I was really on the journey, the question naturally arose as to what I should do, how first to proceed, and where to begin. I had resolved on engaging assistance—but where was this to be found? For some time I puzzled my own brain with the matter, and then referred it to Teddy.

Though brought up in an humble sphere of life, with very little education, Teddy was nevertheless a keen, shrewd observer, and of excellent judgment in matters coming within the range of his intellect and experience; and accordingly I relied much upon his advice.

Having heard the case fully stated, with the dignified gravity of a judge, and asked several pertinent questions, he replied, that our best course, in his humble opinion, was to continue our present route as far as Fort Hall, where we would be likely to

augment our number to our satisfaction, and could then proceed in a southerly direction and be guided by succeeding events.

As this tallied exactly with my own views, the plan was quickly adopted, and I rode forward with great mental relief, that I now had a fixed purpose, whether right or wrong.

For several miles our course lay over the upland prairie I have mentioned, and then the ground changed and became more rolling, which in turn gave place to hills, sometimes sparsely and sometimes densely wooded, interspersed with rocks, gullies, and deep ravines, that greatly impeded our progress. We halted to noon in a little valley, through which, with a roaring sound over its rocky bed, dashed a bright stream of pure water, on whose banks grew rich, green grass, of such luxuriance as to satisfy the appetites of our animals in a very short time.

While partaking of some plain food of which we had a small store, we amused ourselves by overhauling our rifles, examining their priming, as well as our other weapons and ammunition, and seeing that every thing was in proper condition to meet danger. Scarcely was this over, when in a whisper Teddy called my attention to a fine, fat buck, which was trotting along within rifle shot. Quick as thought, I drew up my piece and fired. The animal instantly bounded forward a short distance, reeled, and fell over upon its side.

The next moment we were on our way to examine the carcass, and take from it the most suitable portions for our wants. We had scarcely proceeded twenty paces, when Teddy, grasping my arm, exclaimed: "Injins, be jabers!"

And sure enough, just issuing from a clump of bushes on the opposite side of the valley, distant less than two hundred yards, were six half-naked savages, armed, two of them with rifles or muskets, and the others with bows and arrows. As it was impossible to divine their intentions, only by their acts, and as they made straight towards us, I snatched Teddy's rifle from his hands, and ordering him to load mine as quick as possible, raised it to my shoulder, determined, should they prove

hostile, to sell my life dearly, and die, if I must, with the satisfaction of having done my duty in self-defence.

Perceiving my movement, they came to a halt, and made me friendly signs, by extending their open hands and then placing them on their hearts. Dropping the muzzle of my rifle, I did the same, and then waited for them to come up, though, it must be confessed, with not the most faith imaginable in their amicable professions. However, I kept well on my guard, and by the time they had shortened the first mentioned distance between us by a hundred paces, Teddy coolly announced that two bullets were at their service, at any moment they might choose.

Ere they joined us, I had made them out by their costume and paint, to belong to the Chinook tribe, whose grounds lie due north of Oregon city, on the opposite side of the Columbia river. I had frequently seen more or less of them in the village; and had, in fact, purchased the horse, mentioned as being stolen, from one of their tribe; so that I now feared less a design upon my life than upon my property.

The party in question were all inferior beings, both in size and appearance; but one seemed superior to the others, and possessed of command. He approached me in advance of his companions, and held out his hand, which I accepted and shook in a friendly manner. He next proceeded to Teddy, and each in turn followed his example. When all had done, the chief addressed me in broken English:

"Where you come?"

"The village, yonder," I replied, pointing with my finger toward Oregon City.

"Where go?"

"Away beyond the mountains;" and I pointed eastward.

"Good muskee (musket) got?"

I nodded in the affirmative.

"Good hoss got?"

I nodded again.

"Good present got, eh? poor Injin, eh?"

"I have nothing but some tobacco I can spare," I answered, of which I still had a pretty good supply.

"Ugh! bacco good," rejoined the chief, with a smile.

This was in my sack on my horse, and I was not sorry of an excuse to get to him without showing myself suspicious of my new acquaintances; for I had noticed many a wistful glance cast in that direction, and I feared lest, presuming on our weakness, they might think proper to take our animals by a *coup de main*, and leave us to make the best of it. Accordingly, I informed the savage where the article was, and that I must go alone and get it."

"Why me no go?" he asked.

"Then your followers must stay behind."

"Why dey no go?" he inquired, a little angrily as I thought.

"Because I shall not permit it," I replied, decisively.

"Ugh! we so—you so," he rejoined, holding up first six and then two fingers, to indicate the numbers of each party.—"We strong—you weak. We go, eh?" and he made a step forward.

In an instant the muzzle of my rifle was pointed at his breast, and my finger on the trigger, a movement imitated by Teddy, who quickly covered another.

"Another step, chief," I said, "and you are a dead man."

"Back, ye devils—ye dirty blaggards! d'ye hear the gentleman spaking to yees now?" shouted Teddy.

This peremptory decision had a salutary effect upon the white-livered knaves, who instantly shrank cowering back, the chief at once exclaiming, in a deprecating tone:

"No shoot. We no go. You go."

Fearing treachery, we instantly started for our horses, keeping our faces to our foes, and our rifles levelled, prepared for the worst. Having secured a few plugs of the desired article, we both mounted and returned to the savages, among whom I made an immediate distribution. The chief thanked me, and said they would now go home. Accordingly, the whole party set off in one direction, and we in another, rifles in hand. We had scarcely gone twenty paces, when crack went a musket behind us, and a ball whizzed over my head.

"The treacherous scoundrels!" I ex-

CHAPTER IV.

PASS MOUNT HOOD AND THE CASCADES—
ARRIVE AT FORT WALLA-WALLA—EN-
LIST A FRENCH VOYAGEUR—FRENCH AND
IRISH—A QUARREL—A CHALLENGE—A
FIGHT—FOES BECOME FRIENDS.

claimed; and wheeling my horse as I spoke, I beheld the whole six running and dodging for their lives. Singling out the villain that had fired at us, I drew up my rifle and pulled trigger. The next moment he lay howling in the dust, deserted by his cowardly friends, whose speed seemed greatly accelerated by this event.

Teddy would have gone back for his scalp, but this I would not permit, both on account of its barbarity, and that by delay we might encounter another party. Setting spurs to our horses, therefore, we dashed rapidly away, leaving our game and foes behind us, and congratulating ourselves upon our providential escape.

For the rest of the day our progress was by no means slow, though the travelling at times most execrable. The sun was already throwing a long shade to the eastward, when, ascending a rough, stony ridge, which we had been forced to do circuitously, we beheld below us a beautiful plain of miles in length and breadth, along the eastern portion of which towered the lofty Cascade mountains, with the everlasting snow-crowned Mount Hood rising grandly above all, till lost beyond the clouds, glittering like a pinnacle of burnished silver in the rays of the sinking sun. It was a sublime and beautiful scene for the painter and poet; and for many minutes I paused and gazed upon it with feelings of reverence and awe for the great Author of a work so stupendous. A similar feeling must have possessed Teddy, for he instantly crossed himself and repeated the pater-noster.

Descending to the base of the hill, we found a suitable place and encamped.—Though greatly fatigued, I did not rest well; and either my thoughts, or the dismal howl of surrounding wolves, or both, combined with other circumstances, kept me awake most of the night.

Early the following morning we were on our feet, and having partaken a slight repast, we mounted and set off towards Mount Hood. The travelling was now good, being over a rolling prairie, which, as we neared this colossal erection of nature, gradually became more and more level, so that our horses being refreshed and full of fire, our speed was all that could be desired even by the most impatient.—Before noon we reached the base of Mount Hood; and if I had thought it sublime at a distance, I now *felt*, as it were, its sublimity in an awful degree. Up, up, up it rose, until my eyes became strained to trace its glistening outline in the clear, blue ether. Its base was surrounded with sand, dead trees, and broken rocks, which had accumulated there, perhaps, by the torrents of ages, as they rushed and roared down its jagged sides. For a considerable distance above the plain, it was well timbered; then came a long stretch of green grass; then a long barren spot; and then commenced the snow and ice, which rose far beyond the ordinary height of clouds—the whole combined, forming a spectacle of which the pen can convey no adequate idea. To the right and left stretched away the Cascades, which, stupendous of themselves, seemed as mole-hills in compare with Mount Hood. Far to the south rose the lofty peak of Mount Jefferson, and as far to the north, on the other side of the Columbia, that of Mount St. Helens.

Having gazed upon the scene to my satisfaction, I turned my horse to the right, and began my ascent up a valley, formed by the partial meeting of two hills, and down the very bed of which roared a sparkling streamlet. The farther I ascended, the more wild the scene, the more precipitous and dangerous the path. In fact, on three occasions we were obliged to dismount and lead our horses for a considera-

ble distance, and once our steps had to be retraced for half a mile, in order to pass around a frightful chasm. Near the summit of the ridge we came upon a fine spring and an abundance of grass. Here we encamped for the night, during which I slept soundly.

The following day was cold and stormy, with sleet and snow. This may surprise the reader, who bears in mind that it was now June; but snow-storms on the mountains are not regulated altogether by the seasons, and are frequently known to occur in one part of the country, while in another, not ten miles distant, the heat may be excessive. As all are aware, the higher we ascend, the colder the atmosphere; and on many high mountains in southern climes, there may be all kinds of temperatures, from the torrid to the frigid—from the valley of dates, figs and oranges, to the peaks of never melting ice and snow—and this within the distance of five or ten miles.

Ere we raised our camp I shot a mountain goat, being the first game we had killed since the buck of unfavorable memory. Of this we prepared our breakfast, and also put a few choice pieces in our "possibles," leaving the balance to the wolves, which, in justice to the appreciation they showed thereof I must say, was nothing but a pile of shiny bones ere we were fairly out of sight. I now consulted an excellent map, which I had procured from one of the emigrants, and referring to my compass, laid my course a little north of east, so as to strike the Dalles of Columbia, and thus the most travelled route to and from Oregon City.

The day, as I have said, being stormy, and our route lying over a wild, bleak country, served not a little to depress the spirits of both Teddy and myself. Nothing of consequence occurred through the day to distract our thoughts from their gloomy channel, and but little was said by either. By riding hard, we gained the Dalles that night, and encamped on the banks of the Columbia. Eager to arrive at Fort Hall, we again pushed ahead on the succeeding day, and following up the Columbia, reached Fort Walla-Walla, on the

third from our quitting the Dalles, without any events worthy of particular note.

This fortress, constructed on the plan of Fort Laramie, described in "Prairie Flower," I shall pass without notice, other than that it contained a small garrison of resolute and daring adventurers, or rather mountaineers and their squaw wives, who preferred passing their time here in comparative ease, at good wages, to the privations and perils of trapping in the wilderness.

Here I found a number of hardy fellows, who had lately "come in," preparing to set off again for the Blue Mountains—some to hunt for game in the forests, and others to trap in the streams. Here were also several friendly Indians, (friendly through fear of the whites,) the usual number of traders, pedlers, one or two land speculators and fur company agents, and one French *voyageur*—all more or less engaged in drinking, trafficking, and gambling—the usual routine of a gathering of this kind.

Thinking it possible to raise a party here, I made a proposition to several, but found all had prior engagements. I next made some inquiries concerning Black George, and learned, much to my satisfaction, that he had been seen quite recently on the Blue Mountains, and that in all probability I should find him at Fort Bois, or Fort Hall, as he was then slowly taking his way eastward.

"If you desire an excellent guide," said an agent to me, "let me recommend to you Pierre Boreaux; who, though somewhat eccentric at times, you will find most faithful in the discharge of his duty. I have tried him, sir, and know."

"Just what I desire exactly," I replied.

"Come, then," he said; and taking me aside, he presented me to the individual in question, who was none other than the French *voyageur* previously mentioned.

He was a small, dapper personage, very neat in his appearance, with a keen, restless black eye, and a physiognomy more inclined to merriment than melancholy. His age was about forty, though he ever took pains to appear much younger. His *penchant* was for the wild and daring; and

never was he so well contented, as when engaged in some perilous enterprise. This, taken in connection with his jovial turn of mind, may at first seem paradoxical; but it must be remembered, that most persons incline less to their likes than their opposites; and that the humorist is the man who seldom smiles, while the man of gravest sayings may be literally a laughing philosopher. He was much addicted, too, to taking snuff, of which he always managed to have a good stock on hand, so that his silver box and handkerchief were in requisition on almost all occasions. He spoke with great volubility, in broken English, generally interlarded with French, accompanied with all the peculiar shrugs and gesticulations of his countrymen. He was, in short, a serio-comical, singular being, of whom I can convey no better idea than to let him speak and act for himself.

"Ah, Monsieur," he said in reply to my salutation, taking a huge pinch of snuff the while and bowing very politely; "ver moche happe make you acquaintones.—Will you 'ave von tam—vot you call him—happenese, eh?—to take von leetle—I forget him—so—(putting his thumb and finger together, to indicate a pinch,) avec moi, eh?"

"Thank you," I returned, "I never use the article in that shape."

"Ver sorre hear him. Vous remember le grand Empereur Napoleone, eh?"

"Ay."

"Ah! von plus great sheneral him. He take snooof, eh! Vell, you speak now, you—vot you call him—businese, eh!"

"I wish to engage you," I replied, "to go on a journey full of peril, in the capacity of guide."

"Ou aliez-vous?"

"How?"

"Ah, pardonnez-moi! I say, vere you go?"

"To Mexico, perhaps."

"Oui, Monsieur. I shall be ver moche delight, I certainment assure you. Ven, you go, eh?"

"I leave here, *en route* for Fort Hall; at daylight to-morrow."

Here the Frenchman took one or two

hasty pinches of his favorite, and closing his box, said:

"Von leetle absence, Monsieur. I shall 'ave von ver moche pleasure;" and off he skipped as gay as a lark, to prepare himself for the journey.

At daylight on the succeeding morning, the Frenchman was at his post, well mounted on a full blooded Indian pony, armed to the teeth, and really looking quite the warrior. Three minutes later we had all passed the gate and were speeding away.

This was the first meeting between Teddy and Pierre, and I soon became aware it was any thing but a pleasant one, particularly on the part of Teddy, who cast many a furtive glance upon the other, expressive of dislike. What this arose from—whether from jealousy, national prejudice, or contempt for the inferior propositions of Pierre—I was at a loss to determine. Never before had I seen animosity to a fellow traveller so strongly depicted on the features of the faithful Teddy. It may be he fancied the Frenchman of equal grade with himself, and was jealous of his supplanting him in my favor, and this seemed the most probable of the three suggested causes. Pierre, however, showed no ill will to the Irishman, but merely returned his glances with a supercilious look, as though he considered him his inferior. But he could not long remain silent; and so, after riding on briskly for a short distance, he turned to Teddy, and with a mischievous twinkle in his small black eye, said, with much suavity:

"Parlez vous Français?"

"Spake it in English, ye spalpeen! and thin a gentleman can answer yees," replied Teddy, reddening with vexation. "If it's frog language ye's jabbering, sure it's not meself as wants to know what ye says, now."

"Que voulez-vous, Monsieur?" inquired the Frenchman, looking slyly at me with a significant shrug, and secretly enjoying the discomfiture of Teddy.

"Quack, quack, quack, kithier hoben," rejoined Teddy, fiercely. "Sure, now, and is it that ye can understand yourself, ye tief! It's maybe smart, now, ye's ather thinking yourself, by token ye can say

things I don't know the maaning of. And so ye is smart, barring the foolish part, which comprehinds the whole of yees.—Troth! can ye fight, Misther Frogeater? Come, now, that's English; and by St. Pathrick's bones, I'll wager ye're too cowardly to understand it."

"Come, come, Teddy," I said, "you are getting personal. I can allow no quarreling."

"Och! there's no danger, your honor," returned Teddy, turning upon Pierre a withering look of contempt. "It's not inny frog-eater as is going to fight his betthers; and sure it's not Teddy O'Lagherty as can fight alone, jist."

Meantime there had been a quiet, half smile resting on the features of the Frenchman, as though he were secretly enjoying a fine joke. Even the abusive language of the excited Irishman did not appear to disturb his equanimity in the least. There he sat, as cool and apparently as indifferent as if nothing derogatory to his fighting propensities had been uttered, or at least understood by him. I was beginning, in fact, to think the latter was the case, or else that Teddy was more than half right in calling him a coward, when I became struck with a peculiar expression, which suddenly swept over his bronzed features, and was superseded by the same quiet smile—as we sometimes at noon-day see a cloud flit over a bright landscape, shading it for an instant only.

Suddenly Pierre reined his pony close along side of Teddy, and in a very bland voice, as if begging a favor, said:

"Monsieur, you say someting 'bout fight, eh? Sare, I sall 'ave le plus grande delight to soot you with un—vot you call him—peestole, eh?"

"The divil ye will, now!" replied Teddy, with a comical look of surprise. "Sure, thin, an' it's mesilf that 'ud like to be doing the same by you, and ye was wort the powther it 'ud cost."

"Sare," returned the Frenchman with dignity, "in my countre, ven gentilshomes go for kill, dey nevare count de cost. I soot you—I cut you troat—I sharge you acting."

"Well, be jabers! since ye've got your

foul tongue into English, and be — to yees! I'll do the same for your dirty self," retorted Teddy; "for it's not Teddy O'Lagherty as 'll be behind aven a nager in liberalithies of that sort, now."

"You are both too liberal of your valor by half," I rejoined, laughing at what I thought would merely end in words.

But I was soon convinced of my error; for scarcely had the expression left my lips, when the Frenchman sprang from his pony, and striking his hand on his pistols, exclaimed:

"Je l'attaquerai: I vill 'ave at you, Monsieur, ven you do me von leetle honour, sare."

"It's not long you'll have to wait, thin," cried Teddy; and before I could interfere—or in fact was fully aware of what was taking place—he had dismounted and drawn a pistol.

"Tin paces, ye blaggard!" he cried; "and may howly Mary be marcifal to yees!"

"Hold!" I shouted. "Rash men, what are you about? I forbid—"

Here I was interrupted by the reports of two pistols, followed by a stifled cry of pain from Pierre, who instantly dropped his weapon and placed his hand to his shoulder. The next moment I was on my feet, and rushing to his assistance, accompanied by Teddy, whose features, instead of anger, now exhibited a look of commiseration.

"Are you hurt, Pierre?" I inquired, as I gained his side.

"Ver leetle scratch," replied the Frenchman, taking away his hand covered with blood.

I instantly tore away his garments, and ascertained that the ball of Teddy had passed quite through the fleshy part of his arm near the shoulder, but without breaking a bone or severing an artery.

"A lucky escape, Pierre," I said.

He merely shrugged his shoulders, and coolly proceeded to take snuff, with an indifference that surprised me. When he had done, he turned to Teddy with:

"Vill you 'ave von more—vot you call him—le plus grande satisfacione, eh?"

"Sure, and it's mesilf as is not over par-

thicular inny ways. If ye's satisfied, I'm contint—or conthrawise, as plases ye most."

"Vell, then, suppose we shake hand, eh?" rejoined Pierre. "I soot you—you soot me. Ve 'ave both satisfacione, eh?" and the next moment these two singular beings were pleasantly engaged in complimenting each other on his bravery.

O, curious human nature! From that moment Pierre Boreaux and Teddy O'Lagherty were sworn friends for life—nor did I ever hear an angry word pass between them afterwards.

CHAPTER V.

PASS FORT BOIS—THE HOT SPRINGS—A CAPITAL JOKE—SUPERSTITION OF TEDDY—"THE DIVIL'S TAE-POT"—A NIGHT ATTACK—STRATAGEM OF THE INDIANS FOILED BY PIERRE—FOE PUT TO FLIGHT—FOUR SCALFS—A PACK OF WOLVES—IN DANGER OF BEING DEVoured—A DISMAL NIGHT OF IT.

Pursuing our course along the banks of the Walla-Walla, we passed Dr. Whiteman's station, and camped the following night in a romantic dell at the foot of a ridge adjoining the Grand Round. In the course of the evening we were visited by several Indians, with whom we held a small traffick for provisions. For fear of evil consequences, we kept well on our guard, but they displayed no hostile intentions.—Pierre complained somewhat of his arm, which I had bandaged at the time as well as circumstances would permit. I advised him to consult the Indians, who are known to be great proficients in the healing art. He did so, and the result proved highly beneficial; so much so, that he was able to use it sooner than I expected.

The next day we crossed the Grand Round, (a delightful valley of twenty miles in extent, watered by a pleasant stream,) also the Blue Mountains, and descended into the valley of the Snake river. The scenes we passed over were, many of them, wild, and some of them romantic in the extreme; but as more important mat-

ters press me, I cannot pause to describe them. The Indians we now beheld on every side of us—but they offered no violence. The third day from crossing the Grand Round we reached Fort Bois, where we passed the night.

The next morning we pursued our journey, having learned, meantime, that Black George, for whom I made particular inquiries, had passed here a few days before, in company with two other trappers, on his way to Fort Hall. This was cheering news to me, and we pushed forward as fast as circumstances would permit, in the hope of overtaking him.

About noon of the third day from leaving Fort Bois, we came upon some half a dozen fine looking springs, when Teddy declared he must quench his thirst.

As he descended from his horse, the Frenchman shrugged his shoulders and gave me a very significant wink.

"What do you mean, Pierre?" I inquired, fully at a loss to comprehend what seemed to him a capital joke.

"Paix! le diable!" he exclaimed, laying his hand on my arm and pointing to Teddy, who, having reached a spring, was just in the act of bending down to the water. "Monsieur sall see."

"See?" I repeated.

"Oui, Monsieur."

"What shall I see?"

"Och! howly murther! be St. Pathrick! jabers!" cried Teddy at this moment, springing to his feet and running towards us with all his fleetness, holding his tongue with one hand, and pressing the other upon his forehead. "Och! murther! I'm dead intirely—bit—ate up—claan killed, I is!"

"What is the matter?" I inquired, unable to comprhend the meaning of such strange actions, while Pierre leaned forward on his saddle and held both hands upon his ribs, fairly screaming with laughter.

"Mather, is't?" rejoined Teddy. "Musha! but it's mather intirely. Me tongue's burnt out of me, jist, barring about sax inches on't."

"Burned, Teddy?"

"Ay, burnt your honor—that's the wor-r-rd, now. Sure, that's the divil's

pool, and so it is—and hell must be hereabouts. Och! but I'm in a hurry to lave the spot betimes;" and springing into his saddle he rode away, in spite of my calls to the contrary, as fast as his beast could carry him.

"What is it, Pierre?" I exclaimed; but Pierre was too much convulsed to answer me; and dismounting, I approached the miraculous water myself.

Now I understood the joke; and to do myself justice, I must say I so far imitated the Frenchman, that I was unable to quit the spot for at least ten minutes. In his eager desire for a cool, refreshing draught, Teddy had plunged his face into, and gulped a mouthful of boiling water, from what are known as the Hot Springs. Of these there are some five or six, the water of which bubbles up clear and sparkling, and, all meeting, form a small stream, which rolls away with a pleasing murmur. No wonder Teddy, not understanding the phenomenon, and being superstitious too, should imagine Old Nick had something to do with it.

"Vell, you see, eh!" exclaimed Pierre, as I remounted. "By gar! him von ver moche good joke. He tink him von diable, eh?" and he ended with another hearty laugh, in which I was forced to join.

About three miles farther on we overtook Teddy, whose running ardor had cooled down to a quiet walk.

"Ah, faith!" said he, dolefully, "it's mighty feared I's beginning to git, that ye'd not come at all, at all."

"Why so, Teddy?"

"Oh, worra! worra! that I should iver live to taste the divil's pool! And did ye sae him, body and bones, your honor?—and how did he look, if it's all the same to yees, and he no forbid your tilling rationally?"

"Why, Teddy, there was nothing to be alarmed at;" and I proceeded to explain the mystery. "It is a very natural phenomenon, I assure you."

"Nath'ral, is it? Och! thin I have it, 'pon me sowl!"

"Have what?"

"Why sure, your honor, I sae cleaun through it."

"Well, what do you see, Teddy?"

"Musha! but it's the divil's tae-pot."

"Tae-pot!"

"Ah! troth and it is. Ould Sathan is at the bothom of it, does ye mind! He haats the wather there, now, to coax saints to dbrink tae wid him, the spalpeen! and thin he'll make the most of 'em, d'ye sae, your honor! Och! it's a lucky man Teddy O'Lagherty is for gitting off so asy, barring he's more unlucky by token he wint to the place at all, at all."

It had become a fixed fact with Teddy, which all my jests and arguments failed to alter, that the Hot Springs and his Satanic majesty were indissolubly connected. But this did not lessen the joke, which for a long time afterwards served Pierre and myself as a specific for blue devils and *ennui*.

As I said before, we were now travelling through a country thickly peopled with savages. What we had seen of these appeared to be friendly; but knowing the treacherous nature of many, we felt that self-preservation demanded we should at all times be on our guard. For this purpose, our arms were always ready to our hands in the day time, and at night each took his turn of standing sentinel. Thus far we had escaped all difficulty; but Pierre often warned us not to be too sanguine of reaching Fort Hall without a brush of some kind, as he well knew the nature of those surrounding us.

The sun was just sinking behind the Blue Mountains, when we came to a small stream—a tributary of Snake river—that took its devious course through a valley between two precipitous ridges, and thence through a canon of a thousand feet in depth. The valley was shaded by large trees of various kinds, and was romantic in its appearance. It contained good grazing also, and good water, and this made it a desirable camp-ground. Hobbling our horses and setting them free, we kindled a fire, around which we squatted to cook our meat, smoke our pipes, and fill up the intervals with the most amusing subjects, among which Teddy and his "divil's tae-pot" came in for their full quota of mirthful comment.

At length we began to grow drowsy, and having seen our animals tethered within the circle of the fire, and it being Pierre's turn to stand guard, Teddy and I threw ourselves upon the ground, our blankets rolled around us, and soon were fast asleep. For an hour or two every thing passed off quietly, when Pierre awoke me with a gentle shake.

"Ver sorre, Monsieur, to—vot you call him—deesturb you, eh!—but de tam Injen—sacre le diable!"

"Well," said I, starting up, "what is it? Are we attacked?" and at the same time I woke Teddy.

"By gar!" returned the Frenchman, "I see von leetle—vot you call him—sneaker, eh? Him creep—creep—creep—and I tink I wake you, sare, and soot him, by tam!"

"Faith, that's it!" cried Teddy, grasping his rifle and springing to his feet: "That's it, now! Shoot the haathen!"

✓ By this time I was fully aroused to the sense of danger; and quickly learning from Pierre where he had seen the savage, I grasped my rifle and sprang beyond the fire-light, in an opposite direction, followed by my companions. We had not gained ten paces, when crack, crack, went some five or six muskets, the balls of which, whizzing over our heads, did not tend to lessen our speed. However, we reached the covert unharmed, and for the time considered ourselves safe. We turned to reconnoiter, but not a sign of living thing could we see save our horses, which stood with ears erect, trembling and snorting, as if conscious of a hidden foe.

For an hour we remained in this manner, when, concluding the enemy had departed, I proposed returning to the fire.

"Hist!" whispered Pierre, grasping my arm. "You sall see, Monsieur."

And he was right; for not ten minutes afterwards, he silently directed my attention to some dark objects lying flat upon the ground, which, with all my experience and penetration, I could not believe were savages, until I perceived them gradually near our horses. Then I became alarmed, lest reaching them, they might speedily mount and escape, leaving us to make

the best of a perilous and toilsome journey on foot.

"What is to be done, Pierre? I fear we are in a bad fix."

"Je me couche—je tire fur lui: I lie down, sare—I soot at him. You sall see. Wait von leetle minneet. Ven you hears my canon, den you soot and run at him as le diable."

Saying this, Pierre glided away as noiselessly as an Indian, and I saw nothing more of him for several minutes. Meantime, Teddy and I kept our eyes intently fixed upon our stealthy foes, and our rifles in rest, ready to give them their deadly contents at a moment's warning. Slowly, like a cat creeping upon her game, did these half naked Indians, serpent-like, steal towards our animals, every moment lessening the distance between them and the objects of their desires. I began to grow nervous. What had become of Pierre? If he intended to do any thing, now I thought was the time. A few moments and it would be too late; and acting upon this thought, I drew a bead upon the most advanced savage, and was about pulling the trigger, when the latter suddenly bounded to his feet, uttered a yell of delight, and sprang towards the now frightened animals, imitated in his manœuver by some ten or twelve others.

"Good Heaven! all is lost!" I exclaimed, bitterly.

The words had scarcely passed my lips, when bang went a pistol from among the horses; and the foremost savage—the one I had singled out, and who was on the point of grasping one of the tether ropes—bounded up into the air, with a horrible yell, and fell back a corpse. This was wholly unlooked for by his companions, and checked for an instant those pressing on behind. Remembering Pierre's request, I whispered Teddy to "throw" his man and charge. Both our rifles spoke together, and down tumbled two more. At the same moment Pierre's rifle sent another to his account; and simultaneously springing forward, all three of us made the welkin ring with our shouts of joy and defiance. This was the grand *coup de grace* of the night. The Indians were alarmed and be-

wildered. They had counted on certain success in stealing our horses without the loss of a man. Four had fallen in as many seconds; and fancying themselves in an ambuscade, they turned, with wild yells of affright, and disappeared in every direction; so that by the time I had joined Pierre, we were masters of the field, and not an unwounded foe in sight.

"Yoh see hoss safe, Monsieur," said Pierre, hurriedly, as we met; "and I see to tam Injen, eh!" and without waiting a reply, he darted forward, and the next moment was engaged in tearing off the bloody scalps of the slain.

As every mountaineer considers this his prerogative, I did not interfere, but ordering Teddy to assist me, cut the lariats and led our horses back into the darkness, from fear of another attack, in which we might come out second best. In a few minutes Pierre approached me leisurely, and laughingly said:

"Tout va bien: All pe vell, sare;" and he held up to the light four bloody scalps. "Von, two, tree not pe dead, I kill him. Good for—vot you call him—stealer, eh? —ha, ha, ha!" and taking out his box, he deliberately proceeded to take snuff with his bloody fingers, adding, by way of accompaniment: "Von tam ver moche exsallant joke him—ha, ha, ha! Sacre! me tink him get von leetle tam—vot you call him—astonishment, eh? By gar! ver moche good."

As we did not consider it prudent to venture again within the fire-light, we decided to remain where we were through the night and guard against surprise. All was dark around us, except in the direction of the roaring fire, which, flickering to the passing breeze, made the scene of our late encampment look dismal enough. To add to its gloom and cheerlessness, we were presently greeted with the distant howl of a hungry pack of wolves. Every moment these howls grew louder, showing the animals were approaching the spot, while our horses snorted and became so restless we could scarcely hold them. Nearer and nearer came the hungry beasts of prey, till at length we could perceive their fiery eyeballs, and occasionally catch a glimpse

of their bodies, as they hovered around the circle of the fire, fearing to approach the carcasses they so much coveted.

For an hour or two they prowled and howled around us, "making night hideous with their orgies," while the fire gradually growing less and less bright, increased their boldness accordingly.

At last one, unable to longer bear the keen pangs of hunger, leaped forward and buried his teeth and claws in the carcass of one of our late foes. The others followed his example, and in less than a minute as many as fifty of these ravenous animals were growling, fighting, gnashing their teeth, and tearing the flesh from the bones of the dead Indians.

Pierre now informed me we were in imminent danger of being attacked ourselves, as, having once tasted blood, and their appetites being rather sharpened than appeased, they would only become more bold in consequence. To my inquiry as to what should be done, he replied that we must continue to kill one of their number as fast as he might be devoured by his companions; and setting the example, he shot one forthwith. Sure enough! no sooner had the beast fallen, than the rest sprang upon and devoured him. By that time, my rifle was loaded, and I knocked over another, which met the same fate.—In this manner we kept firing alternately for a couple of hours, during which time the old stock was replenished by new comers, until I began to fancy all of the genus would be present before daylight. But at last one after another got satisfied, and slunk away licking his chops. No new ones appeared, and ere the stars grow dim, nothing was visible of the last night's butchery but a collection of clean-licked, shiny bones. While the fire lasted, we could see to take sight; but after that went out, we fired at random; though, knowing the exact location of the beasts, our shots generally proved successful in killing or wounding.

When morning again put a smiling face upon the recent sable earth, we mounted our horses and quitted the loathsome spot, thanking God for our providential deliverance.

CHAPTER VI.

ARRIVE AT FORT HALL—FIND BLACK GEORGE
—ENLIST HIM WITH THREE OTHERS—
SOME NEWS OF PRAIRIE FLOWER—A
STORM—UNDER WAY—A TURBULENT
STREAM—DANGEROUS EXPERIMENT OF
PIERRE—ALL SAFE AT LAST.

It was a warm, pleasant afternoon in June, that we came in sight of Fort Hall, which we hailed with three cheers of delight; and setting spurs to our horses, in less than half an hour we rode gaily within the gates.

As we entered the area, which, though much smaller, was fashioned like Fort Laramie, I perceived a small group of mountaineers or trappers, among whom were two or three Indians, all apparently engaged in some important traffick. The next moment I heard a well known voice exclaim:

"It's done gone then, or I'm no snakes; and heyar's what never backs for nobody and nothin'."

The next moment the speaker sauntered toward me, just as I had dismounted from my horse. As he approached, he looked me steadily in the face a moment, and then springing forward with hand extended and flashing eyes, fairly shouted:

"Bosson—for a thousand wild-cats—I'll be dog-gone ef 'tain't;" and ere the sentence was concluded, my hand was suffering under the powerful but welcome pressure of that of Black George. "Well," he added, "I'll be teetotally rumflumuxed, ef I don't think you're a trump, and a ace o' diamonds at that. Whar d'ye come from now, and which way goin' ef it's not tallied on a private stitk."

"Direct from Oregon City," I answered, by no means backward in displaying my delight at meeting him again.

"Whar's the gals?"

"Left them all behind me."

"Augh! 'Spect you left your heart thar too, eh?"

"Possibly."

"I'd swear it. Well, hoss, don't blame ye. Them's about as nice human picters as ever this nigger seed. Been thirty year younger, might hev got into deep wa-

ter thar myself, and lost the whole kit.—Howsomever, this coon never tried treein a gal but once't—and Suke Harris soon blowed damp weather on to his powder, and it warn't no shoot no how—augh!—Well, well," he added, with something like a sigh, "them's by-gones any how, and 'spects it's all for the best—'case I'm an old dog, and lead a wanderin life; and when I kind o' git rubbed out—why, ye see, I haint got no pups nor nothin to be a barkin over my last roost."

Here Black George coughed a little, and turned aside his head, when his eye chanced upon Teddy and Pierre, who, having dismounted at another part of the enclosure, were now approaching to join me.

"Why, hello, hoss! how goes it?" continued the old trapper, addressing the Irishman, and extending his hand. "And here's Pierre too, lookin as nateral 's a young cub; and I'll be dog-gone ef that same old smell-box aint jest whar it used to was, a reg'lar fortress, makin his fingers runners 'tween it and his nose. Augh! gin us a chaw, and see the ginteel done."

"Faith! ye're the same ould chap," rejoined Teddy, grasping one hand, while the Frenchman took the other. "Sure, an' it's good for sore eyes to see the likes o' ye agin."

"Ah! Monsieur Blake Shorge," added Pierre, "it give me von ver moche le plus grande delight, for—vot you call him—discoverment you, eh? Ver exceeding tam glad, by gar!"

As soon as the congratulations were over on all sides, Black George turned to me with:

"Well, Bosson, hearn any thing o' your pardner?"

"Nothing; and I am now on my way to hunt him out, if among the living."

"A long tramp, and no beaver, or I'm no prophet."

"You think it impossible for me to find him, then?"

"Well, hoss, it's hard sayin what's impossible; but I'd jest as soon think o' huntin for a singed tail beaver, I would, and odds on my side at that."

Here I entered into an explanation of how he was lost, and wound up by asking:

"And now do you do not think it possible he was taken prisoner?"

"Nothin agin it, as I knows on."

"And if taken prisoner by the Mexicans, is it not possible—nay, more, is it not probable—he was sold into slavery?"

"Why," replied Black George, who seemed struck with this last suggestion, "I'll gin in it sort o' edges that way, that's a fact—I'll be dog-gone of it don't! But 'spose it's all so—how's you to diskiver him?—'case it looks a heap mixed to this child, to see it in the cl'arest light."

"That is just what I wish to know myself, and for that purpose have started on the search—being the least, to my mind, I could do under the circumstances."

"Then you're bound sothe'ard, 'spose?"

"Exactly; and desire you to join me, with three as good men as you can select."

"Ah, yes; but ye see, it's beaver time now, and——"

"I understand; but I am willing to pay you as much as you could make in your regular vocation."

"You is, hey? Well, come, now, that's a sensible and feelin speech, and you couldn't hev bettered the gist on't, ef you'd a splattered it over with all the big words as is English. I like a straight for'ard-toe-the-mark way o' dealin—I'll be dogged ef I don't!—and bein's I know you're a gentleman—why, I'll jest tell ye I'm in, ef it takes all my hair to put her through. Besides, thar's a chance to raise hair, and that's a sport as this nigger al'ays had a nateral incline for. I've jest got in from the Blues, and made a sale of some hides—so I'm ready to travel and fight jest when you speak it. Got any bacca?"

"Can you raise me three more of the right sort?"

"I reckon."

"Do so; and we will start, if possible, to-morrow morning."

"Well, that'll jest save me a big spree—ugh! I say, boys," he continued, drawing from the pocket of his hunting shirt a small canteen, "got the critter here—and so spose we take an inside wet, eh? Spect 'twont hurt your feelins none;" and he set an example which was very accurately followed.

"By-the-by, George," said I, "have you seen or heard any thing of Prairie Flower, since that night when she appeared, gave the alarm, and disappeared so mysteriously?"

"Jest what I's a-goin to ax you. No, I haint never sot eyes on her purty face sence; but I hearn a trapper, as come from the sothe, say as he had seed her down to Taos way, and all her Injins was along.—She was axin him, now I come to remember, ef he'd heard o' a prisoner bein taken that-a-ways and sold to the mines."

"Well, well, what did he reply?" exclaimed I, as a sudden thought struck me.

"That he'd hearn o' several—but none in partikelar."

"Heaven bless her! I understand it all!"

"All what?" inquired Black George.

"Why, when I saw Prairie Flower last, I informed her of the fate of Charles Huntly; and ten to one she has set off to search for him!"

"That's it, for my old muley!" cried Black George, not a little excited. "I've said afore she was a angel, and heyar's a possum what don't speak without knowin. Lord bless her! I could love her like dar-nation, jest for that. Ef she aint one on 'em, why was peraries made, hey?"

A few minutes more were spent in like conversation, when Black George parted from me to engage some companions for our journey. Bidding Teddy look to our horses, I entered the common reception room of the fort, greatly elated at the intelligence just received. Sweet Prairie Flower! She was doubtless at that very moment engaged in an undertaking which should have been performed by me long before; and I could not but condemn myself, for what seemed either a great oversight or gross neglect of duty. And should Heaven favor her, and she discover my friend and set him free—what a debt of gratitude would he owe her for saving him twice!—first from death, and secondly from a slavery worse than death. And should this happen, what would be the result to two beings, who, whatever might be outward seemings, loved each other with a

OR, ADVENTURES IN THE FAR WEST.

passion strong, and, on the part of Prairie Flower at least, imperishable! Sweet, mysterious being! I could hardly realize she was only mortal; for there was something in her every look, thought and deed, which spoke a divinity—a something ennobled above mere frail humanity.

In the course of an hour, Black George rejoined me, bringing with him three large boned, robust, good looking fellows, who, he informed me, were ready to follow me at a fair remuneration. In a few minutes every thing was settled, when each departed to make preparations for an early start on the morrow.

A storm, however, set in during the night, which raged with such violence the next morning, that I was feign to defer my departure for twenty-four hours longer. To me the day wore tediously away; for my mind was continually harping on my lost friend and Prairie Flower; and now that I had gained some intelligence of the latter, I could not avoid connecting the two, in a way to raise my hopes in a great degree; and consequently I was doubly anxious to be on the way.

But if the delay proved tedious to me, not so was it with my companions; who had a jolly time of it over their cups and cards, and drank and played, till it became a serious matter for them to distinguish an ace of trumps from a gill of whisky.

However, the day went at last, as all days will, and I was gratified the second morning with a peep at old Sol, as he rose bright and glorious in the east. I hastened to rouse my companions—who were rather the worse for the previous day's indulgence, but who turned out as well as could be expected, all things considered—and in a short time we were all mounted and in motion, a godly company of seven.

Shaping our course southward, a couple of hours brought us to Port Neuf river, which we found very turbulent from the late storm, and in consequence very difficult to cross. After examining the banks for some distance, and finding no good ford, we determined on swimming it. This was no easy undertaking; for the current ran very swift, and loudly roared, as its flashing but muddy waters dashed furious-

ly against the rocks, which here and there reared their ugly heads, as if with a half formed intention of damming and forcing it to another channel.

"Monsieur," said Pierre to me, as we stood hesitating what to do; "you see tother bank, eh?"

I nodded assent.

"Sacre! by tam! now I tell you me like him. I sall 'ave von grande satisfactione of put my foot dere—or I sall be von—by gar! vot you call him—dead wet homme, eh?"

As he spoke, he spurred his horse forward, and the next moment the fiery animal was nobly contending with an element, which, in spite of his struggles, rapidly bore him down on its bosom, while his rider, as if to show his utter contempt for danger, sat erect on his back, coolly engaged in taking snuff.

"H——!" exclaimed Black George, with a grin. "Ef thar aint that old smell-box agin! Ef ever he goes under, he'll do it with a sneeze. Augh!"

"Sure, and it's troublesome he finds the wather now, I'm thinking," observed Teddy.

"Good heavens! he is indeed in difficulty!" I exclaimed. "Quick! let us ride down the bank and be prepared to give him aid."

And in fact our aid came none too soon; for the stream had borne both rider and horse down to a narrow channel, where the water rushed furiously over the rocks, and being partially obstructed below, formed an eddy or whirlpool of a very dangerous character, in which the beast was floundering and vainly striving to reach either bank. By this time Pierre had become aware of his danger, and was exerting his utmost skill to keep his seat, and guide his animal safely out of the fearful vortex. Just below him was a narrow canon, of considerable depth, and at its farther termination a slight fall, where the water seethed and foamed with great violence, after which it became comparatively tranquil, as it spread out on a broad level, to again concentrate its greatest force at a point still below. As we reached the bank along side of the guide, we all dis-

mounted, when Black George leaping upon a steep rock overhanging the stream, instantly threw him a rope which he had selected for the purpose. Pierre caught one end of it eagerly, and fearing to remain longer where he was, instantly abandoned his horse and plunged into the water. The next minute we had drawn him ashore, though not entirely scatheless, as the whirling current had several times thumped him against the rocks, and bruised his limbs and body in several places.

Pierre, however, seemed to care more for his horse than himself; and no sooner had he found a safe footing on *terra firma*, than giving himself a shake, he cried—"Mine boss, by gar!" and darted away to the rescue of the unfortunate brute, which was now being hurried against his will through the canon. We all followed Pierre down the stream, but ere we gained the tranquil part of the river before spoken of, the animal had passed safely over the falls, and, with a joyful whicker, was now fast swimming to the shore, where he was soon caught by his owner, who expressed his joy in sundry shouts and singular antics.

"Ah! sacre!" cried the Frenchman, as he remounted his gallant pony, shaking his hand with an air of defiance at the heedless river: "I sall 'ave von le plus satisfacione again try you tam drowning;" and no sooner said, than he spurred into the liquid element, and succeeded, after some difficulty, in gaining the opposite shore, an example we all safely imitated.

We now struck one of the most northern points of the Bear River Mountains; and for the rest of the day pursued our course without accident, over steep ridges, through dangerous defiles, dense thickets, deep gorges and ravines, past yawning chasms, and all the concomitants of wild, mountain scenery. Sometimes we stood on a point which commanded an extensive view of a country of great beauty and grandeur—where the soul could expand and revel amid the unchanged fastnesses of a thousand years—and anon we were completely hidden from the sight of any thing but the interwoven shrubbery, through which we diligently labored our way. At last we came to a fine spring,

around which grew a limited circle of excellent grass, presenting the appearance of a spot, which, at some remote period, had been cultivated. Here we encamped, built a fire, ate our suppers, and slept to the music of howling wolves.

CHAPTER VII.

BEAR RIVER MOUNTAINS—BEAR RIVER—TRAPPING—REMARKS ON THE TRAPPERS—A STAMPEDE—ALARM—FLIGHT—MORE SCARED THAN HURT—THE JOKE ON ME—STAND TREAT.

It is unnecessary to weary the reader with farther detail of mountain life. Unless in cases of extreme peril, from savages or wild beasts, the scenes are monotonous; and enough I think has already been recorded to give a correct idea of life as it is, with all its dangers and hardships, beyond the boundaries of civilization.—I may therefore be permitted to press forward—annihilate time and space—only pausing occasionally to give something new or out of the regular routine of every day adventure.

It was my intention on leaving Fort Hall, to make the best of my way toward Taos—a small Mexican village, much frequented by mountaineers, situated in the country of Texas, on the western side of an arm of the Green Mountains, some fifty or sixty miles north of Santa Fe, and on a small tributary of the Rio Grande. This was to be my first destination, and where I was in hopes to gain some intelligence of my friend, from the many adventurers there collected—the travelling representatives of all the territories as well as Mexico. It was possible, too, I might fall in with Leni-Leoti (which the reader will bear in mind is the Indian name of Prairie Flower) and her tribe, from whom I had sanguine expectations of gaining some information, either good or bad. If Prairie Flower had, as I inferred from what Black George imparted, actually been in search of Charles Huntly, I could at once gain the result and extent of her operations, and shape my own accord-

ingly. With this view of the matter, as may readily be supposed, I felt no little anxiety to see her; and on no route, to my thinking, would I be more likely to find her, than on the one I had chosen and was now pursuing.

Making the best of our way over the hills, we struck the Bear river on the third day from leaving Fort Hall. This river, which takes its rise in the very heart of the mountain range to which it gives name, presents the curious phenomenon of a stream running adverse ways, and nearly parallel to itself, for a distance of from one to two hundred miles. Beginning, as just stated, in the very center of the Bear River Mountains, it dashes away northward on its devious course, for a hundred and fifty or two hundred miles, and then, encircling a high ridge with the bend of an ox-bow, runs southward nearly the same distance, enlarging with numerous tributaries, and empties at last into the Great Salt-Lake, within fifty or seventy-five miles of its own head waters. Formerly this stream was much resorted to by trappers, who here found beaver very numerous, and mountain game in abundance. Beaver dams, in process of decay, may here and there be seen at the present day, and, at rare intervals, a thriving settlement of the little fellows themselves; but, as Black George remarked with a sigh of regret:

"It aint what it used to was, no how."

Soon after we had camped, Black George, who ever had an eye to business, started out in search of game, and soon returned with the intelligence that "beaver sign was about," and forthwith proceeded to get his traps, which he had brought along in his possibles.

"What are you going to do?" I inquired.

"Make 'em come, hoss—nothin' short."

As I had never witnessed the modus operandi of catching beaver, I expressed a desire to do so, which was responded to with:

"Come on, Bosson, and I'll put ye through."

Taking our way to the river, which was here rather shallow, Black George led me down some two hundred yards, and then

directed my attention to some small tracks made in the muddy bottom of the stream, along the margin of the water.

"Them's the sign, d'ye see! and thar's fur about, sartin, or this nigger don't know beaver."

Saying this, the old mountaineer proceeded to set his traps, of which he had some five or six. Moistening a small stick in his "medicine," as he termed it—an oily substance obtained from a gland of the beaver—he fastened it to the trap, and then placed the latter in the "run" of the animal, just under the edge of the water, securing it to a sapling on the bank by a small cord. Another cord led off from the trap several feet, and was attached to a "floating stick"—so called from its floating on the water—by which appendage the trapper, in case the beaver caught makes off with his property, is enabled to recover it.

"And now," said I, when he had done, "what inducement has the animal to become your victim?"

"Why he gits to be my meat you mean!"

"Exactly."

"Well, I'll jest explanify—though maybe I'll not git it out as scientiferic nor some folks—for's I said sometime ago, edication never come in this child's line.—Ye see, it's jest this: Beaver's like I've hearn say women-folks was. He's got an orful cur'osity, and it gits him into bad snaps without his intendin' it. Ye see, he'll come along here arter a while, and he'll smell that thar 'medicine,' and think maybe thar's another beaver about—leastwise he'll want to know purty bad—and so he'll come smellin' round, and afore he knows it, 'he's put his foot in't,' and is a gone beaver. Augh!"

Having delivered himself of this, Black George coolly continued his operations, till all his traps were set, and then together we returned to our camp. On arriving, I found that the beaver mania had taken possession of Black George's companions, who were in consequence absent with like sinister designs against the harmless little fellows.

On returning with the old mountaineer

in the morning, I soon discovered he had "made a raise," as he expressed it, "of three old 'uns and a kitten." The other trappers were somewhat successful also; so that on that fatal night, no less than a dozen beaver lost their "run" forever.

Before raising camp, my mountain friends proceeded to skin the animals, scrape the inside of the pelts of fat and all superfluous matter, and then stretch them on hoops for drying—after which they were ready for packing. This latter is done by turning the fur inside, putting several together and fastening them with cords, when they are tightly pressed into the possibilities of the trapper, and thus conveyed on mules to the rendezvous-market, sometimes one place and sometimes another.

The labor of the trapper is very severe, and his perils without number. Sometimes he traps on his own account—alone, or with two or three associates—and sometimes for a company. In the first instance, his cognomen is the "free trapper;" in the last, the "hired hand." In either case, however, his hardships are the same. He sets off to the mountains, as soon as the spring rains are over, and there generally remains till the approaching storms of autumn drive him to winter quarters, where his time is spent in all kinds of dissipation to which he is accessible. If he make a fortune in the summer, he spends it in the winter, and returns to his vocation in the spring as poor as when he started the year previous; and not unfrequently worse off; for if a "free trapper," ten to one but he sacrifices his animals in some drunken, gambling spree, and is forced to go out on credit, or as a "hired hand." He braves all kinds of weather in his business, and all kinds of danger, from the common accidents of the mountains, to his conflicts with wild beasts, and wilder and more ferocious savages. But he is a philosopher, and does not mind trifles. So he escape with a whole skin, or even with life, he looks upon his hardships, encounters and mishaps, only as so much literary stock, to be retailed out to his companions over a warm fire, a euchre-deck, and a can of whiskey.

Seeking the best beaver regions, he

scans carefully all the rivers, creeks and rivulets in the vicinity for "beaver sign," regardless of danger. If he find a tree across a stream, he gives it close attention, to ascertain whether it is there by accident, by human design, or whether it is "thrown" by the animal of his search for the purpose of damming the water. If the first or second, he passes on; if the last, he begins his search for the "run of the critter." He carefully scrutinizes all the banks and peers under them for "beaver tracks." If he find any, his next examination is to ascertain whether they are "old" or "fresh." If the latter, then his traps are set forthwith, in the manner already shown.

In his daily routine of business, he not unfrequently encounters terrible storms of rain or snow—the former sufficient to deluge him and raise rivulets to rivers—and the latter to bury him, without almost superhuman exertions, far from mortal eye, and there hold him to perish,

"Unwept, unhonored, and unsung."

These are the least of his dangers. He is often attacked by wild beasts, when nothing but his presence of mind, his coolness and good marksmanship, can extricate him from his difficulty; and yet he rarely fails to come off conqueror. Escaping these, he must be continually on his guard against his worst foe, the wily Indian; so that he can never approach a bush with the surety that a treacherous ball may not put a close to his mortal career, and all his hard earnings pass into the hands of an enemy he ever hates with the bitterness of concentrated passion.—With all these dangers, and hardships, and vicissitudes, your *bona fide* trapper loves his calling, would not be content to follow any other, and is in general a rough, jolly, dare-devil sort of fellow, who not unfrequently attains to the appointed age of man, and at last "goes under" with all the stoicism of a martyr,

"With not a stone, and not a line,
To tell he e'er had been." ✓

Continuing our course, but in a more easterly direction, we at length quitted the mountains and descended to a large,

beautiful, rolling prairie, with little or no vegetation but short buffalo grass. Taking our way over this, we had been about half a day out, and were beginning to lose sight of the lower ranges of hills, when we heard a deep rumbling, like heavy thunder or a distant earthquake, and our guide came to a sudden halt, exclaiming:

"Le diable!"

"Howly jabers! what is it, now?" cried Teddy.

"Hist!" exclaimed Black George. "I'll be dog-gone ef I don't think we're chawed up this time, sure as sin!"

"What is it?" I echoed.

"Von grande stampede, by gar!" answered Pierre.

"Stampede of what, I pray?"

"Buffler," replied Black George, sententially.

"Where are they?"

"Yonder they is now—here-a-ways they soon will be," and as he spoke, he pointed over the plain with his finger.

Following the direction with my eyes, I beheld in the distance a cloud of dust, which rolled upward like a morning fog, through which, and in which, I could occasionally catch a glimpse of the huge animals, as they bounded forward with railroad velocity.

"What is to be done?" I cried.

"Grin and bear it," responded the old trapper.

"But we shall be trodden to death. See! they are coming this way!"

"Can't die younger," was the cool rejoinder.

"But can we not fly?"

"Howly mother of Mary!" shouted Teddy, worked up to a keen pitch of excitement; "it's fly we must, sure, as if the divil was afther us, barring that our flying must be did on baasts as have no wings, now, but long legs, jist."

"What for you run, eh?" grinned the Frenchman. "Him catche you, by gar! just so easy as you catche him, von leetle, tam—vot you call him—musquito, eh?"

"It's no use o' showing them critters our backs," rejoined Black George.—"Heyar's what don't turn back on nothin that's got hair."

"Well," continued I, "you may do as you please; but as for myself, I have no desire to stand in my tracks and die without an effort."

Saying this I wheeled my horse, and was just in the act of putting spurs to him, when Black George suddenly dashed up along side and caught my bridle.

"See heyar, boy—don't go to runnin—or you'll discomflicate yourself odaciously—you will, by——! Eh, Pierre?"

"Certainment, by gar!" answered the guide; and then both burst into a hearty laugh.

"What do you mean?" cried I in astonishment, unable to comprehend their singular actions; and I turned to the other mountaineers, who were sitting quietly on their horses, and inquired if they did not think there was danger.

"Thar's al'ays danger," replied one, "in times like this; but thar's no safety in runnin."

"For Heaven's sake, what are we to do, then? Stay here quietly and get run over!"

Black George gave a quiet laugh, and the Frenchman proceeded to take snuff. This was too much for my patience. I felt myself insulted, and jerking away my rein from the hand of the trapper, I exclaimed indignantly:

"I do not stay here to be the butt of any party. Teddy, follow me!"

The next moment I was dashing over the prairie at the full speed of my horse, and the Irishman, to use a nautical phrase, close in my wake, whooping and shouting with delight, at what he considered a narrow escape. The direction we had taken was the same as that pursued by the running buffalo; and we could only hope for ultimate safety, by reaching some huge tree, rock, or other obstacle to their progress, in advance of them. How far we would have to run to accomplish this, there was no telling; for as far as the eye could reach ahead of us, we saw nothing but the same monotonous, rolling plain. The herd, thundering on in our rear, was so numerous and broad, that an attempt to ride out of its way, by turning to the right or left, could not be thought of—as the ve-

locity of the animals would be certain to bring a wing upon us, ere we could clear their lines. There was nothing for it, then, but a dead race; and I will be free to own, the thought of this fairly chilled my blood. Exposed as I had been to all kinds of danger, I had never felt more alarmed and depressed in spirits than now. What could my companions mean by their indifference and levity? Was it possible that, having given themselves up for lost, the excitement had stupefied some, and turned the brains of others! Horrible thought! I shuddered, and turned on my horse to look back. There they stood dismounted, rifles in hand, and, just beyond them, the mighty host still booming forward. Poor fellows! all hope with them is over, I thought; and with a sigh at their fate, I withdrew my gaze and urged on my steed.

On, on we sped, for a mile or more, when I ventured another look behind me. Judge of my surprise, on beholding a long line of buffalo to the right and left, rushing away in different directions, while directly before me, nothing was visible but my friends, who, on perceiving me look back, made signs for me to halt and await them. I did so, and in a few minutes they came up laughing.

"Why, Bosson," said Black George, waggishly, "I hope as how you've run the skeer out o' ye by this time; for I'll be dog-gone ef you can't travel a few, on pertikelar occasions!"

"Oui, Monsieur," added Pierre, "vous 'ave von le plus grande—vot you call him—locomotion, eh!"

"But how, in the name of all that is wonderful, did you escape?" rejoined I.

"Just as nateral as barkin to a pup," answered Black George. "We didn't none on us hev no fear no time; and was only jest playin possum, to see ef we could make your hair stand; never 'spectin, though, you was a-goin to put out and leave us."

"But pray tell me how you extricated yourselves!" said I, feeling rather crest-fallen at my recent unheroic display.

"Why jest as easy as shootin—and jest that, hoss, and nothin else."

"Explain yourself."

"Well, then, we kind o' waited till them critters got up, so as we could see thar peepers shine, and then we all burnt powder and tumbled over two or three leaders. This skeered them as was behind, and they jest sniffed, and snorted, and sot off ayther ways like darnation. It warnt any thing wonderful—that warnt—and it 'ud been onnateral for 'em to done any thing else."

"I say, your honor," rejoined Teddy, with a significant wink; "it's like, now, we've made jackasses o' ourselves, barring your honor."

"Very like," returned I, biting my lips with vexation, "all but the barring."

The truth is, I felt much as one caught in a mean act, and I would have given no small sum to have had the joke on some one else. I detected many a quiet smile curling the lips of my companions, when they thought I did not notice them, and I knew by this they were laughing in their sleeves, as the saying is; but, being in my service, did not care to irritate my feelings by a more open display. It is very galling to a sensitive person to know he has made himself ridiculous, and is a private subject of jest with his inferiors. It is no use for one under such circumstances to fret, and foam, and show temper. No! such things only make the matter worse. The best way is to come out boldly, own to the joke, and join in the laugh. Acting upon this, I said:

"Friends, I have made a fool of myself—I am aware of it—and you are at liberty to enjoy the joke to its full extent. But remember, you must not spread it! and when we reach a station, consider me your debtor for a 'heavy wet' all round."

This proved a decided hit. All laughed freely at the time, and that was the last I heard of it, till I fulfilled my liquor pledge at Uintah Fort, when Black George ventured the toast, "Buffier and a run," which was followed by roars of mirth at my expense, and there the matter ended.

CHAPTER VIII.

A BEAUTIFUL VALLEY—A LEGEND—THE OLD TRAPPER'S STORY—FATE OF BEN ROSE—REFLECTIONS—TEDDY'S ACCOUNT OF HIMSELF—DEATH OF HIS PARENTS—THE "OULD PRAAST"—HIS FIRST LOVE—THE WAY HE CAME TO LEAVE IRELAND—ALARMING ONSET OF INDIANS.

Passing Uintah Fort, which awakened many painful recollections of what had occurred since my former visit here in company with my lost friend, we took a southerly course, and crossing Green river, continued over an undulating, mountainous country to Grand river, and thence to the most northern range of the Green Mountains, where gush forth the head waters of the Arkansas and Rio Grande. Here we came to a beautiful valley, shut in by high hills, through which flowed a limpid stream, whose banks wore a velvet covering of rich green grass and innumerable wild flowers. A little back from the stream, on either side, was a delightful grove, stretching away in rows of artificial regularity. In fact, from what I saw, and the information I gathered from my *compagnons d'voyage*, I have every reason to believe this valley was at one time a nobleman's park. I said it was shut in by hills; but there was one outlet toward the west, where the streamlet flowed gently away between two ridges. Entering through this pass, you are struck with the singular beauty of the spot; and not more so than by a huge pile of ruins on a gentle eminence away to the right. Here, as tradition goes, once stood a famous castle, belonging to a Spanish nobleman, who, for some state intrigue, was exiled his country, but who subsequently flourished here in great power. He had a beautiful daughter, to whom a descendent of the Aztecs paid court; but neither the father nor the daughter fancied him, and his suit was rejected. Enraged at this, he swore revenge; and possessing power and influence over a barbarous race, he succeeded by bribes and treachery in accomplishing his fell design. The lord of the castle, his daughter and attendants, all fell vic-

tims; and the mighty structure, touched by the devastating fingers of Time, at last became a heap of ruins. Such is a brief outline of the tradition, which I give for the benefit of future romancers.

As we entered this ancient retreat, the bright sun of a hot July day was just beginning to dip below the line of the western horizon, and his yellow light streaming along the surface of the meandering waters, gave them the appearance of a long stream of molten, quivering gold.—Every thing in and about the place seemed to possess the charm of enchantment. Beautiful and merry songsters, of all hues, warbled sweet tones among the branches of the trees, or amid the tall grass and flowers beneath them. Here and there small animals of the hare species might be seen running to and fro, while the waters of the rivulet occasionally displayed the shiny sides of a mountain trout. Take it all in all, to me the place seemed a second Eden; and when I turned my eyes upon the old ruins, my imagination at once carried me far back into the dark ages of the past, and the strange tales I had heard seemed literally enacting before me.

"Thar's been a heap o' blood spilt here—a ways, take one time with another," observed Black George, as, with our pipes in our mouths, we sat round the camp-fire in the evening.

"Faith! and it's meself, now," said Teddy, "that 'ud be ather saaing the spot as hasn't been likewise, in this haathinish part of Christendom."

"Oui, Monsieur Teddy," rejoined the Frenchman. "Ha, ha! by gar sacre! dat pe ver nice spoke—ver nice. You sall make von moche grande—vot you call him—oratore, eh?"

"But tell us what you know," said I, addressing the old trapper, whom I was anxious to draw out in one of his marvelous tales.

"Well, hoss, I'll gin ye the gist of a spree I once had here, ef Teddy'll agree to tell a story when I'm done."

"What say you, Teddy?"

"Och, now, it's not me mother's child; as was iver blist wid the gift of gab; but to make the time slip off asy, I'll do me o

trying of it, rather thin lose that of Mither Black George, barring that I'd lose what I niver had, and that 'ud be lost twice, d'ye mind!"

"As how, Teddy?"

"Why, your honor, and sure wouldn't I lose the hearing the story towld, and the story itsalf besides? and, troth, wouldn't that be two? and isn't two twice, now?"

"Very good for you; but come, Black George, go on with the tale!"

Here the old mountaineer took out his pipe, knocked out the ashes, put some of the weed into his mouth, and after twisting and turning himself into a comfortable position, thus began:

"Thar's none o' ye here, I spect, as knowed Ben Bose; and the more's the pity; for Ben was a screamer, he was, right out and out. He could eat more buffler meat, drink more whisky, chaw more bacca, cuss louder and tell bigger lies, nor any white nigger this coon ever seed—and that's a dog-gone fact. Maybe you think as how I exaggertate; but I ken jest prove all I've said and more too. Why, I've seed Ben afore now, when his meat bag war right smart empty, chaw up half a buffler, all wet down with about two gallon o' whisky, and then swear till all the trees round him 'ud git the ager, that ef he didn't git somethin to eat soon, he'd hev to go a wolfin with starvation. And as for lyin—O he could tell sich lies, could Ben, and swear to 'em so parfact, that though you knowed all the time they was lies, you'd sort o' b'lieve 'em, and wouldn't care to do nothin else; for you'd kind o' say to yourself, ef they aint facts they ort to be, and that's the same thing. Why Ben used to tell sich almighty lies and stick to 'em so long, that he'd git to believing 'em himself, he would—and then he'd quit 'em; for he war never knowed to tell any thing as he suspicioned bein true ef he could help it. The only time this child ever hearn him tell a fact, was onc't in a joke, when he said he was the biggest liar on arth; but he made up for that right purty, by swearin the next minnet he'd never told a lie in his life.

"But whar am I gittin to! Well, ye see by this, that Ben was one of the boys,

he was, and nothin else. Poor feller! he went under at last like a sojer. He gin in the pint right out thar-a-ways, whar ye see the light shinin on that big tree."

"Ah! then he died here?"

"Well he did," said the old trapper with a sigh; "but he died game, and that's authin. It's how he went out I'm goin to 'lighten ye; but I'm goin to make the story short, for somehow these here old by-gones makes me feel watery like, and I never had much incline for water, no how. Augh!"

"Ben was purty much of a gentleman, any how, and me and him, when we'd meet, used to come together like two pieces o' wax, and stick to each other like darnation, ef not more. The last time I ever seed Ben, I got on his 'run' jest back here a few mile. He was jest makin his tracks out from Taos, and this coon war jest crossin over from Bent's Fort. Me and him had two muleys apiece, and was both goin out alone, and happened to meet jest whar two trails jine.

"How is ye?" sez he, 'and whar bound?"

"Why I'm some, I sez back agin, 'and out for a venter.'

"Jest from Bent's?"

"No whar else, hoss."

"I'm from Taos. Let's splice and double the game. Augh!"

"So we jined in, and went talkin 'bout this thing and that, and tryin which could out lie tother, till we got to this here valley and camped.

"What d'ye think o' this place, any how?" sez he.

"I reckon it's a few," sez I.

"D'ye ever see any ghosts here?" sez he.

"Never, hoss."

"I hev," sez he. 'I was campin here one night, and'd jest got ready to blind my daylight, when I happ'd to cast one over thar to that old castle, and may I be sot down for a liar, ef I didn't see a live ghost standin right on that big pile, all dressed in white, and lookin orful serious right at me. At fust I tried to think it a opterkal collusion,' sez he; 'but then I knowed right off that ef I didn't see that I didn't see nothin; and ef I didn't see

nothin, what in —— did I see? Well, arter squintin at it,' he sez, 'till my eyekivers got so heavy I had to put splinters under 'em to prop 'em up, I riz up on to my travellin pins, and sot out on a explore, to see ef 'twas the ghost of a white man or nigger. On that,' sez he, 'the ghost got miffed, and makin jest one step, stood right plum beside me.'

"'Ben Bose,' sez the ghost, 'I want you.'

"'And so does the devil,' sez Ben.

"'Well, I'm him,' sez the ghost; and at that Ben sez the thing jest turned black in the face, and looked orful skeerful.

"'Hadn't you better wait till I git ready?' axed Ben.

"'No,' sez the old chap, 'I want you now;' and at that Ben sez he took hold on him, and his fingers felt hot as burnt pitch.

"'Well,' sez Ben, 'I jest clinched in to him, and sich a tuzzle you never seed. Fust me and then Brimstone, and then Brimstone and me, for two mortal hours. But, by hokey! I licked,' sez Ben, 'and the feller mosied with a flea'n his ear, and his tail hangin down like a licked puppy's.'

"'Now, boys,' continued Black George, 'as I've said afore, Ben was the all-fired-est liar on arth, or else I might a b'lieved suthin o' this; for he hadn't but jest done spinnin it, when bang, bang, bang—whizz, whizz, whizz—yeahup! yeaho! whirp! come ringin in our ears, as ef the arth was all alive with shootin niggers—and that's a scripiter, dog-gone fact, as I'm a gentleman! (Somebody gin me a chaw. Thankee! Old by-gones starts the juice—augh!)

"'O the infarnals!' sez Ben, jumpin up and showin blood on his noddle. 'I'm dead meat, sartin. But I'll hev company along,' sez he; and he ups and blaizes away, and throwed the nigh one, as was comin up, right purty.

"'Two on 'em,' sez I, 'for a pint,' and old Sweet-love gin the second one the belly-ache, instanter.

"'Now let's dodge,' sez Ben, 'and keep our hair;' and with that he grabbed hold o' me, and both on us put out for the hills.

"'But Ben 'ud got a settler, and felt top-heavy. He travelled 'bout fifty yard, with my arm in his'n, and five yellin devils

close behind us, and then he pitched on to me, and said he'd got to quit, and axed me to lift his hair* and keep it from the cussed niggers. I hated to do it like darnation—but thar wasn't no help. Ef I didn't, the skunks would; and so I outs with my butcher, and off come his scalp afore you could say beans.

"'Thankee,' sez Ben. 'Good-by, old hoss, and put out, or you'll lose two on 'em.'

"'I knowed he war right, and though I hated to quit, I seed thar was no help, and I started for the old castle yonder, fodderin Sweet-love as I went. I hadn't got fur, when I knowed by the yell the rascals had come up to him. They 'spected to make a raise thar, and two stoped for his fur, and the rest followed me. Ben was cunning though, and they didn't never tell what happ'd—them fellers didn't—I'll be dog-gone ef they did! Ben kind o' played possum, and they thought he was gone under, and so while they was foolin thar time, Ben had his eye skinned, burnt his pups'† powder, and throwed both on 'em cold right han'some, and then turned over and kicked the bucket himself. I managed to plug another jest about then, and the other two scamps sot off, instanter, for a more sal-u-bri-ous climax—they did—and ef you'd only seed 'em streak it, you'd a thought lightnin warn't no whar. Why, jest to tell the clean truth, I'll be dog-gone ef they didn't travel so fast, that a streak o' fire followed 'em, and the animals as had been snoozin on thar way, waked up and looked out, and concluded the arth was burnin most conscrimptiously, and so they put out arter them same flyin niggers. Fact, by Judas! and ef you don't b'lieve it, you ken jest bile me for a per-simmon and no questions axed."

"'O, of course,' said I, as Black George paused and looked around triumphantly, "we all believe it, and I should like to see the man that would not."

"'Faith, now,' chimed in Teddy, tipping me the wink, "the man that wouldn't believe all that asy, wouldn't believe that the

* Take his scalp.
† Pistols.

moon's made o' graan chaase, nor that Metooselah (blissings on his name of scripiter mimory!) was twice as big as a maating-house."

"Ha, ha! ver fine—ver fine," chimed in the Frenchman, rubbing his hands and giving a peculiar shrug. "I am ver moche delight. I sall believe him till I, pe von—vot you call him—gray-beard, eh!"

The other mountaineers laughed, winked at one another, but made no reply, and Black George resumed, with all the gravity of a parson:

"Well, sence you b'lieve it, I don't see no use as I'll hev to prove it—and that's suthin gained," he added, *sotto voce*.—"Well, when I seed the field was clear, I jest mosied back to Ben to see how he'd come out, fer then I didn't know. I shuffled up to him, and thar I seed the varmints lyin by his side, clean meat and nothin else, and Ben Bose as dead nor a biled kitten. I felt kind o' orful for a while, and had to play the squaw a leetle, jest for old acquaintance's sake. When I'd rubbed the water out o' my spy-glasses, I sot to work, dug a hole, and kivered Ben over decent, at least a foot below wolf-smell. Then I went a hair raisin, and lifted all the skunks' top-knots, took all thar muskets and powder, and sot down to my lone camp-fire, feelin as used up and womanish as ef I'd shuk with the ager a month. The only feel-good I had that night, was hearin the infernal wolves tearin the meat off o' them — dirty niggers' bones. The next mornin I sot on agin, and took on Ben's muleys, and it was a purty considerable time afore I made another trail in this here valley. Thar, you've got the meat o' the story, and I'm done. Augh!"

Though more familiar with mountain life and all its rough scenes, than when I first heard the old trapper relate his adventures, yet the tale he had just told in his rude, off-hand way, produced many painful feelings. The story in the main I believed to be true—at least that part which related to the death of the trapper—and I could not avoid some very unpleasant reflections. Who was Ben Bose, and how came he here? Had he any near and dear relatives? Ay, perchance he had a sister—a mother—who

knows but a wife and children!—all of whom loved him with a pure affection. He had been driven, it might be, by the stern arm of necessity, to gain a living for himself and them among the wild fastnesses of the mountains. We had toiled and struggled, braved dangers and hardships, with the bright hope of one day returning to them to part no more in life. And they, all ignorant of his untimely fate, had possibly been—nay, might he now—anxiously looking for his return. Alas! if so, they must forever look in vain. No news of him, peradventure, would ever reach their ears—and certainly no Ben Bose would ever again appear. Should they venture, however, to make inquiry among the trappers who had known him, what painful tidings would the common brief rejoinders, "he's gone under," or "been rubbed out," convey to them, and how lacerate their sinking hearts! Poor fellow! Here he slept his last sleep, unheeding and unheeded, his memory forgotten, or recalled only on an occasion like this as a fire-side pastime.

"Alas! sighed I, "what an unenviable fate! and how many hundred poor human beings like him are doomed to share it!"

I was recalled from my rumination, by hearing clamors for a story from Teddy, who, now that Black George had told his, seemed little inclined to favor us.

"Remember your promise," said I, joining in with the others.

"Faith!" answered Teddy, resorting to his peculiar habit, when puzzled or perplexed, of scratching his head: "Faith, now, gentlemen, if ye'll allow a poor body like meself to observe, it's me mother's own son as is thinking it's a mighty tight fix I'm in. Troth! ye axes me for a story, and it's hardly one meself knows to tell yees. Och! I has it!" he exclaimed, his eyes brightening with a sudden thought; "I has it, now, cleaan at me fingers enda, barring the nails which isn't counted at sich times, and won't make any difference for being longer some. I has it! I'll tell yees how I com'd to lave ould Ireland—the swaat land o' murphies and murthering fine ladies—bless their, angel sows, ivery baastly one on 'em! barring the baastly

part, now, which I ounly mintioned by way of smoothing the sintence."

"Yes, yes, give us the yarn," cried a voice; "and don't spin it too long, for it's gittin late."

"Ay, Teddy," I added, "I think that will do—only make it short."

"By gar!" rejoined Pierre, having recourse to his box, "I tink so, Monsieur Cut him off so, von, two, tree feets, and den him be von ver exsallent good, eh!—Je le crois."

"Will, ye sae, thin, gintlemen," resumed Teddy, "to begin at the beginning, as Father Murphy used to say whin he wipt to carve a chicken tail foremost, I was born in ould Ireland, not a tousand miles from Cor-r-k, ayther ways. Me father—pace to his ashes!—barring I niversaan the proof he was me father, and there was dispuete about it—was a gintleman laborer, as had plenty to do all his life and little to ate. He loved whisky, the ould chap—spaking riverintly—and one day he took it into his head to die, by token as he said there wasn't air enough for ivery body to brathe, and he'd jist sacrifice himself a marthyr for the good of others. Will, me mæther—Heaven rist her sow!—she become a widdier in coorse, and took on mighty bad about her Saint Dennis, as she called me dead father—though it's little of a saint as she thought him whin living—and so to drown her sorrow, she took to the bothel too, and soon afther died spaachless, calling for wather, wather, the ounly time I iver heerd her mintion it, and by token of that I knowed she was uncanny."

"Will, gintlemen, ye sae, by raason of both me parents dying, I was lift a hilpless infant orphan of fourteen, widout father or mother, or a shilling in me pocket, or a divil of a pocket in me coat, barring that it wasn't a coat at all, at all, ounly rags sowed the gither, jist. Me father's and mother's estate comprehinded ounly a bed, some pots and kithles, two broken stools, and a table as had it's ligs cut off for kindling-wood. So, ye sae, that was soon sittled, and thin I was lift a poor, houseless wanderer, widout a place to go to, or a relation in the wide wor-r-ld, barring three brothers as was away, an un-

cle, two aunts, and about a dozen cousins; all poorer nor meself. Will, I took to crying for a living, and a mighty nice time I had on't, till one day Father Murphy come'd along—blessing on his name, the ould spalpeen!—and axed me would I like to come and live wid him?"

"Faith! maybe it wasn't long saying yis I was; and so the ould praaast took me home wid him, and said if I'd work right har-r-d, and be a good boy, I should live as will as his pige—which was mighty will, he said, for they got fat on't; and so did I, barring that all the fish as crept on me bones over the night, was worked off o' me through the day. Howiver, it's bether nor starving to death, I sez to meself, barring it's not much choice I sees in it, and one's jist as asy as the tother, and a good bit asier."

"Now's you're afther having a short story, I'll skip over four years, and till ye what turned up thin, by way of variety."

"The praaast, Father Murphy, ye sae, had a beauthiful niece, as was jist my age, barring that she was a couple o' years younger. Now ye must know I iver had a fondness for the female sex, and I kind o' took to liking Kathleen by raason of natheral instinct. And Kathleen, the darling! she sort o' took to liking me be-times, more by token I was a dacent body, and she hadn't inny one bether to like; and so betwaan us, we both thought of each other waking, and dramed about 'em in our slaap. Now divil a word did the praaast know of it, at all, at all, and that was all the bether for the pair of us."

"At last I got to making love to her, and tilling her she was too swaat a being to be living all alone by hersilf jist, and that if her poor parints should be taken away like mine was, and she become a poor orphan like meself, what would she be aRher doing for a protector, and all thim things. She cried, she did, and she sez:

"'Teddy,' sez she, 'what would become o' me?'"

"'It's not knowing,' I sez, 'and it's a mighty har-r-d thing to go by guess work on sich occasions.'

"At that she cried the more, by token her inner faalings was touched, and axed

me would I contrive a way to git her out o' her troubles.

"Ah, faith," sez I, all of a sudden, "I have it now!"

"What is it, Teddy, dear?" sez she.

"Och! come to your Teddy's arms, and he'll be father, and mother, and victuals and dhrink to yees, my own swaat Kathleen!" I sez."

"Aha!" interrupted the excited Frenchman, "dat vas von ver nice bon exsallent coup de grace, eh! Certainment, je le crois."

"Ah, the darling!" pursued Teddy—"blissings on her sowl, be it where it will, and pace to her ashes, if she's dead, which I'm not knowing, and hoping conthrawise—she fill right into me arms, and commenced crying jist like wather dripping through a seive. And thin, ye sae, I cried too, more by token o' saaing her cry, nor that I felt bad like at all, jist. Will, I wiped me eyes wid me sleeve, and had jist begun to say comfortable things to her, whin who should happen along but the ould chap of a praast, her uncle!

"Och, ye spalpeen! and what is it ye're at there, ye villain!" sez he.

"At this Kathleen give a awful scream, and rin for the house, laving me alone to fight the ould tiger-cat as best I could. I filt mighty small jist thin, ye'd bether believe, and wished wid all me heart an earthquake would open and swaller the pair of us. I saan the praast was in a dangerous timper, and I knowed something was coming, asy as squaaling to a pig. But I'll not provoke his riverince, I sez to mesilf, or he'll jist murther me outright, widout judge or jury.

"Who are ye?" sez he, coming up and taking me by the collar of me coat, baring that me coat had no collar, and I stood in me shirt sleeves, jist. 'Who are ye?' sez he; and thin he shook me till me teeth rattled.

"I'm Teddy O'Lagherty, your riverince, sez I.

"Ye're a baastly dog!" sez he.

"Troth! and so was me father before me," sez I, 'and hisn before that,'—for I wanted to plaze him.

"Ye're a blaggard!" sez he.

"That comes by nather," sez I.

"Ye're a scoundrel—a villain—a maan, contimptible spalpeen!" sez he.

"Sure, and that comes by associations," sez I.

"At this Father Murphy got as rid in the face as a baat, and 'pon me sowl I thought he would swaller me widout cooking or buther.

"What was yees doing here wid Kathleen?" sez he.

"Lov'ing her, your riverince," sez I.

"And how dare you love sich as she?" sez he.

"Troth! and I'm thinking her as good as mesilf, your riverince," I sez.

"At that I thought the ould praast would choke himsilf, he held his grip so tight up-on his own throat. Jabers! but it was rejoicing, I was, that it wasn't mesilf's he fingered that ways.

"Teddy," sez he, afther a bit, and spak- ing more calm like, though I knowed the devil was behind it all: 'Teddy, I'm going to have yees whipped to death, and thin sint away for a baastly vagabone, to arn yees own living in the cowlid world,' sez he.

"Jist as plases your riverince," sez I. 'But sure, ye'll be afther knowing I've done many worse thing than love the swaat Kathleen, blissings on her sowl!'

"And do ye raaly love her?" sez he, in a softer voice.

"Och, your riverince, and 'is it mesilf as loves good aetables, now?"

"Will, thin," sez he, 'for the sake of me niece, as is the apple o' me eye, I'll pardon yees, on one condition.'

"And, sure, what might that be, your riverince?" sez I.

"That ye'll lave the counthry, and niver come into it agin," sez he.

"What," sez I, faaling me anger rising, 'and lave darling Kathleen all alone by hersilf, widout a protector! Be jabers! Father Murphy, it's me own mother's son as 'ud sae me own head cut off first, and thin I wouldn't.'

"What," sez he, gitting his dander riz agin, 'and does ye dare to talk that ways to me, a praast of the gospel, and I as has raised ye from poverty to be me own sar- ving man, and gin ye the bist of ivery

thing as was lift whin we'd all aeten, and the pigs had done? Say that to me face, as has been a father to yees, ye ungrateful varlet! I'll have ye horse-whipped out of town, so I will!

"And if ye does," sez I, 'I'll staaal around and rin off wid Kathleen, as sure's me name's Teddy O'Lagherty, and Dennis O'Lagherty was me father'—which wasn't so sure, d'ye mind! but the praast didn't know that.

"This put Father Murphy to-thinking agin, and afther a bit he sez, quite amiable like:

"And sure, ye wouldn't be afther doing that, now, to one as has trated ye iver wid sich respect, Mистер O'Lagherty?" sez he.

"Howly murther! thinks I, what's coming now! Ayther a mighty stor-r-m, or sunshine sure—for I'd niver hearn the praast spaak that ways afore.

"Mистер O'Lagherty," sez the praast agin, 'I love ye.'

"Faith! sez I, 'and it's glad I am to hear the likes, more by raason ye niver showed the faaling at all, at all.'

"Will, ye think of gitting Kathleen—but it's all in your eye,' sez he. 'She don't care for ye, me son!'

"That's a lie,' sez I, 'begging your riverince's pardon for spaaking plain Inglish!'

"Father Murphy bit his lips, and his two eyes looked jist like fire-balls, they did.

"Will,' sez he, sez Father Murphy, 'we'll jist let that pass; but she can niver be yourn, Teddy, by raason of her being barrained to another.'

"That alters the case,' sez I.

"It does,' sez he. 'Now ye sae, me son, ye can't make nothing by staying round here—not a bit of it—and as I maan to do the gintaal by yees, I'd like to be knowing what ye'd ax to lave the counthry, and have the money down?'

"And, sure, where'd I go?' sez I.

"To Amirica,' sez he.

"Will, I'd al'ays heerd of Amirica—and what a blissed counthry it was for liberty, ladies and poor folks—and the notion plazed me; and besides, I knowed what

the praast said about my niver gitting Kathleen was throe. So I thinks it over a wee bit, and sez:

"Why, Father Murphy,' sez I, 'saaing it's you, and you're a praast too, and a gintleman I respect, (I had to lie a little, d'ye mind!) I'll go if ye'll give me dacent clothes, pay me passage out, and five pounds to dhrink your riverince's health.'

"He wanted to baat me down, but I saan I had him, and I swore divil a step would I stir widout he'd do me axing. At last sez he:

"Teddy, I'll do it, if ye'll agree to start right off, and niver sae Kathleen agin—otherwise I won't.'

"It's har-r-rd, so it is,' sez I; but I was afeard he'd back out if I didn't accept soon, and so I towld him, 'It's a bargain, your riverince.'

"Stay a minnet, thin,' sez he; and he rin into the house and brought me out five sovereigns. 'These'll pay ivery thing,' sez he; 'and so lave, now, and niver show your dirty face here agin, or I'll have you up for staaaling.'

"Troth!' sez I, faaling like a lord, wid me hands on the goold, 'it's not throubled wid me ye'll be agin soon. The top o' the morning to your riverince!' and so I left him.

"Will, to wind up, I come'd to Amirica, and spint all me fortune, and thin wint to work and earned more money, and thin wint travelling to sae what I could find, whin, blissings on me luck! (turning to me) I fill into your honor's sarvice, for which good bit of accident howly Mary be thanked! That's me story."

At the moment Teddy concluded, and ere a single comment or remark had escaped our lips, a frightful volley of musket balls flew round us like hail, and one of our party, springing up with a yell, fell back a corpse.

CHAPTER IX.

RUN FOR COVER—A REMARKABLE VOLLEY—
 ASSAIL THE FOE—WONDERFUL SUCCESS
 —BLOODY TROPHIES—FRIGHT OF OUR
 ANIMALS—A DILEMMA—UNEXPECTED RE-
 INFORCEMENT—ALARM, ROUT, AND AL-
 MOST TOTAL ANNIHILATION OF THE IN-
 DIANS—THE WONDERFUL HORSEMAN—AN
 OLD ACQUAINTANCE—SPOILS OF THE VIC-
 TORS—ANIMALS RECOVERED—ROUND THE
 CAMP FIRE—MORE TIDINGS OF PRAIRIE
 FLOWER, ETC., ETC.

"Indians," was the simultaneous cry which burst from our lips, as each man grasped his rifle and sprang to his feet.

"Tree, boys," cried Black George, just as a series of terrific yells resounded on all sides, and a host of dusky figures were seen bearing down upon us from every direction but one, which seemed providentially left open for our safety. Toward this, the only point of compass possible for us to escape without a personal conflict, we fled precipitately, and soon reached a small clump of trees, which afforded us immediate protection, leaving our dead comrade in possession of the savages. With a shout of triumph, a dozen of the latter rushed up to the unfortunate trapper, and one of the number instantly tore off his scalp, while several others buffed their knives in his body to make sure of their victim.

Meantime the rest of the party, which consisted of some thirty in all, made for our retreat, uttering demoniac yells of barbarous exultation, doubtless fancying us an easy prey.

"Now, boys," cried Black George, in a stentorian voice, "every man pick a nigger, and give the —— skunks h——!"

His advice did not need a repetition; for scarcely were the words out of his mouth, when crack went our six rifles, and, almost miraculous to record, six of the foremost assailants rolled howling in the dust—each man, by a friendly providence, having selected a separate target with a fatal aim. This was a result as unlooked for by us, as alarming to our foes, who suddenly halted and rent the air with howls

of rage and dismay. While it staggered them, it gave us courage, and in the moment of their indecision and our triumph, the voice of Black George was heard shouting the inspiring words:

"Well done, boys! Foller me, and let us bark our pups and butcher at close quarters!"

Saying this, he sprang forward with a yell, a proceeding we all imitated, and before the astonished savages were fully aware what was taking place, they found us in their midst, shouting, shooting, and cutting, with a daring, activity and ferocity they had probably never seen equalled. So suddenly had we become assailants in turn, and so vigorously did we press upon them, that they instantly wavered, became confused, and after a slight resistance, took to flight, leaving four more of their number companions to the first unfortunate six. Being all more or less experienced in Indian warfare, we were consequently wise enough not to follow them, well knowing they would return to the charge as soon as pressed into cover. Both of Black George's companions had been wounded in the *melee*, but not dangerously, and we now congratulated ourselves, with a triumphant shout, on our success.

"Reckon they'll stay put till we ken butcher and raise these here dog's hair," said the old trapper; and forthwith all set to work, save myself, in killing the wounded and scalping the slain. When this bloody business was over, Black George observed:

"This heyar coon wonders how the niggers feels now! Maybe they've got a notion in thar heads that we're some in a bar-fight. Sarved 'em right, the —— possums! What business'd they to be pitching into us, when we was tellin stories and troublin nobody. Augh!"

"By gar! I tink so," added the Frenchman, as he gave his olfactory organ an extra dose, and his shoulders an unusually vigorous shug. "Ha, ha, Monsieur Blake Shorge—you say ver moche true, sarve him right. Certainment, he got von most tam ver good exsallent—vot you call him—drubbing, eh! Ha, ha! certainment."

"Och, now, but didn't the blaggards look a wee bit astonished, the spalpeens!" joined in Teddy. "Faith! but I thought whin they rin, maybe as it was a race they was rinnin for whisky or the likes."

"Well," said I, "we have been fortunate so far, that is certain; and now let us take care for the future. Load quick, my friends, and let us bring our animals together, or the Indians may rally and dash upon them, and leave us in a bad condition."

"Right, boy," cried Black George, with a start: "I'd forgot. What a old fool I is sometimes. Quick! or the skunks will head us—for I knows 'em of old."

Fortunately for us, the Indians had not as yet made a seizure of our horses, (which, at the time of the attack, were quietly feeding in the valley, but now running to and fro and snuffing the air,) thinking, I suppose, that victory for them was certain, and well knowing that an attempt to take the animals first, would create an alarm, and perhaps defeat their design of making us their victims. Our possibilities, too, had escaped them, probably from being concealed under the brushwood collected for our fire, and also from their being put to flight so suddenly. All these were certainly matters for congratulation; and hurriedly removing our property from out the fire-light, I ordered Teddy and Pierre to guard it with their lives, while the rest of us, having reloaded our rifles, set off to collect our animals.

We had not been any too soon in this matter; for the Indians, having recovered from their first alarm and confusion, we now espied dodging from tree to tree, with the evident intention of getting between us and the beasts, and so capturing the latter.

"Heyar's a fix," observed Black George, making a halt. "Ef we go for'ard, the cussed varmints will pick us off and make meat on us; and ef we stay here-a-ways, they'll catch our critters and leave us to foot it. I'll be dog-gone ef it don't look like a dilemmer, as I hearn a scholar say onc't—that's a fact."

It was a dilemma, sure enough, and how to act was a matter of great moment.—

We could not charge upon the savages as we had done before, for they had "treed" in every direction, and, as Black George observed, would be sure to pick us off singly. To lose our cavallada was not to be thought of, for this would in a measure place us in their power. What was to be done! Several propositions were made by one and another, but all as soon rejected as being impracticable.

Meantime the Indians were not inactive, and though the night was without moon, we could occasionally perceive a figure fitting before us like a shadow, and the circle they had made around our horses gradually narrowing. It was a time for action of some kind, and yet we stood irresolute. At length the old trapper suggested that we should separate, and each shift for himself in the manner best calculated to annoy our foes. This was the best plan as yet proposed, and was instantly adopted. We had already begun to put it in execution, when, to our astonishment, a small body of horsemen, with loud yells, suddenly dashed out from a distant thicket, and separating, bore down upon the rear of our enemies. The next moment we heard the sharp crack of fire-arms, mingled with the shouts of the assailants, and yells of terror from the surprised Indians, who instantly took to flight in all directions. In their confusion, a portion ran towards us, and were received by a well directed volley, which wounded one, killed two, and increased the alarm of the survivors, who instantly changed their course and fled toward the western hills, only to find their flight intercepted by an occasional horseman.

"Don't know who fights for us," cried Black George, "and don't care a kick—but know they's some—and so let's arter and disconfumicate the — skunks all we ken."

Saying this, the trapper set forward in eager chase of the flying foe, an example we all followed, and for the next quarter of an hour the valley presented an indistinguishable scene of confusion and excitement. Nothing of life could be seen but flying fugitives, hotly pursued by a bitter enemy, whose only mercy was instant

death; and nothing heard but shrieks, yells, groans and shouts of triumph—these from victors, those from vanquished—together with the constant sharp crack of fire-arms, and the clashing of knives, as here and there two met in personal and deadly conflict. To use a military phrase, the rout was total, the enemy badly beaten, and the victorious skirmishers only withdrew from the field of conflict for want of a foe.

During the *melee*, we had all become mixed up, and but for the distinguishing difference of color and equipments, we might, owing to the darkness, have made sad havoc with our best friends. But the new comers were whites, and there was no difficulty in distinguishing between them and the savages. But who were they, and how came they here so opportunely for us, were enigmas I had no time nor opportunity to solve till the fray was over. Whoever they were, they were brave to a fault—if I may call that courage a fault which is reckless of self-preservation—and they fought like demons. One of their party, whom I took to be leader, displayed an agility, intrepidity and fierceness I had never seen equaled but once. Mounted on a fiery steed, which seemed to comprehend his slightest wish, he rushed among the frightened savages, and twice, as he passed near me, did I observe him bend from his saddle, seize the scalp-lock of an Indian, stab him in the neck, and then, with a motion quick as thought, cut around and tear off the bloody scalp, without scarcely checking the speed of his horse.

Already I fancy I see the reader smile, and say such feats are impossible. I do not blame him; for had I not seen them myself, I should require more than one person's evidence to convince me of their possibility, to say nothing more.

A long, loud shout at last attested our complete victory, when I, in company with my companions, approached our deliverers, to return our sincere thanks for their timely aid. Moving up to the personage I supposed to be leader, who now sat quietly on his horse, surrounded by a dozen stalwart figures, all mounted, I said:—

"Whom have I the honor to thank for this invaluable assistance, at a point of time so critical to us?"

"Why, as to thanks," answered the one addressed, in a voice that seemed familiar to me, "I don't 'spect thar's any needed; but ef you thank any body, thank all—for every man's done his duty, and nothing more."

"Methinks, sir, I know your voice," I rejoined, "but I cannot see your features."

"Well, it struck me as I'd heard your's afore," returned the intrepid horseman; and he bent forward in his saddle, for a closer scrutiny of my person.

At this moment Black George came up, and casting one glance at the speaker, exclaimed:

"Kit Carson, or I'm a nigger! Reckon you knows old Black George, don't ye?" and in an instant the two were shaking hands with the hearty familiarity of old friends.

"Kit Carson!" cried I, in surprise. "Well, sir," I might have known it was you, from your manner of fighting;" and in turn I seized his hand with one of my strongest grips.

"You have a leetle the advantage of me," said Kit, when I had done.

"I presume you have not forgotten Frank Leighton, and the fight at Bitter Cottonwood?" I replied.

"Good heavens! is it indeed you? Why, I thought you war rubbed out thar, and I've never heard any thing of you sence. I'm glad to see you, sir;" and an extra grip and shake of the hand, convinced me he meant what he said. "I'll have a talk with you, by-and-by; but just now we mountain men hev got a right smart chance at scalping—arter which I'm at your service."

While most were occupied in the barbarous practice (I can never call it by a milder term,) of scalping the slain, I called Teddy, Pierre, and one or two others to my aid, and proceeded to collect and picket the frightened animals. This was no easy task, and it was at least an hour before order and quiet were again restored. In the meantime the Indians were

scalped, and rifled of every thing valuable, and then left to feed the wolves, some of which had already begun their feast, and were fast being joined by others. Of the slain, we counted in all twenty-three carcasses; so that it was evident but few, perhaps only five or six, escaped—and these, doubtless, more or less wounded. Of my party, not one was injured in this last affray; but several of the horsemen had received cuts and stabs, though none of a dangerous character. When we had all collected around the camp-fire, the wounded were looked to, and their wounds dressed as well as circumstances would allow. This done, we proceeded to bury the mountaineer, who had been killed, as the reader will remember, at the onset. As soon as all these matters were arranged, we squatted down in a circle round the fire, to talk over the events of the last two hours.

I now had an opportunity of conversing with Carson, which I eagerly embraced. I informed him, in brief, of all that had occurred since we last met, and listened to a hasty recital of his own adventures, the principal part of which referred to Fremont's first expedition, and is already before the public. He said, that after parting with Fremont, he had been engaged to conduct a party to California, and was on his return to St. Louis, by way of Uintah Fort, St. Vrain, and Fort Laramie, when, stopping at the first mentioned, he found the present party of adventurers anxious to obtain a guide to Taos, and thence to Santa Fe, and that they had induced him to accompany them as far as Taos. He said that they had been on our trail for some time, but had not come in sight of us, until the present evening, when, camping just the other side of one of the surrounding hills, he, in a short ramble, had accidentally discovered our camp-fire, and had determined on joining us in the morning. The attack on us by the Indians had been heard, and as soon as possible, thereafter, the whole party had come to our aid, with what result the reader knows.

He further added, it was rumored that Fremont had begun his second expedition, and

was even now on his route westward by way of Bent's Fort—that he was anxious to join him—and that if an arrangement could be effected to do without him, he would in the morning cross over to the valley of the Arkansas, and take a direct course for Bent's.

In answer to my inquiries concerning Prairie Flower and her tribe, he said he had not met with any of them since the battle of Bitter Cottonwood; but that he had heard of their being in this part of the country quite recently, and was inclined to believe them somewhere in the neighborhood of Taos at the present time. With regard to my friend, he expressed much sorrow for his loss, but could give me no information concerning him.

I was now more than ever anxious to find the Mysterious Tribe; for something whispered me that Prairie Flower had been in search of my friend—or at least was now with her tribe on that errand—or, if neither of these surmises should prove correct, I could perhaps prevail upon them to assist me. At all events, I determined on finding them as soon as possible, and accordingly resolved to start at daylight, and push through to Taos with all haste.

Busy thought prevented me from sleeping that eventful night, and at the first tinge of morning light I awoke my companions for the journey. As we all had one destination, the party of Carson consented to part with him and join mine; and shaking my hand, with a hearty prayer for my success, he set off alone over the mountains, while we continued down the valley of the Rio Grande.

CHAPTER X.

ARRIVE AT TAOS—DISAPPOINTMENT—A SINGULAR CHARACTER—JOYFUL TIDINGS—SOUTHWARD BOUND—SANTA FE—ADDITIONAL NEWS—ON THE RIGHT COURSE—PERPLEXITY—ALL RIGHT—TRIUMPHANT SUCCESS—RETURN TO THE NORTH.

As our party was now quite formidable, we had no fears of again being attacked,

so long as we remained together. On the fourth day from quitting the valley described in the previous chapter, we entered the small village of Taos. Here I found a *melange* of all nations and colors, consisting of trappers, hunters, traders, adventurers, &c.

Mingling with all classes, I at once proceeded to make inquiries regarding the present whereabouts of the Great Medicine Tribe, and also if any had seen or heard of a certain young man (giving a full description of Huntly) being taken prisoner by the Indians or Mexicans. To my first inquiry, I received from several the answer, that a singular tribe of Indians, among whom was a beautiful female, had been seen in the vicinity within a few weeks; but where they now were, or in what direction, none could tell. As to the latter, each replied with a shake of the head, that he could tell me nothing. It was not an uncommon thing, they informed me, for a white man—an adventurer—to be taken, robbed, held for ransom, knocked on the head, or sold into slavery; but no one remembered hearing of, or seeing such as I had described.

To me this news produced great disappointment; for, from some cause which I can not explain, I had been sanguine of getting information of Huntly so soon as I should arrive at Taos. Here, then, was a complete overthrow of my most ardent hopes! and I now felt keenly the sandiness of the foundation on which I had reared my expectations. I might pass a long life in a wearisome and dangerous search, and be no wiser of Huntly's fate at last.—There was still a faint hope that Prairie Flower, who I doubted not had gone south with her tribe for this purpose, had gained some information of him; and at once I determined to hunt her out, with the additional resolve, that should my surmises prove correct, and she had failed also, to set out on my return forthwith. But where should I begin to look for her, was the next question. She might be as difficult to find as Huntly, and there was no certainty of my ever seeing either again.

The day following my arrival in Taos, I was passing along one of the streets, pon-

dering upon these matters; when I chanced to meet an old mountaineer; whom I did not remember having seen before. Determined to leave no stone unturned, I accosted him with the same inquiry I had made of the others. He stopped, looked at me attentively a moment, as if to comprehend my questions, and then in a musing, half soliloquising manner, replied:

"'Bout the Injins, don't know—think I've seed such—won't be sartin—don't like to besartin when I aint. Yes! think I hev seed 'em—yes, know I hev—but it war two year ago, and way up north a — of a ways: Fact. 'Bout the other chap, don't know;—yes—no—stop—let me see—y-e-s, I reckon—aint sartin—what was he like?"

Here I proceeded to give a description of my friend, with what conflicting feelings of hope and fear I leave the reader to imagine. In fact, my voice became so tremulous, that several times I was forced to stop and put my hand to my throat, to prevent, as it were, my heart from strangling me.

"Git cool, and jest say that thar over agin," rejoined the other, when at length I tremblingly paused for his answer.

I repeated it twice, before he seemed satisfied.

"Now," says he, "I'll think—let me see!" and he deliberately proceeded to take up each point of my description, and apply it to some person he had seen, making his own comments as he went along.—"Slim and graceful—let me see!—yes—no—ye-a-s—rather reckon he was—know it—fact. 'Bout twenty-three—stop—let me think!—yes—reckon he might be—know he was—sartin. Good face—han'-some featur's—stop—a—y-e-s—know it—settled."

Thus he went on until I found my patience completely exhausted, and was about to interrupt him, when he suddenly exclaimed:

"Seen him, stranger—sartin as life—know I hev."

"Where? where?" cried I breathlessly, grasping his hand.

"San Domingo."

"When?"

"'Bout a year ago."

"God be thanked! You are sure?"

"Sartin, or I'd never said it."

"Well, well—what became of him?"

"It's more'n I ken say—'spect he war made a slave. A — old Greaser had him, and wanted to sell or git him ransomed. He axed too high, and nobody traded. I pitied the poor feller, but I hadn't no money, and thar warn't no Yankees thar then to help me out in takin him. Old Greaser went sothe; and some I axed shuk thar heads, and said that that old scamp war a robber chief, and had lots o' help close by. All I know, stranger."

"But do you think he is alive now?"

"Can't say, ye see, 'cause don't know. Never say what don't know. Any thing more to ax, stranger?"

"Nothing that you can answer," I replied; and thanking him kindly for his information, I placed a gold coin in his hand, and hurriedly left him to seek out my companions—my spirits, so lately depressed, now buoyant and bounding.

The party which had joined mine at the valley, had not yet quitted Taos; and calling all together, I proceeded to lay before them my joyful intelligence. When I had done, Black George gave a shout, Teddy a whoop, Pierre shrugged his shoulders and doubled his dose of snuff, and every one expressed his delight in his own peculiar way. The Rovers—so our new companions termed themselves—were nearly all young men from the States, who had come west more for adventure than speculation; and as I had become a favorite with them in the short time of our acquaintance, they at once volunteered me their assistance, an offer I accepted with tears of gratitude.

Ordering out our animals, we mounted and set forward immediately, and, although the day was partly advanced, succeeded in reaching Santa Cruz about nightfall. By noon of the next day we rode into Santa Fe—a place of much importance and notoriety, from being centrally located on the great caravan route from Missouri to Southern California. At the time of which I write, Santa Fe contained some four or five thousand inhabitants, and was the em-

porium of the northern trade between New Mexico and Missouri. However, it was any thing but an agreeable place—its inhabitants being mostly made up of the off-scourings of the earth—without religion, morality, or any other noble quality. To gamble, steal, rob and murder, were among the refined amusements of this most worthy set. To make matters still worse, there had recently been some difficulty between the Mexicans and the citizens of the United States, and on both sides existed a bitter hostility, which was productive of the most violent crimes. It was dangerous for any one to traverse the streets alone, particularly after nightfall; for at every corner he turned, he knew himself in danger of assassination. The Indians here generally sided with the Mexicans, and looked upon all Yankees as their worst enemies.

Such was the state of affairs at Santa Fe on my arrival; and the same inimical feeling, to a greater or less extent, prevailed in all the adjacent towns. As myself and party had no desire to quarrel with any one, we took care to be civil, always together, well armed, and to mind our own business on all occasions; and in consequence we fortunately escaped without molestation.

Making several inquiries in Santa Fe, and gaining nothing further of Huntly or the Mysterious Tribe, we pursued our course southward through Cinega to Sag Domingo.

Here the story of the old trapper was so far confirmed, that several persons remembered having seen the notorious robber, Gonzalez, in possession of a handsome young prisoner, whom he was anxious to dispose of, declaring he could not find it in his heart to kill him, and could not afford to part with him without recompense; that no one there being disposed to purchase him, he had gone further south; but what had since become of him, none could afford me any information. In answer to my inquiry concerning Prairie Flower, I learned that some time ago she had been seen in this vicinity with her tribe—that she had made inquiries similar to mine—and that all had departed southward.

This news almost made me frantic with joy. Huntly, I argued, was living. Prairie Flower, like some kind angel, had gone to his rescue; and it might be, that even now he was free and enjoying her sweet companionship. The joyful thought, as I said but now, nearly drove me mad with excitement; and all my olden hopes were not only revived, but increased by faith to certainties.

Hurrying forward to San Bernilla on the Rio Grande, I heard nearly the same tale as at San Domingo; and following down the river to Torreon, listened to its repetition—and at Valencia, Nutrias and Alamilla likewise. At Valverde, the next village below the last mentioned, I could gain no intelligence whatever. This led me to think Gonzalez had disposed of his prisoner between the two villages—or, what was just as probable, had taken another course. For what I knew, he might have crossed the Rio Grande and struck off into the Sierra de los Mimbres—a mountain chain only a few miles to the west of us, whose lofty, snow-covered peaks rose heavenward to a vast height, and had been distinctly visible for several days. If he had taken this direction, the chances of tracing him successfully appeared much against us. It was equally as probable, too, he had gone eastward—perhaps to Tabira—a small village some seventy miles distant. But which course should we take? Consulting my friends, we at length resolved to retrace our steps to Alamilla, make inquiries of all we might meet on the way, and then, if we could gain no satisfactory information, to strike out for Tabira on a venture.

This matter settled, we at once turned back, but had not proceeded far, when we met a couple of Mexican hunters. As I understood a smattering of Spanish, I at once addressed them, and, in course of conversation, gained the joyful tidings, that a prisoner, such as I described, had been purchased by a Mexican, living not more than three miles distant, and that in all probability we should find him there now. The path to his residence having been pointed out, I rewarded each of my informants with a gold coin, and then driv-

ing the spurs into our horses, in less than half an hour we reined them in before a small hacienda, much to the terror of the inmates, who believed we had come to rob and murder them. Assuring the proprietor, a rather prepossessing Mexican, that in case he gave us truthful answers no harm should be done him—but that, being partially informed already, the slightest prevarication would cost him his tongue and ears, if not his head—I proceeded to question him.

Thus forewarned, and much in fear of the execution of the threat, he gave straight-forward replies, to the effect that more than a year ago Gonzalez had paid him a visit, and offered him an American at a small price, declaring that if he did not purchase, he would knock the prisoner on the head without more ado, as he had cost him more time than he was worth; that at first, he (the proprietor of the hacienda) had refused to buy, having as many slaves as he cared about; but that something in the young man's appearance, and the appeal he made with his eye, had touched his feelings, and the bargain had at length been struck. He farther stated, that the prisoner had not been treated like the rest of his slaves, but with more respect, and had behaved himself like a gentleman and won his confidence. A short time ago, he continued, a small tribe of Indians had called upon him, and offered a ransom for the prisoner, stating he was an old acquaintance; that he had accepted the offer, and the prisoner had departed with them toward the north, in fine spirits.

This was the substance of the information I gathered here; but it was enough to intoxicate me with joy, and was received by the rest of the party with three hearty cheers, much to the astonishment of the old Mexican, who did not comprehend what was meant.

The prisoner was Huntly—there was no doubt of that—and the Great Medicine was the Indian tribe which had set him free. The next thing was to go in quest of them. They had gone toward the north, and had had some time the start of us. It might be difficult to find them—but nothing, I fancied, in comparison with the task I

had first undertaken of tracing out my friend. The Rovers agreed to accompany me as far as Santa Cruz, when, after having seen me so far safe, they designed returning to Santa Fe.

It is unnecessary for me to detail each day's journey. Suffice, that in due time we arrived at Santa Cruz, where I parted from the Rovers, with many expressions of gratitude on my part, and heart-felt wishes for my success on theirs. My party was thus reduced to six; and as two of this number preferred remaining here to going north immediately, I settled with them at once, still retaining Teddy, Pierre and Black George.

With these I again set forward rapidly, making inquiries of all I met. For two or three days I could get no tidings of the Mysterious Tribe, and I began to have doubts of being on the right course. Fortunately, before we had decided on changing our direction, we met a party of mountaineers, who informed us that a few weeks before they had seen a small tribe of friendly Indians, somewhere between the Spanish Peaks and Pueblo, among whom were a white man and a beautiful female half-breed—that they were moving very leisurely toward the north—and that in all probability they were now encamped somewhere in the beautiful valley of the Arkansas.

Elated with the most extravagant anticipations of soon realizing our sanguine hopes, we again pressed forward for two or three days, and leaving the lofty Spanish Peaks to our right, tracing up the head-waters of the Rio Mora, we struck off over the Green Mountains and camped at last in the far-famed valley of the Arkansas, within full view of the eternal snowcrowned Pike's Peak.

CHAPTER XI.

MORE CHEERING NEWS—A FRANTIC RIDE—
IN THE EMBRACE OF MY FRIEND—EFFECT
OF THE MEETING—SAD TIDINGS FOR HUNT-
LY—DEEP EMOTION—STORY OF HIS CAP-
TIVITY AND RELEASE—HIS SECOND MEET-
ING WITH PRAIRIE FLOWER—OLD FEEL-
INGS RENEWED—LOVE, ETC.

For two days after reaching the valley, our search proved fruitless, and the reader can better imagine my feelings than I describe them. My anxiety to see my long lost friend was so great, that I could not rest at night, and barely devour enough food to support nature. A consultation had resulted in shaping our course up the river, and on the third day we had the unbounded delight to meet with a couple of trappers, who informed us they had seen the Great Medicine Tribe only two days before, and that they were then camped on a small creek, in a lovely valley, at the base of the southwestern mountain chain, surrounding what is known as the South Park, not more than sixty or seventy miles distant. Never can I forget the feelings I experienced, nor the wild, prolonged, and deafening cheers which resounded at this announcement. Each of my companions seemed frantic with joy; and as for myself, I could have clasped the informants, rough and half civilized as they were, to my beating heart.

Becoming at last a little more tranquil, we managed to impress upon ourselves a brief description of the route to be taken, and then set forward with the wildness of mad-men just loosened from an insane asylum. On, on we dashed, over plain heath and ridges, through thickets and streams, till the blowing and reeling of our animals warned us we must be more prudent, or their lives, at least, would be the penalty of our rashness.

Throughout that day, nothing was thought of, nothing talked of, but our fortunate adventure, and the speedy prospect of gaining what we sought. Time, distance, every thing was overlooked; and when the sun went down, it appeared to us the day had been by half the shortest of the sea-

son. But very different was it with our horses, which were so exhausted from hard riding, that serious fears were entertained lest we had ruined them. But a thorough rubbing down, and an hour or two of rest revived them; and we at last had the satisfaction of seeing them crop the plentiful blade with their wonted gusto.

I slept none that night; in fact, did not even lie down; but most of the time paced the earth to and fro before the fire-light, anxiously praying for the dawn to resume our journey. My companions, however, slept soundly; for they had far less to think of than I, and moreover were sorely fatigued.

At the first blush of morning I roused them, and again mounting we set forward. As both Pierre and Black George knew the country well, we lost no time by going out of the way, but took the nearest and safest course to the point described. A ride of four hours brought us to the brow of a hill, looking down upon a fertile valley, where, joy inexpressible! we beheld a village of temporary lodges, and a few Indians, whom I instantly recognised as belonging to the anxiously sought tribe.

"Hurray! we've got 'em—I'll be dog-gone ef we haint!" cried Black George. "Hurray for us, beavers, sez I! and a quart on the feller as is last in!"

Uttering yell after yell, as wild as those of savages, we spurred down the hill with reckless velocity, each one striving to lead the rest and be first to reach the goal of our present desires. Had the tribe in question not been peaceably inclined, this proceeding would have been dangerous in the extreme, and a shower of rifle balls might have changed our joyous shouts to cries of pain and lamentation, or put us beyond the pale of mortality. Our rapid and tumultuous approach alarmed our friends, and men, women and children came running out of their huts, with fear depicted on their faces. Among them were two figures that fixed my attention; and from that moment I saw nothing but Charles Huntly and Leni-Leoti, till my gallant beast stood panting in the center of the crowd.

"Charles!" I exclaimed, as I leaped from

my steed, my brain fairly reeling with intense emotion; and staggering up to where he stood, bewildered and confused, I threw my arms around his neck and swooned in his embrace.

When consciousness again returned, I found myself lying on a mat in a small cabin, hastily constructed of sticks and skins, and my friend standing by me, chafing my temples, dashing cold water in my face, and entreating me in the most piteous tones to arouse and speak to him.—There were others around, but I heeded them not. I had neither ears, nor eyes, for any but my friend. My first glance showed me he was altered, but not more than I had expected to find him. His form was somewhat wasted, and his pale features displayed here and there a line of grief and suffering which I had never before seen.

"Frank," he cried, "for God's sake look up and speak to me!"

"Charles!" I gasped.

"Ha! I hear it again—that dearly loved voice!" and burying his head upon my breast he wept aloud.

In a few minutes I had completely recovered from my swoon; but it was a long time before either of us could master his emotion sufficient to hold conversation. We looked at each other, pressed each other by the hand, mingled our tears together, and *felt*, in this strange meeting, what no pen can describe, no language portray. We had literally been dead to each other—we who had loved from childhood with that ardent love which cements two souls in one—and now we had come to life, as it were, to feel more intensely our friendship for the long separation. The excess of joy had nearly made us frantic, and taken away the power of speech. At last we became more tranquil, when our friends who had been present, but almost unnoticed, withdrew and left us to ourselves.

"And now, Frank," said Huntly, looking me earnestly in the face, his eyes still dimmed with tears, "tell me the news. Have you been home?"

"I have not."

"Ah! then I suppose you know nothing of our friends?"

"More than you imagine;" and I turned away my head, and sighed at the thought of the mournful intelligence I was about to communicate.

"Indeed!" said Huntly. "But why do you avert your face? Has—has any thing happened?"

"Prepare yourself for the worst, dear Charles!" I said, in a tremulous tone.

"For the worst?" he repeated. "Great Heaven! what has happened? Speak! quick! tell me! for suspense at such times is hard to be borne; and our imagination, running wild with conjecture, tortures us, it may be, beyond the reality."

"In this case I think not."

"Then speak what you know—in Heaven's name, speak!"

"Promise me to be calm!"

"I will do my best," replied my friend, eagerly, with a look of alarm, while his frame fairly trembled with excitement, and his forehead became damp with cold perspiration.

"Your father, dear Charles!" I began.

"Well, well, Frank—what of him?"

"Is—is—no more. The sod has twice been green above him."

"Merciful God!" he exclaimed, throwing his hands aloft, with a look of agony I shall never forget; then covering his face with them, he groaned as one in the throes of death.

For some time I did not disturb him, thinking it best to let his first grief take its course in silence. At length I said:

"Come, my dear friend, rouse thee, and be a man! Do not give too much sway to your sorrow! Remember, that in this world we all have to die—that we are doomed by the immutable laws of nature and the decrees of an over-ruling God, to part from those we most dearly love! But it is only for a time. God is wise, and good, and does all things for the best; and it is only a short time at the longest, ere we in turn shall depart to join them in a life beyond the reach of death. Cheer up, dear Charles! and look upon your father as one who has done with the cares and perplexities of life, and made a happy change. I know how dearly you loved him—I know the trial to give him up is most painful—

and from my very soul I sympathise with you in your affliction. But, my dear friend, we have other duties than to wail the dead; for the living demand our attention; and you have friends still left you, equally near and dear, who stand in need of your most iron energies."

"Alas!" he groaned, his face still hid in his hands—"dead! dead! dead!—and I—his only son—far, far away!" He paused, and trembled violently for a few moments, and his breath came quick and hard. "But you are right, dear Frank," he said, at length, slowly raising his face, now sadly altered. "You are right, my friend! We know such things must, do, and will take place; and we should, to what extent we can, be philosophers all, and strive to be resigned to God's will. It is terrible, though—terrible—to lose a beloved parent and not be at hand to hear his parting words, nor see him set forth on that journey from whence none ever return. But I—I—will strive to bear it—to at least appear calm. And now, dear Frank—my—my—I fear to mention who—lest I hear more painful, heart-rending tidings."

"You mean your mother and sister?"

"He grasped my arm nervously, partly averted his head, as if in dread of my answer, and answered almost inaudibly:

"I do."

"Be not alarmed, dear Charles! I left them well."

"Left them well?" he repeated, in surprise. "Did not you tell me you had not been home?"

"True! neither have I."

"Then where did you see them, and where are they now?"

"I will answer your last question first. They are now in Oregon City."

He gave me a deep, searching look, such as one would bestow upon a person whose sanity he had just begun to question.

"I do not wonder you look surprised," I added; "but listen ere you doubt;" and I proceeded to narrate, as briefly as I could, how I had met them near the South Pass of the Rocky Mountains, and under what singular circumstances; how I had soon learned of their misfortunes, both in the loss of their dearest friend and their prop-

erty, (which latter seemed to affect Charles less than I had expected;) how I had there met the Unknown, been warned of danger by Prairie Flower, and what followed; how I had subsequently accompanied the party to Oregon; how I had proposed to Lillian, been accepted, and on what conditions; and how I had at last been led to set off in search of my dearest friend, and what had happened on the journey. In short, I gave him condensed particulars of all that had occurred since we parted, not forgetting my night search for him, and the effect of his loss upon me at Los Angeles.

He listened attentively throughout, occasionally interrupting me with questions, on points of more than usual interest, or where, in my hasty narration, I had failed to make the matter clear to him.

"Strange! strange!" he said, when I had done; "very, very strange is all this! It all looks improbable—seems impossible—and yet I do not doubt your word. So, then, I am not worth a dollar?"

"Do not let that trouble you, Charles! While I have money, neither you nor your friends shall want."

"I know it, Frank," he said, pressing my hand warmly; "I know it. That, at present, is the least of my concern. And so you have seen the Unknown? and she is called Eva Mortimer?" He mused a moment, and added: "Well, this is more singular than all. Frank, we must set out for Oregon immediately!"

"As soon as you please. And now tell me something of your own adventures."

"Alas!" sighed he, "after the painful news you have communicated, I feel myself unable to enter into particulars. I will give you something in brief, for I know your curiosity is excited. In fact, I will give you the outline of my story, and anon will fill it with detail."

"Proceed."

"At the time we separated to follow the wounded goat," he began, "I hurried around the foot of the mountain which you were ascending. In my haste, I missed the path, and had spent some time in searching for it, when suddenly I found myself surrounded by half-a-dozen guerillas, who, it seems, were in waiting here

for the return of a larger party, momentarily expected, when all designed an attack upon some merchants coming in from Santa Fe. A single glance showed me resistance were useless, and I surrendered myself a prisoner. They seized and began stripping me of every thing valuable, when it occurred to me I could let you know my situation, and I accordingly shouted as if calling to a party of my friends. The next moment I was seized and gagged, when the cowards, fearful I suppose this precaution had been taken too late, (for a cheer from you was heard in answer,) and that they might be attacked soon, if they remained where they were, began to sneak away, taking me with them.

"When they had rendered themselves safe, by penetrating farther into the mountains, they kept quiet till night, and then sallied forth to the rendezvous, where they joined the others, in all some twenty persons.

"A consultation was now held, whether I should be put to death or taken along and sold into slavery. The latter was finally adopted; and Gonzalez, the chief, took me under his charge. Taking the great Spanish trail, we set off towards Santa Fe, travelling mostly in the night and lying by through the day, often in ambush for some unfortunate wayfarers, who, in the encounters that sometimes ensued, generally lost both money and life. My dear Frank, I could describe events which have passed before my own eyes, that would make your hair stand with horror; but these are almost irrelevant to my story, and so I shall omit them.

"It was a strange fancy they had formed of selling me into slavery, and I could never rightly comprehend it. It could not have been for the amount I would bring—for that was small, in comparison to the trouble I must have cost them in guarding me from escape. No! I am inclined to think it the result of a whim—perhaps of the chief—who ever treated me with as much leniency as I could expect, or have dared to ask for. Still I was made to do menial services, and used as a slave; and it might have been my life was preserved for this; for save myself, the par-

ty had no servant. O! how it made my blood boil at times, when I thought what I had been, and what I was! and how I groaned in secret, to think what must be your feelings, and the feelings of my friends, should the latter ever hear of my fate! But I still had hope; I was still alive; and I struggled to bear up manfully, and be resigned to my lot till Providence should favor my escape.

"The first hundred miles I was forced to proceed on foot—the robbers having no horses but what they rode themselves. Sometimes they travelled fast, obliging me to keep them company, and in consequence I suffered most severely. At last one of the band got killed in an affray, and his beast was assigned to me, which proved a great relief.

"One day the chief informed me, that if I would take the oath of his dictation, I might join the band and have my freedom—or rather, the freedom of a robber. I declined his offer, in language so decisive that he never after repeated the proposition, and I continued as before a slave. But I must avoid detail.

"At last we reached the Sierra de los Mimbres, where the band divided—the chief and a few followers taking me down to San Domingo, where I was offered for sale. Not meeting with success here, he continued down through the several villages, and, in short, to the very hacienda whither you and another (God bless you both!) traced me. Had he failed here in disposing of me to Pedro Lopez, I do believe he would have put an end to my existence.

"After much quibbling, the bargain was at last struck, and I became the property of Pedro Lopez. I shall now pass over the period of my slavery—the most unhappy one of my life. True, I was treated better than my companions, and, on the whole, suffered much less physically than mentally. But still I knew myself a slave—knew I was degraded; and the thought of my position—that thus I might be doomed to spend my days—nearly drove me mad. Sometimes evil thoughts would enter my head; and then I would half resolve to kill my master and take the consequences, or put an end to my own being. Then

hope would revive, that something might turn up for my deliverance, and I would strive to labor on, resigned to bide my time. Thus a year rolled around, when one day Pedro Lopez came to me and inquired if I were contented with my situation! At first I thought he was mocking me, and I half-raised a garden-tool I had in my hand to dash out his brains. He must have guessed my intention from my looks; for he took a step back, and bade me be calm and give him a civil answer. I replied by inquiring if he would feel contented to be a slave in a foreign land? He shook his head, and said he would not—that he had felt for my situation from the first—and that that was the cause of my being treated better than my companions. He then told me, that as I had ever behaved myself with propriety, and as he had been offered a fair ransom by a small tribe of Indians, if I felt disposed to go with them he would give up all claim to me. A thought flashed upon me, that possibly this might be the tribe of Great Medicine, and I begged to see them. My request was granted, and the first glance showed me I was right in my conjectures; and uttering a joyful cry, I rushed outside the gate, to where they were assembled before the walls of the hacienda.

"Frank, it is impossible for me to describe my feelings then. Life, liberty, every thing joyous, seemed bursting upon me at once, and my brain grew dizzy with the exhilarating, intoxicating thoughts. I hugged the first Indian I met; I danced, capered around, shouted, laughed, cried—in short, did every thing extravagant to give my overpowering feelings vent. For an hour or two I was insane with joy, and my reasoning powers as bewildered as those of a lunatic. At last I began to grow calm; and then I went around to each of my old friends and shook them by the hand, thanked them with tearful eyes and trembling voice for my deliverance, and received their congratulations and caresses in return.

"But where was Prairie Flower? As yet I had not seen her. I made the inquiry, but could get no direct answer. Some shook their heads, others said she was not,

here, and others again that she was away. Finding none would answer me, I concluded they had a sufficient reason for their evasion, and dropped the subject.

"When every thing had been satisfactorily arranged, and I become reasonably sobered down, we all set out toward the north. A horse had been provided for me, and all were mounted—the females, of whom there were several, mostly on mules.

"Some three miles from the hacienda, we reached a heavy wood. Entering this about a mile, we made a halt by a spring. While watering the animals, I heard a distant rustling of the bushes, and the tramp of more horses. Presently an airy figure, gaily attired, and mounted on a coal black Indian pony, burst through a dense copse near me, followed by five dusky maidens, and rode swiftly up to where I was standing by my steed.

"'Prairie Flower!' I shouted; and the next moment she was on her feet, and her hand clasped in mine.

"O, the emotions of that moment! Time seemed to have turned his wheel backward, and years of toil, and grief, and fatigue, were forgotten. Passions, which had slumbered, or been half obliterated by other events, were again awakened and wrenched from their secret recesses; and I saw her as I had seen her three years before, and felt all I had then felt, but in a two-fold sense.

"As for Prairie Flower, she was pale and exceedingly agitated. She grasped my hand nervously, gave one searching glance at my features, and burst into tears—but did not speak. Then she sprang away from me a few paces, dashed the tears from her eyes, and returning with a bound, asked me a dozen questions in a breath: 'How I had been? Where I had been? If I were well? If I were glad to get my liberty?' and so on; and wound up by adding: 'She was rejoiced to see me, and hoped I should be more fortunate hereafter.'

"Throughout our first brief interview, her manner was wild and her language almost incoherent—which, so different from any thing I had seen, surprised and alarmed me. She would ask a question, and

then, without waiting an answer, ask another and another, or make some remark altogether irrelevant. At last, with a hope that I would now be happy, she informed me that she could see me no more that day; and before I had time to reply, she skipped away, sprang into her saddle and was off—followed by all the females of the tribe, and some half a dozen of the other sex.

"This proceeding perplexed me not a little. I asked several the meaning of it, but they only shook their heads, and I was left to ponder it over in secret.

"We pursued our way slowly toward the north, and I saw nothing of Prairie Flower, nor of those who had accompanied her, till about noon of the succeeding day, when she again joined us, with the balance of the tribe, among whom were some women and children I had not before seen, which led me to infer there had been two camps, and this supposition was subsequently confirmed by Prairie Flower herself.

"My second meeting with Prairie Flower was very different from the first. She was calm, constrained, and I fancied cold; though somehow I was led to think this rather forced than natural. She was polite, civil, and agreeable; but all that passionate enthusiasm of the previous day was gone. She did not speak with freedom, and her words seemed studied, and her sentences regulated by previous thought. In fact, she seemed to have relapsed into the same state as when we first were guests of herself and tribe. There was either something very mysterious about this, or else it sprang from one natural cause—and my vanity, it may be, led me to infer the latter. If she loved me, her actions were easily accounted for; if she did not care for me, why had she taken so much pains, as her own lips revealed, to hunt me out!

"In course of conversation which ensued, she narrated how she had met you—under what circumstances—and how, urged on by a sense of duty, she had at once set off with her tribe in the hope of learning something more of my fate. Fortune favored her; for while on her way south, she

met with an old mountaineer, who gave her tidings of a cheering nature. As her adventures have been so much like your own, Frank, I shall not enter into detail. Enough that she was successful in finding me, and that I am here.

"Day after day, as we travelled north, I had more or less interviews with Prairie Flower; but though she ever treated me with respect and politeness, she always studied to avoid familiarity.

"At last we reached the present spot, where the tribe have encamped for a few weeks, or until the fishers and hunters shall have laid in a supply of provisions, when they intend proceeding farther north. From Prairie Flower having seen you where she did, I inferred you had gone home, and every day have been intending to follow. But somehow, when the time has come to start, I have again put it off for another twenty-four hours, and thus have been delaying day after day, for what purpose I hardly know myself. I believe I have been held here by some charm too powerful to break, and now that you have come I am glad of it."

"And that charm," said I, as my friend concluded with a sigh, "is Prairie Flower."

"It may be," he answered, musingly. "She is so strange—I do not know what to make of her. She is not an Indian—I feel certain of that; but as to who she is, I am as unenlightened as ever. Do you really think she loves me, Frank?" he asked suddenly, rousing himself and fastening his eye earnestly upon mine.

"How can I answer?" I said, evasively. "But I know of one that does, Charles."

"You mean the Unknown—or rather, Eva Mortimer?" he rejoined, musingly.

"I do. I have already delivered her message, sufficient to assure you of the fact; and she is certainly one worthy of being loved."

"It may be," he sighed, "and there was a time, Frank, such intelligence would have made me happy. But now—(he paused, shook his head, and mused a moment)—now it is not so. When I first saw Eva, I had never seen Prairie Flower; and ere the germ of a first passion had

been brought to maturity, the tree was transplanted to another soil, and the sun of another clime, although it did not change its nature, ripened it to another light. Or, to drop all metaphor," he added, "Eva was the first to arouse in me a latent passion, which doubtless a proper intercourse would have warmed to a mutual attachment; but ere this was consummated—ere I even knew who she was—without a hope of ever seeing her again—I departed, and have never beheld her since. She touched some secret chord in my breast, and I dwelt on her memory for a time, and loved her as an unapproachable ideal, rather than as an approachable substance. I loved her—or fancied I did—rather that I had nothing else on which to place my affections, than for any substantial cause. In another I afterward found a resemblance which arrested my attention, and changed the current of my thoughts. The singular manner in which we were thrown together—our daily interviews—my gratitude to her as the preserver of my life and yours—her generosity—in short, the concentration in her of every noble quality—the absence of all others—gradually drew me to Prairie Flower; and ere I was aware of it myself, I found her presence necessary to my happiness. At last we parted, as you know how, and I strove to forget her; but, Frank, though I mentioned her not to you, I now tell you, that I strove a long time in vain. By day and by night, in a greater or less degree, did she occupy my thoughts; and it was only when misfortunes fell upon me that her image gradually gave place to more trying thoughts. But our second meeting—an additional debt of gratitude for deliverance from slavery—has done the work; and I now feel I can love none but Prairie Flower."

"Then you are really in love, Charles?"

"I am; and I fear hopelessly so."

"I fear so too," sighed I. "But where is Prairie Flower? I must see and thank her from my heart."

As I spoke, the subject of our conversation glided into the rude lodge and stood before me.

CHAPTER XII.

APPEARANCE OF PRAIRIE FLOWER—HER BEAUTY—HER STRONG RESEMBLANCE TO EVA—STARTLING SUSPICION—MAKE IT KNOWN—HER AGITATION—PROMISED INQUIRY—ABRUPT DEPARTURE—MY FRIEND IN LOVE—INTERRUPTION.

"Prairie Flower! my dearest friend!" I exclaimed, springing to my feet and clasping her extended hands in both of mine: "Prairie Flower! this is a happy meeting—most happy!"

"I am very glad to see you, Mr. Leighton," she said, with something like a sigh; "very, very glad!" and she closed in a tremulous tone, while her dark eyes filled with tears.

O, how beautiful she looked, as we stood face to face, her hands clasped in mine! Never had she appeared more lovely!—Since our first meeting, time had ripened her to full maturity; and though her sweet countenance was pale and sad, and though something like care and thought could be traced thereon, yet it was so mellowed, so blended with something lofty and noble, that it added a peculiar charm to her appearance which mere physical beauty could not sustain. It was a something that, while you admired, awakened your sympathy, and drew you to her, as toward one you felt it your duty and delight to soothe, cherish, and protect. As I gazed upon her a moment in silence, I became forcibly struck with the resemblance she bore to Eva Mortimer. She was a shade darker, perhaps; but this might be owing to her life in the mountains, and constant exposure to the free, bracing air. There was the same mould of feature, and in her now sad and thoughtful expression, a marked resemblance to that I had seen on the countenance of Eva as she bade me farewell. A sudden thought sent a hot flash over me, and involuntarily I took a step backward and scrutinized her again. Good heavens! could it be possible! No! no! it was too visionary! And yet why too visionary, I said, half aloud. As strange things had happened. Eva had a sister—a twin sister—who was lost at an infantile

age—who had been stolen away. There was no existing proof—or at least none to my knowledge—that that sister was dead: no one knew what had become of her.—Here was a being of her own age apparently, and of a marked resemblance. Her history she would never touch upon—perhaps did not know. Might Prairie Flower not be that twin sister? The thought, the suspicion, was wild and romantic—but what argument was there against it? The ways of Providence are strange, but not in all cases past finding out.

"It must—it must be so!" I ejaculated, completely absorbed with my speculations, and forgetful of every thing around me.

I was aroused from my reverie, by the voices of both my friend and Prairie Flower.

"What is the matter, Frank!" cried Huntly, grasping my arm, shaking me, and gazing upon me with a look of alarm.—"Speak to me! speak! that I may know you have your reason!"

"Are you ill, sir?" joined in Prairie Flower, with a startled look. "I fear you are ill, Francis! Fatigue has overcome him," she added to Huntly. "Better get him to lie down on the mat, while I run for assistance."

"Stay! stay!" I exclaimed, as the latter turned to depart. "I am not ill. I was only—I beg your pardon!—did I act strangely?"

"As I never saw you before," replied Huntly. "You stared wildly at Prairie Flower, and spoke incoherently. Tell me! are you in your senses?"

"Most certainly I am. I was only thinking of—of——"

"Of what, pray?"

"Prairie Flower, speak!" I exclaimed, addressing her, as she stood near the entrance, uncertain whether to depart or not: "Speak! what do you know of your history?"

"My history?" she repeated in surprise. "Have I not forbid you——"

"Never mind now! I have important reasons for asking."

She colored to the eyes, and seemed greatly embarrassed.

"What reasons can you have," she re-

joined, "for asking this, in this wild manner? You surprise and alarm me!"

"A resemblance," I replied, "a strong resemblance you bear to another. Fear not to tell me and my friend what you know, and we promise, if necessary, to keep your secret inviolate."

"Ay, do, Prairie Flower!" urged Huntly, vehemently, who now comprehended the whole matter. "Speak, dear Prairie Flower, without reserve! Speak, I pray you! for much depends upon your answer."

"Are you both mad?" she said, looking from one to the other, as if doubting our sanity.

"No! no!" I returned, "we are not mad, but in our sober senses. A weighty reason, which my friend did not at first, but now understands, and all important to you as well as ourselves and others, induces the inquiry. Come, sweet Prairie Flower! will you not grant our request?"

She hung down her head, tapped the earth with her foot, and seemed confused and agitated. I approached and gently took her hand, and again in a soothing voice entreated her to tell us all she knew, reiterating my promise, that, if necessary, it should never pass to other ears.

"Say, sweet being! are you not of our race?—are you not a pale-face?"

For sometime she did not reply, during which she seemed struggling to master her emotions. At length a half inaudible "I am" escaped her lips.

"I thought so—I could almost have sworn it!" I returned, triumphantly. "And your parents, Prairie Flower?"

She burst into tears, and hid her face in her hands.

"Nay, sweet Prairie Flower, be calm!" I added. "Do not let this affect you so seriously. I do not seek to pry into your private affairs, only so far as I fancy the knowledge imparted may benefit yourself. Tell me—did you or do you know your parents?"

She shook her head and sobbed aloud.

"Believe me, gentle maiden, nothing is farther from my design, than to wound your feelings or recall painful associations. Do you know how you came among the Indians?"

"Something I know," she answered.

"Will you tell us what you know?"

"As you seem so anxious," she said, making an effort to dry her tears, "I will, on condition I gain the consent of Chacha-chee-kee-hobah."

"And what has he to do with it?"

"I have promised to reveal nothing without his consent. And now I think of it," she quickly added, "perhaps I have done wrong in saying what I have."

"Give yourself no uneasiness, Prairie Flower; for even he could attach no blame to what you have said. But how came you to promise him this?"

"He exacted it of me as my guardian."

"Indeed! Then he must know your history?"

"He knows more of it than I do."

"Then I must see him at once. Pray, conduct me to him!"

"Nay, sir," she answered, "it were useless. He would tell you nothing. He is old, and singular, and would look upon you as an intruder. I will see him, and see what can be done. He loves me, and I have more influence over him than any other of the tribe. If he refuse to tell me, no earthly power can open his lips, and the secret will go down to the grave with him. But now let me hear something of yourself, and how we all came to meet again in a manner so singular."

"One question more, Prairie Flower."

"Nay, no more. I will answer nothing farther, till I have consulted the Old-Man-of-the-Mountains."

"Be it so, then," I answered; and the conversation changed to matters connected with my present adventure.

We were still engaged in recalling past events, when an Indian maiden hurriedly entered the lodge, and said something in her own language to Prairie Flower.

"Indeed!" she exclaimed, starting and turning deadly pale. "Gentlemen, excuse me!" and she hastened from the cot.

"What can be the meaning of this?" said Huntly.

"Some startling news, I judge. Perhaps some one has been taken ill and sent for her."

"And so, Frank," returned Huntly the

next moment, "you really think Prairie Flower and Eva sisters?"

"There is so strong a resemblance, my friend, that, until I have proof to the contrary, I can hardly believe otherwise."

"Strange!" he rejoined, musingly: "Strange! very strange! Yet since you have told me something of the history of the Mortimers, I must say the matter looks possible, not to say probable."

"At all events," I returned, "there is mystery somewhere, and I shall not rest till it be sifted to the bottom. I hope she may prevail upon the old man to allow her to tell what she knows, even if he add nothing himself."

"And should it turn out as we suspect, Frank!" said Huntly with great energy, grasping my arm as he spoke.

"Well?"

"You know I—that is——"

"I understand. You would have her the closest of kin—eh! Charles?"

"Say no more. I see you understand me. But then, I——"

"Well, say on."

"I—that is—you—perhaps she—she does not fancy me!"

"What! do you doubt?"

"Why, no—yes—I—I cannot say I doubt—but—but she is so strange, Frank. I would give the world to have her talk to me with the freedom she does to you."

"And if you really love her, Charles, you should give the world to have every thing exactly the reverse: in other words, exactly as it is."

"What do you mean?"

"Why, simply, that she does not love me."

"Are you sure of this, Frank?" and Huntly fastened his eyes intently upon mine, as if to read my soul.

"As sure as that the sun shines at noon-day."

"And you think she—she——"

"Loves another."

Huntly turned deadly pale.

"Who, Frank?—who?"

"Charles Huntly."

"Indeed!" he exclaimed, with a rapid change of countenance. "You think this?"

"I know it."

He took a step backward and looked at me hard a moment—during which his color came and went rapidly, and his breathing became audible—and then said, impressively:

"Frank, do not jest with me! To me this matter is of the gravest importance."

"I do not jest, Charles; I know your feelings, and you may rest assured I would be the last to jest with them."

"And you say she loves me?"

"I do."

He grasped my hand, the tears sprang into his eyes, and his voice trembled as he rejoined:

"Frank, I thank you for these words. I am suffering under deep affliction—my life is clouded—but, if this be true, there is still sunshine—still an oasis in the desert—still something to look forward to."

"My words are true, my friend, if that is any consolation."

"And how have you discovered this so suddenly?"

"I have not. I have known it all along."

"Indeed! you never told it me before."

"True, and for good reasons."

"What reasons, I pray?"

"I did not wish to encourage an attachment which may even yet prove hopeless."

"What mean you?"

"As I told you once before: Prairie Flower may love—nay, does love, mark that!—but may never marry—may even reject the suit of him she idolizes."

"For what cause?"

"That she is already wedded to her tribe."

"But should she prove to be what we suspect?"

"That *may* alter the case with her; and on the strength of that supposition, and that you have been so mysteriously brought together, and that I find your affections so firmly placed upon her—have I ventured to tell you what I have long known. But remember, Charles, I warn you not to be too sanguine in your expectations!"

"Well," answered my friend, "I will hope for the best. It is all very singu-

lar!" he added, relapsing into a musing mood.

"I suppose we had better not start for Oregon to-day?" said I, playfully.

"No, not to-day!" he replied; "not to-day! To-morrow, perhaps."

"Or, peradventure, the day following?"

"Ay, peradventure."

At this moment Teddy, Pierre and Black George appeared at the door to pay their respects to my friend, and I quitted the lodge, bidding them pass in.

CHAPTER XIII.

JOIN AN INDIAN CROWD—SILENT RECOGNITION—GREAT MEDICINE ILL—ANXIETY TO SEE HIM—REAPPEARANCE OF PRAIRIE FLOWER—DEVOTION—URGE HER TO QUESTION THE INVALID—SUSPENSE—PRESENT FAILURE—SUBSEQUENT SUCCESS—PRAIRIE FLOWER RESOLVES TO VISIT OREGON—AN EVENING STROLL—THE DEATH WAIL.

As yet I had not exchanged a word with any of the tribe but Prairie Flower; and as I left the cot, I turned toward a crowd, which was huddled together near the center of the temporary village, their eyes all fixed in a certain direction. I knew by this, and the abrupt departure of Prairie Flower, that something unusual had occurred; and hastening forward, I soon reached them, and, to my surprise, found most of them in tears, and the others looking very solemn.

"What has happened, my friends?" inquired I.

On hearing my voice, those nearest me turned round and extended their hands in silence. They then separated, so as to allow me a passage through; and as I moved along, I shook a hand of each on either side. They appeared glad to see me, but, at the same time, very sad, from some untoward circumstance, of which I felt anxious to be informed.

When I had concluded, I turned to an intelligent youth, and inquired the cause of each and all looking so serious.

He silently pointed his finger to the center lodge, and after a solemn pause, uttered:

"Great Medicine."

"Sick!"

He nodded his head.

This, then, accounted for the agitation of Prairie Flower; and after what had passed between us regarding her history, it may readily be inferred I felt no little anxiety to ascertain to what extent the old man was indisposed, and whether his case was, or was not, considered immediately dangerous. He was very old I knew, and in all probability would not long survive. Should he die without revealing to Prairie Flower her history, all dependence of proof from her would be cut off, and it would doubtless be a very difficult, if not an impossible endeavor, to indentify her with the lost daughter of Madame Mortimer. On this account, as well as for old acquaintance-sake, I was very anxious to enter the lodge—at the door, or just outside of which, were standing several females, weeping. I made a step forward for this purpose, when an Indian touched me on the shoulder and shook his head, as a sign that I must go no nearer.

"I have most important business with the invalid," I said. "Can I not be permitted to see him?"

He again shook his head.

"But this matter is urgent."

"No one must see him," he answered, "but such as he desires to see."

"Then let me see Prairie Flower."

"She must not now be called. We wait her appearance."

"Will she soon be here?"

"Cannot say."

There was nothing to do, therefore, but wait as patiently as I could. What troubled me the most, was the fear that the old man might die suddenly, and Prairie Flower, in her agitation, neglect to question him till too late. For an hour I paced to and fro, in a very uneasy mood, revolving these things in my mind, when the latter made her appearance outside the lodge, where she was instantly surrounded by those nearest in waiting, all eager for her intelligence. Having spoken a few

words with them, they all moved slowly away with sorrowful looks, and Prairie Flower approached to where I was standing. The Indians, though as anxious as myself to gain her tidings, moved not from their places, but waited in respectful silence for her to open the conversation. I, however, not being bred in the same school with them, could not exercise the same patience; and taking a few steps forward, I said:

"Great Medicine is ill, Prairie Flower?"

"He is," she answered, in a tremulous voice.

"Very ill? dangerously ill?" I inquired.

"I fear he is."

The Indians behind me, on hearing this, uttered several deep groans, but said not a word.

"Can he survive, Prairie Flower?"

"I think not," she answered, mournfully shaking her head.

"Any particular disease?"

"Only age and debility. He is very old, and has not been well for some time. A few minutes before I was called, he was taken very ill. I fear his time to go is at hand. Friends," she added, addressing her tribe, "you are about to lose one you love and reverence. Let us commend his soul to the Great Spirit;" thereupon each and all kneeled upon the earth in prayer.

When this was over, I turned to Prairie Flower again.

"Pardon me, fair being!" I said, "at this solemn time, for intruding worldly thoughts upon your attention. But the Old-Man-of-the-Mountains is about to depart, in all probability, to join his fathers and friends in another state. You think he holds the key to your history. If you have not already, would it not be well for you to bid him unlock the memories of the past, so far as relates to yourself?"

"True," she answered, with a start; "I had forgotten that. I fear it is too late; for already his voice falters, and he seems standing midway between time and eternity, and slowly receding toward the shadowy land of spirits."

"Fly!" I urged: "Fly, Prairie Flower! and do your best, ere all is over!"

"I will," she said; and at once hastened back to the lodge.

For another hour I paced to and fro impatiently, ever and anon turning my eyes upon the hut where the old man was breathing his last. At length Prairie Flower reappeared, and with her three Indian maidens, all weeping and seeming very much dejected. On leaving the lodge, each went separate ways through the village, Prairie Flower approaching me direct.

"To prayer!" she said, addressing her friends, who still remained as she had left them.

All again kneeled as before. When they rose to their feet, I addressed her:

"What news, Prairie Flower?"

"He is sinking very fast," she answered, sadly.

"Did you gain any information?"

"No! I addressed him on the subject, but he only looked at me vaguely, and did not seem to comprehend what I said."

"Alas! I fear it is too late, Prairie Flower!"

"I fear so," she rejoined. "But he may revive a little; and if he do, I will question him again."

With this she returned to the lodge of the invalid, while I proceeded to join my friend, and inform him what had occurred. I found Huntly as I had left him, in company with my *compagnons d'voyage*, all engaged in an animated conversation.

"Well," he said, as I entered, "what news, Frank? Something has happened, I know by your sober looks."

I proceeded to detail what had transpired, and the fears I entertained.

"This is unfortunate," he said, when I had done; "most unfortunate."

The sun was some half an hour above the hills, when Prairie Flower again joined us in haste. Pierre, Teddy and Black George had left some time before, so that no one was in the cot but myself and friend, and we were so deeply engaged in discussing the various matters which had transpired, as not to be aware of her close proximity till she spoke:

"Where is this person," she asked, "whom I resemble?"

"I left her in Oregon City," I replied.

"That is far away," she rejoined, musingly.

"But what success, Prairie Flower?"

"Better than I expected."

"Indeed! You give us joy."

"As I observed he might do, when I quitted you," she answered, "the old man again revived, when I immediately put the question as to what he knew of my history. He seemed much surprised, and inquired my reasons for asking. I hurriedly informed him of your conjectures. He listened attentively, and seemed ill at ease. He had promised, he said, in reply, never to divulge, during his natural life, who I was, nor any thing connected with my earliest years."

"Ha! then he knows your history himself?"

"Nay, do not interrupt me."

"I crave pardon! Go on!"

"Yes," continued Prairie Flower, "he said he knew much concerning me, but did not know all; that something had whispered him this information might be valuable to me at some future time; and that he had recorded it on a roll of parchment, which he had purchased of a trader for the purpose. This parchment, he said, was concealed under a stone, in a certain place, which none but such as to whom he might reveal the secret would ever be able to find. He farther said, that if in truth I had a sister and mother living, I had better perhaps seek them out, and should they recognise and claim me, I could then do as I saw proper, either cling to them or my tribe; that although I had been reared for the most part among Indians, and had adopted their habits and customs, still I was not of their race—not of their blood—and he could therefore see nothing unnatural or improper in my desiring to form acquaintance with my own kin. But, he added, lest I should meet with disappointment—in my kin, or those I supposed to be such, not claiming me on what I and they might know—he thought it better I should remain ignorant of myself, until I had seen them face to face, when, should all turn out as I desired, it would be time enough to produce proof; and that if I

would promise to go in quest of them before perusing, or allowing another to peruse, the parchment in question, he would make its locality known."

"What a singular request!" said I.

"True," replied Prairie Flower; "but as I have said before, Great Medicine is a very singular being, and an enigma to all."

"And did you agree to his proposition?"

"I did, though somewhat reluctantly. But I knew if I did not, that the secret would die with him, and of this I could not bear to think."

"And so he told you all?"

"He did."

"And where is the parchment concealed?"

"Nay," she answered, shaking her head, "I do not know as I am at liberty to tell."

"I beg your pardon, Prairie Flower! I certainly had no right to question. But you will accompany us to Oregon City?"

"That is what I came to speak about," she replied, timidly. "You really think your conjectures are right?"

"We do," answered Huntly. "Every thing tends to convince us so. At first, what was only a vague suspicion with us, has since grown almost to a certainty.—Come, go with us, sweet Prairie Flower! Say you will go, and I shall be happy."

Prairie Flower changed color as Huntly spoke, and turned aside her head.

"And you will allow me a few companions?" she timidly inquired.

"As many as you please," returned Huntly, "so you will consent to go."

"But when do you start?"

"We will wait your time."

"My duty," she said, solemnly, "is henceforth by the side of Cha-cha-chee-kee-hobah, till he take his departure to the land of eternal rest—then to follow his remains to the grave—which done, I shall soon be ready to join you. Adieu, for the present! I must return to him now."

Saying which, she quitted the lodge.

"At last," said Huntly, turning to me: "At last, Frank, I have hope. Let us forth and take the evening air—for strange thoughts are crowding my breast."

Arm in arm we strolled through the little village, where the solemn faces of all we met bespoke the gloom of mourning for one universally beloved, and took our way down to the little streamlet, which, all unconscious of mortal change, ran murmuring on as it had done perchance for ages. All nature reposed in her most charming beauty of quietude. The sun was just beginning to sink behind the lofty mountains to the westward, and the last flood-light of day made golden the tiny waves of the water, and began to hasten the long shadows, precursors of diurnal night, and that night of death which knows no waking. The very air seemed solemn, it was so still. Scarce a breath moved, and the leaflets hung down their heads as if in sorrow. The feathered warblers, which had made music all day, were winding up their tunes with what seemed a melancholy cadence. A few night-watchers had just begun to give each other calls in timid tones, as if half afraid their voices were trespassing upon a scene too sacred. It was just calm enough, and mild enough, and lovely enough, and solemn enough, to awaken meditative thought—that thought in which all the unutterable poetry of our nature becomes infused. When the outward sense bids the inner tongue speak to us in language which the enraptured soul only comprehends. When we feel a melancholy happiness, and a desire to steal away from every thing living, and in solitude commune with ourselves and our God. When the natural voice jars discordantly with the finer and more elevated tones of our being, proceeding from the spirit-harp, touched by the unseen hand of the All-pervading Deity. When, in short, we feel drawn by an unexplainable sympathy to a lonely meditation on things high and holy, beyond the matter-of-fact events of every day experience. Did you never feel thus, reader? Did you never steal away from your daily cares, your business, your friends—from every thing common and evanescent—to hold a quiet communion with your nobler thoughts?—and then trace those thoughts, as it were, to their primal source—the eternal fount of the Great All-Good? And are not such sweet

thoughts, and sweet moments of happy rest, in a life more or less filled with turmoil and pain? For myself, I answer yes; for I look upon them as foretastings of a state of blissful and eternal beatitude, when the changing circumstances of this life shall trouble us no more forever.

Thus I felt, and thus my friend, on the present occasion. Deep thought with both was too busy for words, and we gained the rivulet in silence. Some fifty yards above us was a large, flat rock, overhanging the gurgling waters. Toward this Huntly silently pointed; and obeying the gesture, I accompanied him thither. Seated at length upon it, our eyes simultaneously fixed upon the rapid current laving its base, and our ears drank in its music, while the sunlight gradually departed the stream, the deepening shadows of night stretched over us, growing more and more somber, and the stars here and there began to peep out in the heavens, and shine brighter and more bright, till the firmament above appeared blazoned with thousands on thousands of shining worlds, the armorial bearings of the Great Omnipotent. Still we sat in silence—now soaring in thought to another existence—now dwelling upon the wonders of nature as a complicated whole, or equally complicated, inexplicable part—and anon reviewing the past, touching upon the present, and leaping forward in imagination to the future—that future, to the young, of golden hopes and bright anticipations, destined for the most part never to be realized. Thus we mutely sat, for an hour or more, when Huntly broke the silence.

“Frank,” he said, “what a charm, what a solemn charm there seems in every thing to-night! I have been musing, as it were, upon every thing. I have been back to my boyhood days, when I was wild, giddy, reckless and frolicsome. When I had no thought beyond the sport of the hour, and no ambition but to make a jest of my fellow beings. I have traced up our youthful sports (for you and I were almost one, you know,) to that sudden resolve which parted me for the last time from my beloved father.”

Here his voice faltered to a pause, and

for some moments he remained silent, with his face bowed upon his hands. Then raising his head, he dashed away a few tears and resumed:

"I have recalled event after event to the present time, and find, in my reckless career, that I have much, too much, to regret. But I believe in an overruling, mysterious Power, and that there has been a purpose in all beyond my own simple inclinations. Adversity, I feel, has been for the best, by working in me a great change. Yes, Frank, I am a changed being. From boyhood I have passed to manhood, and from the idle follies of youth, to the wiser and more sober thoughts of maturer age.

"Once I was all for adventure and change—but now the case is different. I have seen enough, and am satisfied. Let me once more be comfortably situated, with a home and friends, means to gain an honest living, and, Frank, one, one sweet being to cheer me with her smiles over the otherwise toilsome path of life—and I shall rest content."

"A great change this, in Charles Huntly, most certainly," I said; "a great change indeed! But perhaps no more than in myself; for I, too, am tired of adventure, and ardently long for those very joys (joys now, Charles, though once it was not so,) of which you speak."

"Hark!" exclaimed my friend at this moment. "What sound is that?"

A long, loud, mournful wail came borne upon the air.

"Alas!" said I, "it speaks a soul departed!"

"Let us return," said Huntly, with a sigh; and forthwith we set out for the village.

On our way thither, we several times heard the same melancholy sound; and as we entered the precincts of the little settlement, we beheld somber figures moving to and fro, bearing lighted torches. As we drew near the center lodge, I discovered Prairie Flower, in company with several of her own sex, moaning with grief.

She espied us as we came up, and, separating from her companions, approached and extended a hand to each.

"Alas! my friends," she sighed, "I need

your sympathy. He who has been to me a guardian—a father—is now no more."

Her voice faltered as she spoke, and withdrawing her hands from ours, she covered her eyes and wept aloud.

CHAPTER XIV.

BURIAL OF GREAT MEDICINE—PREPARATIONS TO DEPART—AFFECTIONATE LEAVE-TAKING—ROUTE NORTHWARD—PRAIRIE FLOWER IN A NEW LIGHT—THE DESERTED VILLAGE—THE DESIGNATED SPOT—HOPES AND FEARS—DISAPPOINTMENT—TREASURE FOUND—STRANGE DEPOSIT OF GOLD—SPECULATIONS—ON THE MOVE—IN SIGHT OF OREGON CITY.

As I have, in "Prairie Flower," described the solemn ceremony by which the Mysterious Tribe consign to dust the mortal remains of such of their number as are called hence by death, I shall not here repeat it—presuming that all who read the present tale, will have perused the other.

The second day from his death, was the one set apart for the burial of the Old-Man-of-the-Mountains. Each of my party, and every one of the tribe was present, and the funeral rite was conducted in the most solemn manner. As it had been the province of the deceased to enact a peculiar part on all similar occasions, and as this constituted one of their forms of worship, it became necessary for the tribe to select one of their number to fill his place. The one chosen for the office, which he was to hold till death, was an old white-haired Indian, of benevolent aspect, who at once etered upon his duties, and thenceforth took the title of "Great Medicine."

A grave was dug in the valley by the little stream, and here the deceased was buried, with all the mournful honors befitting his station. Great were the lamentations, and many the tears shed, as his body was lowered to his last, long, narrow home—the house appointed for all living! When his remains had been covered from the sight of all, and the "Last Dirge" had been chanted, several Indian

maidens brought and strewed flowers over the damp earth, and then repeating, "Sleep in peace, beloved!" each of the tribe took a solemn leave of the spot, and slowly and sadly retraced their steps to the village.

An hour or two later, Prairie Flower sought me out and said:

"I suppose, my friend, you are anxious to be on your way?"

"At your earliest convenience," I replied.

"I do not wish to detain you," she rejoined; "but if you can delay another day, it will greatly oblige me, as I have much to attend to ere I depart."

"A day, either way, will make but little difference," said I; "and moreover, we could not expect you to leave sooner, after what has occurred."

"Thank you," she replied. "I will hasten all my arrangements, and at sunrise to-morrow will be yours to command;" and she left me to begin her preparations.

In the course of the day, Prairie Flower informed the tribe what had transpired relative to herself, and also her present design. The younger members, who had always looked upon her as one of themselves, were much surprised, and all were very sad at the thought of parting with one so dear to them. They could not but admit, under the circumstances, it was her duty to go; but they made her promise, in case events should turn up inducing her to withdraw from them altogether, she would at least pay them one more visit, ere she said the final farewell. She then made choice of three young men and two maidens to be her companions, and selected five noble steeds for them to ride, reserving the little pony to herself.

At daylight on the following morning the whole village was astir; and having broken our fast, the horses were caught and saddled, and ere the sun was half an hour above the hills, all were in readiness to start. The parting scene between Prairie Flower and her friends was very affecting. She embraced all of her own sex—kissed the children over and over again—shook the young men and aged by the hand—and amid tears at losing her, and earnest prayers for her safety and hap-

piness, sprang on her pony and dashed away, too much affected to witness the separation between those who remained and those selected to accompany her. The latter now took leave one by one; and though much feeling was displayed on both sides, yet it was very different from the farewell of Prairie Flower.

"My friends," said Huntly, when it came our turn to depart, "for your kindness to me, I feel very, very grateful—but at present, the only return in my power to make is thanks. Should I ever have an opportunity to do more, you shall find that your labors in my behalf have not been unworthily bestowed. Farewell. If we meet not again on earth, I trust we may in a better state."

Each of our party next proceeded to shake hands with each of the tribe; and as soon as this was over, we sprang upon our horses, and, dashing away, soon joined those in advance.

I must now pass rapidly over our journey, as but little occurred on the way of interest to the general reader. Our provisions were supplied by our trusty rifles—we sometimes killing a bear, a deer, and once or twice a buffalo. Entering the beautiful South Park—a kind of second Eden—we pushed forward, and on the second day reached the head waters of the South Fork of Platte, down which stream we continued to St. Vrain's Fort, where we all arrived without accident. Here I took leave of Pierre and Black George, paying them liberally for their assistance, and pursued our journey toward the Black Hills, to the very spot where I had first been introduced to the Mysterious Tribe, and where, as I learned from Prairie Flower, they intended making their winter quarters.

On our way thither, Prairie Flower threw off much of that reserve which she had hitherto exercised toward Huntly; and not unfrequently they rode on together for miles, engaged in earnest conversation.—The effect of this upon my friend was very gratifying to me; it seemed to divert his thoughts from more painful subjects; and I saw with pleasure that his pale, care-worn features gradually resumed their

wanted appearance, and his eye, especially, its former luster. Still he was sad at times—very sad—and then I knew his thoughts were dwelling upon the loss of his father, and the afflictions of his mother and sister. He was naturally but little given to despondency; and when in company with myself or another, ever strove to be cheerful, that he might not cause us the pain of sympathy.

Sometimes I held long private conversations with Prairie Flower; and then she would ask me over and over again about her supposed sister and mother—whether I thought they would be glad to own her—and more than once made me recount what little I knew of their history. This was a theme of which she seemed never to tire, and oftentimes would be affected to tears. Then she would tell me how she had mused over herself, and wondered who she was—whether she had a mother living—and if so, whether that mother ever thought of her. Sometimes she had fancied herself ignobly born—that she had been cast off in infancy—and then she had gone away by herself and wept bitter tears, and had prayed ardently that she might be resigned to her fate. She loved the Indians—among whom, at an early age, her lot had been cast—to her they were as brothers and sisters; but still the knowledge that she was not of their race—a secret yearning for the fond look and tender tone of a mother—had troubled her sorely; and nothing but the consolation of religion, and the hope of at least meeting her relatives in a better world, had supported her through her lonely trials.

Until I heard this from the lips of Prairie Flower, I had no idea such was the case, and had believed her contented and happy in the position where Providence had placed her, as had all who knew her. But they, as well as I, had overlooked, that where mystery clouds the birth of an individual, the thought of this to a sensitive, intelligent mind—his or her speculations upon it—the want of, the yearning for, more knowledge—must at times render such, no matter what the outward seeming, very unhappy. It was this very thing, perhaps, which had made Prairie Flower

so distant toward my friend, whom she loved, as I knew, with a passion pure and holy. She had thought herself unfit to be his companion, and had nobly struggled to undo what nature had done—and oh! what a hopeless and painful struggle it had been!—what an iron resolution it had required to carry it out!—and how many sleepless nights and miserable days it must have cost her!

At last we reached the village, whereto, some three years before, I had been borne from the field of battle in an unconscious state. What singular associations the sight of it revived! and how mournful its present aspect! It was deserted, and silent; and though most of its rude tenements were still standing, yet their half dilapidated appearance, and the general air of long desertion and decay every where visible, brought to mind Goldsmith's unrivalled and beautiful poem of the "Deserted Village." We rode through the little town in silence, noting each thing as we passed—and when we had got beyond it, Prairie Flower turned, gazed back, sighed deeply, wiped a few tears from her eyes, and then urged her little pony forward at a rapid pace.

A ride of half a mile brought us to a huge old tree, with a hollow trunk, when Prairie Flower came to a halt and said:

"My friends, this is the spot designated by Great Medicine, as the one where I should find a treasure to me more valuable than a mine of gold. Beneath that stone lies all or nothing. Oh! how I tremble, lest it prove the latter. Heaven grant I find what I seek!"

"Amen to that!" responded I; and the whole party dismounted.

Leading the way, Prairie Flower passed the tree a few feet, and rested her delicate foot upon a stone of singular appearance.

"Here!" she almost gasped, while her features grew deadly pale with excitement, and her frame shook nervously: "Here!" and she pointed down with her finger, but could say no more.

Forming a circle around the stone, we all gazed upon it a moment in silence, and then addressing Huntly:

"Come, my friend," I said, "let us raise it."

Stooping down, we applied all our strength to it in vain.

"It seems bedded in the earth by nature," said Huntly.

"Oh, no! say not that!" cried Prairie Flower in alarm. "Say not that, I beg of you! This is the spot described to me by the Old-Man-of-the-Mountains. I have thought of it by day—dreamed of it by night. I here have rested hopes of which you little think. Hopes, whose realization may render me the most happy, as disappointment would the most miserable being on earth. If I have made a mistake, it is a fatal one. A mistake—But no! no! it must not—must not be! Help, here, some of you!" she added, addressing the others. "Be quick! and do not keep me in this torturing suspense!"

She spoke hurriedly, almost incoherently, and her manner was very wild. As she concluded, she clasped her hands and gazed down upon the rock with a look I shall never forget. It was the agonized concentration of hope and fear. As if, in truth, she feared herself about to lose the only friend she had on earth. Instantly Teddy and one of the Indians laid hold with us, and our united efforts moved the stone from its foundation. All pressed forward, and eagerly gazed into the aperture. Nothing was there, apparently, but smooth, solid earth. For a moment Prairie Flower stood stupified with amazement and despair. Then burying her face in her hands, she sank down upon the earth, without uttering a syllable.

"Do not despair!" cried I; and bending down, I felt the earth with my hand.

It was soft, as if it had once been removed. I hastily dug down a few inches, and my hand touched a solid substance. Brushing away the dirt rapidly, I discovered, to my unspeakable delight, a small wooden box.

"'Tis here!" shouted I, "'tis here!" and the next moment I had torn it from the ground, and stood triumphantly holding it aloft.

My words roused Prairie Flower, who started to her feet with a scream, caught

the box from my hand, pressed it eagerly to her lips and heart, and then paced to and fro, in an indescribable delirium of delight. At length she became more calm, and turning to the rest of us, who stood looking on in silence, she said, in one of her sweetest tones:

"My friends, you must excuse me!—but oh! you know not, cannot know, my feelings for the last five minutes."

"We can at least imagine them," returned I; "and certainly there is no apology needed. We are only too happy in discovering the treasure."

"Ay, treasure indeed!" she exclaimed, holding the box from her, and gazing upon it with a singular expression. "Ha!" she added, "here is something written on the outside;" and examining it a moment, she added: "It is in the language of the Mysterious Tribe, and translated, reads, '*Seek lower!*'"

"That implies something still below," observed Huntly; and stooping down, he thrust his hand into the loose earth, and presently drew forth a lump of pure gold, weighing some three or four pounds.

Great was our astonishment on beholding this; but it was increased the next moment, by my friend bringing up two more of nearly equal size and value.—These lumps had no particular shape, and had the appearance of being broken off from a larger substance.

"This is strange!" remarked Prairie Flower, as we all stood examining them; "and where could Great Medicine have procured them! There is no gold in these mountains, that I am aware of—and yet this seems fresh taken from a mine. And, by-the-by, this reminds me that Great Medicine was always well supplied with gold, though where it came from, was always a mystery to the rest of the tribe. And see!" she added, giving one of the pieces a close scrutiny: "See! here is my Indian name, *Leni-Leoti*, scratched upon it with some sharp instrument."

"And on this," said Huntly, holding up another.

"And on this," repeated I, turning over the third.

"They were intended for you, Prairie

Flower," observed Huntly, addressing her; "and together form no mean gift."

"He was always kind to me, and I loved him," rejoined Prairie Flower, artlessly, her eyes filling with tears.

"But where could so much gold, in this rough state, have been obtained?" asked Huntly, turning to me.

A sudden thought flashed through my mind, and I turned to Prairie Flower.

"Was Great Medicine ever much abroad?"

"Never far from the tribe, since I first knew him," was her answer.

"But the tribe has been roving?"

"Yes, we have seldom spent a year at a time in one place."

"Were you ever in California?"

"One season we quartered on a beautiful oasis in the Great Desert, as we termed it."

"Ha! then there is some grounds for my conjecture;" and taking Huntly aside, I recalled to his mind the shiny sand we had there gathered, and added: "I think we were right in our surmises of its being gold!"

"True," he answered, with a start; "I remember now, though I had completely forgotten the circumstance."

"And so had I, till this revived it."

"Have you any of that sand with you, Frank?"

"I have not. Our subsequent perils drove the matter from my mind; and if any remained on my person when we arrived at Sutter's, it was thrown away with the tattered garments that contained it."

"Well, let it go!" rejoined Huntly, musingly; "let it go! There is gold there, without doubt—and some day it will doubtless be the means of great speculation."

"This being the case, my friend, suppose we make another tour, and ascertain for a certainty? If true, our fortune is made."

Huntly looked at me seriously for a moment, with a very peculiar expression of countenance, and then rejoined, in a decisive tone:

"No, Frank! not even a mine of gold

would tempt me to encounter the perils of such a journey again. Suppose I prove successful and make a fortune—what then? What is wealth, after all, that man should make himself a slave? 'Tis here—'tis there—'tis gone. Look at my lamented father, for example! One day he could count his thousands—the next he was a beggar; and the grave soon followed to cover a broken heart. * Fortune is not happiness—therefore I'll pay no court to the truant jade. Let those have wealth who crave it; let them worship the golden Mammon; for myself, let me be happy with little, and I ask no more. But, come! I see Prairie Flower and the rest are waiting us, and we must be on the move."

Joining the others, we made farther search, but finding nothing new, we all mounted our horses and set forward—Prairie Flower in better spirits than I had ever seen her. Though in possession of the box supposed to contain all she desired, yet she absolutely refused to open it, lest she might be tempted to an examination of its contents, and thus break her promise to the dying old man.

Summer had already passed, and the mortal stroke of old Autumn was even now beginning to be felt on the mountains. The trees, which had waved their green leaves as an accompaniment, to the music of the forest choir, were already changing color, as if in dread of the steady, onward strides of their annual, but ever-conquering foe. The first process of decay had begun—but so beautiful, that one as he gazed upon it, though it awakened a solemn, almost melancholy train of thought, could hardly wish it otherwise. As we ascended the mountains higher and more high, the scene below us became enchanting in its variety. Far, far away, for miles upon miles, the eye roved over hill and plain, while the soul, as it were, drank in the very essence of nature's beauty.—The atmosphere was cool and clear, and the sun brilliant, but not warm. In every direction there was something new for the eye to rest upon—something new for the mind to ponder. I beheld distant mountains rising to the very skies—isolated, glistening and cold in their lonely gran-

deur—as one who has ventured to the top-most round of Ambition's ladder, and scorns in his elevation all meaner objects grovelling in the dust below. I beheld lovely valleys, as yet untouched by the destroyer, still bright in their summer garments, through which purled silvery streams—the former doomed ere long to put on the withered shreds of mourning, and the latter to cease their murmurs in the icy fetters of the advancing Winter-King. In short, I beheld hills, and dales, and forests, and rolling prairies, and rivers, and rivulets—all spread before me in picturesque succession—and all more or less variegated with the many hued mantle of autumn. The scene was enchanting; and, as Prairie Flower, who with my friend had also been silently surveying it, observed with a sigh:

“Most melancholy beautiful.”

But lovely as was the view, I had but little time for contemplation; for the long journey before us, and the lateness of the season, required us to hasten forward, that we might pass the mountains before the snow storms and ice of winter should completely bar our way. We had yet some thirteen hundred miles to travel, and, with every thing favorable, could not hope to reach our destination in less than five or six weeks. Fortunately our animals were in good order—lightly laden—with no troublesome vehicles creaking and rumbling after, to delay us with bad roads and breaking accidents.

Leaving Laramie Peak to our right, we struck across the Laramie Plains to the Sweet Water Mountains, and thence descended to the great Oregon trail, crossing the Rocky Mountains at the well known South Pass. For the rest of the distance, our road was to some extent a travelled one, and our progress, with some little delays, very rapid. As nothing of unusual interest occurred on the route, I shall pass it over without a record.

On the evening of the first day of November, 1843, we came in sight of the lights of Oregon City, which we hailed with three deafening cheers.

CHAPTER XV.

ARRIVE AT MRS. HUNTLY'S—PAINFUL SURRENSES—THE WELCOME VOICE—MEETING OF LOVERS—OF BROTHER AND SISTER—OF MOTHER AND SON—TIDINGS OF MY FRIEND'S CAPTIVITY—ITS EFFECT UPON THE HEARERS—TALE OF MY ADVENTURES—PRAIRIE FLOWER DESCRIBED—AFFECTIONATE CURIOSITY—LILIAN'S ENTHUSIASM FOR EVA—VARIOUS MATTERS DISCUSSED—A HAPPY NIGHT.

To describe my feelings and those of Huntly, when we halted within view of the dwellings containing those around the very tendrils of whose hearts our own were entwined—on whose happiness or misery our own were depending—would be impossible; and therefore I shall not attempt it. The day's journey had been very severe—for we had all ridden hard, in order if possible to reach the village before nightfall. In this we had not succeeded; but knowing we were near, we still pressed forward after night set in, and by nine o'clock in the evening, had come in sight of the glimmering lights, as shown in the last chapter.

We now held a short consultation, which resulted in Huntly, Teddy and myself resolving to go forward, while Prairie Flower and her companions should encamp and remain where they were through the night. Our object in this was to see our friends alone, and prepare them to receive our fair benefactress, whom we intended to introduce as an Indian maiden, and then leave matters to take their own course.

Having at length arranged every thing to our satisfaction, we rode forward, and in less than half an hour drew rein near the humble cottage of Mrs. Huntly.

“And is it here,” said Charles, as he gazed with a sigh upon the rude edifice: “And is it here I again meet my dear mother and sister! Alas! Frank, there is a change indeed in our fortune! and now I feel it.”

“Repine not,” returned I; “but rather thank God you are safe, and look forward to better days!”

“I will not repine,” he said. “But,

Frank, there is such an air of poverty here, I could not avoid giving vent to my thoughts."

As we spoke we dismounted, and giving our horses in charge of Teddy—with orders to take good care of them, and seek another place of rest for himself—we approached the door with trembling steps, and with conflicting feelings of hope and fear. What if something had happened, and we should find a stranger in place of those we sought! But no! no! we would not harbor such a thought—would look to clasp our friends to our beating hearts!

The house was tightly closed, but not uninhabited, as we could see by the light which here and there shone through a crevice.

"Go forward!" whispered Huntly; and I advanced and rapped timidly on the rough door with my knuckles.

To this there came no answer, and I repeated it, but harder and louder.

"Who is there?" said a soft voice from within.

Gracious heavens! how its tones thrilled me! I knew it! I would have known it among a million! It was the voice of my own beloved Lillian!

"A friend," answered I, as with one hand I grasped the arm of Charles, who was now trembling with agitation.

"Pardon me!" answered Lillian; "but will you give me your name—as it is already somewhat late, and there is no one within but mother and myself."

"And do you not know me, Lillian?"

"That voice!" I heard her exclaim; "that voice!" and the next moment there was an agitated rattling at the door, which instantly swung open, and revealed the idol of my thoughts standing before me, pale and trembling.

"Lillian!" I exclaimed, "thank God we meet again!" and in an instant she was folded in my embrace and weeping with joy.

"O," she ejaculated, looking up affectionately into my face: "O, Francis, this is more than I have prayed for—more than I expected: I did not look for you this season. But, ha!" she exclaimed, as the shadow of her brother, who had stolen in

behind her unperceived, fell upon her vision—"we are not alone—who have we here!"

She turned suddenly round, and her eyes met the tearful ones of Charles, as, with outstretched arms, he stood ready to receive her, too much affected to utter a syllable.

For a brief moment she remained speechless and motionless, as if fearing to believe her senses; and then gasping "My brother!" she staggered forward and sank fainting upon his breast.

At this moment Mrs. Huntly, who had been on the point of retiring, but had been deterred by the sound of voices, entered the room from an adjoining apartment.

"Who have we here?" she said, as she advanced toward us, looking from one to the other inquiringly, but unable from the position of the light to see our features.

"Francis!" she exclaimed joyfully, as I took a step forward: "Francis, my son! do I indeed see thee again!" and ere the words were concluded, I found myself closed in a motherly embrace. "This is indeed a happy surprise!" she added, warmly.

"But there," returned I, pointing to Charles, who, still straining Lillian to his breast, was now gazing upon his mother with that singular expression of intense joy, which the imprisoned soul, struggling as it were for release, and choking all utterance, stamps upon every feature: "There," said I, "a more happy surprise awaits you;" and springing forward, I took the half unconscious form of Lillian from the arms of my friend.

For a moment mother and son stood face to face, gazing upon each other, completely overpowered by their feelings.

"Mother!" at length burst from the lips of Charles.

"My son!" and staggering forward, they fell upon each other's neck, and gave their overcharged souls vent in tears and sighs.

For sometime no one spoke; then raising her tearful eyes to Heaven, and in a voice of deep solemnity, Mrs. Huntly ejaculated:

"Almighty God! I thank thee for this moment of unclouded happiness—for re-

storing the wanderer safe to the only parent he has on earth!"

"Ay, the only parent," added Charles, with a fresh burst of emotion; "the only one, dear mother. My father—alas! my father!"

He paused, overcome by his feelings.

But I will not prolong the affecting scene. Suffice, that for more than an hour very little was said, except in the way of thanks to the Supreme Ruler for bringing us all safely together once more. And well might we be thankful to that watchful Providence, which had slumbered not in our hours of grief and danger, and had brought us all out, as it were, from the very "Valley of the Shadow of Death."

The first transports of joy over, we gradually grew calm; and having formed a small circle before the cheerful fire:

"Now," said Mrs. Huntly, "let me hear something of my friends in Boston."

"Alas!" sighed I, my mind reverting at once to my own parents, "I can give you no news in that quarter."

"And have you not been home?" she asked in surprise.

I shook my head.

"Then you met Charles on the way, and he perhaps can tell me?" and she turned to him inquiringly.

"Nay, mother," he answered sadly, "I have not seen the land of my nativity since I there parted from you."

"Why, what means this?" she asked, turning to me.

"Pardon me," I said, in some embarrassment, "if I once deceived you both!—but I did it for the best."

"Deceived us!" exclaimed both Lillian and her mother in a breath. "Pray explain yourself, Francis!" added the latter.

"You remember I told you, that when I parted with Charles, he was going eastward?"

"Well! well!"

"But I did not add, it was only intended as the parting of a few minutes, and that when I met you on the mountains, I believed him lost to us all forever."

"Lost!" screamed Mrs. Huntly.

"Lost!" echoed Lillian.

"Lost!" rejoined I. "Ay, lost indeed—for I believed him dead."

"O, speak, Francis!" exclaimed Mrs. Huntly, greatly agitated, and looking from me to Charles, and from Charles to me: "Speak, Francis, and tell us what you mean!"

"Charles," I returned, in a trembling voice, "was taken prisoner by a band of guerrillas; but I—I—believed him dead—for no trace of him could be found."

"A prisoner! You, Charles, my son, a prisoner!" cried his mother; and again throwing herself upon his neck, she burst into tears; while Lillian, gliding up to his side, took his hand in silence, and gazed mournfully upon him with swimming eyes.

"Is it so, Charles?" asked his mother. "Is it so? Have you indeed been in captivity?"

"I have, dear mother, I have!" he answered, in a voice choked with emotion.

Drawing back, Mrs. Huntly gazed upon him with a look of unutterable fondness and affection, and then turning to me, said, somewhat coldly:

"Francis, how could you deceive me! I did not think this of you."

I was about to reply, when Lillian turned quickly round and confronted her mother.

"Mother," she said, "do not speak in that manner. If Francis did not tell us all, it was because he feared to wound our feelings—to give us unnecessary pain.—Was it not so?" she asked, appealing to me with her soft blue eyes.

"It was!" I exclaimed, struggling to command my feelings. "It was, dear Lillian—God bless you for an angel—it was!"

"I crave pardon!" said Mrs. Huntly, taking my hand. "I did not intend to wound your feelings, Francis, and sincerely believe you did all for the best. But the suddenness of the news—the shock—surprised and alarmed me, and I did not heed what I said. I now know it was all for the best; for had I known Charles was lost, I fear the result might have been fatal. Thank God," she continued, turning again to her son: "Thank God, you are safe before me now! O, Charles, my

son," she added, covering her eyes with her hands to conceal her emotion, "you must never, never leave me again!"

"Never, mother," he answered solemnly, "till we are parted by death."

"And this," said Lilian, turning fondly to me, "is why you became so agitated whenever I mentioned my brother. I understand all now. And this, too, is the cause of your abrupt departure, which has ever appeared so singular to me, and over which Eva and I have speculated many an hour, without solving the problem."

"And did my departure indeed appear so singular, sweet Lilian?" I inquired in surprise. "Did I not tell you I was going to seek your brother?"

"Ay! but you forget you did not tell me he was lost—and we, you know, supposed him in Boston. There was nothing so remarkable in your going to meet him, as in the hurried manner which you departed, without any previous notice, as if you had heard bad tidings. It was this that put us to conjecture."

"True, I did overlook that."

"Well, well, dear Francis, never mind; you are here again; and now we must hear the tale of your adventures, and how you found Charles."

"Yes," rejoined Mrs. Huntly, "I am all anxiety to hear the story."

"Who shall tell it?" asked I.

"You, Frank," answered Charles. "You can tell it better than I."

The tale I told: beginning with the loss of my friend at Pueblo de los Angeles, and its subsequent effect upon me, up to the time when I met with his mother and sister near the South Pass of the Rocky Mountains. I then narrated my last adventure, and gave a brief description of the scenes already laid before the reader, and how I had, little by little, traced Charles to the very spot of his captivity, only to find that another had released him. This led me to Prairie Flower, whom I described as a beautiful being, and as good as she was beautiful. I described our first meeting with her and her tribe, and something of their manners and customs, and recalled to mind how she had, at the risk of her life, appeared to warn the emigrants,

on that memorable night before they crossed the Rocky Mountains. I then reverted to Charles, and how I had found him in company with the tribe. In fact, I gave an outline of all the principal incidents of interest, carefully avoiding any allusion to the attachment existing between my friend and Prairie Flower, as also that we had any suspicions as to who the latter might be, or that she had accompanied us on our last journey.

During the recital, both Mrs. Huntly and Lilian listened eagerly, occasionally interrupting me with some question or exclamation, when the incidents detailed were unusually exciting. In fact, whenever I described a scene of danger to myself, Lilian would press close to my side, and gaze up into my face, pale and breathless, sometimes shuddering at the picture called up in her mind, and seem to hang upon my words as intensely as though they were actually imparting life or death to him she loved. Nay, more than this: On several occasions did she become so lost in the thrilling tale, as to utter exclamations of horror; and then, remembering where she was, she would clasp my hand with a hearty pressure, and in a low voice thank God for my deliverance and present safety.

"And where is this beautiful Indian maiden?" she asked, when I had done.— "What a singular being! O, I should love her so! for her goodness, and her kindness to those so dear to me."

"Ay, Lilian, you would indeed love her," I answered; "for she is one of the sweetest beings you ever knew."

"Always excepting Eva," she rejoined, playfully.

"Nay, Lilian, I will except no one but your own sweet self."

She blushed, and smiled, and added:

"You are too complimentary."

"But what has become of this Prairie Flower?" inquired Mrs. Huntly. "You did not tell us where you had left her."

"And what if I should say she is near at hand?"

"Near at hand?" repeated Lilian.

"Explain, Francis!" added Mrs. Huntly.

"She crossed the mountains with us."

"Indeed! and where is she now?"

"Within sight of the lights of this great city."

"Is it possible! And why did you not bring her here at once?"

"Why, it was already late; and as she has several companions with her, we thought it better for the party to encamp and remain till morning, while we went forward and prepared you to receive them."

"O, I am so anxious to see her!" rejoined Lilian; "and so will be Eva, when she hears of her. While she remains with us, we will treat her as a sister."

"I believe you," returned I, pointedly, and fixing my eye upon Huntly, who blushed and turned his head aside, but made no remark.

"O, what a surprise awaits Eva on the morrow!" pursued Lilian. "She does not dream you are here; and yet she has been praying for your return, with brother Charles, every day since you left."

"I thank her, from my heart, for her interest in our welfare. She is a noble girl."

"She is indeed!" rejoined Lilian, enthusiastic in praise of her friend; "and I love her as a sister—which I hope she may be ere long," she added, playfully, turning to Huntly with a smile, who appeared not a little embarrassed. "O, Charles," continued Lilian, pursuing her train of thought, "if ever one being loved another without seeing him, dear Eva loves you—for your name is ever on her tongue."

"I am very grateful for it, certainly," replied Charles, evasively, feeling himself pressed for an answer.

"And well you may be—for her equal does not live!" persisted Lilian with spirit, loth to quit the subject.

"Do not assert that!" returned I, with a smile. "You forget that Eva had a sister."

"But who knows any thing of her sister, Francis?"

"Ay, who knows!" answered I, reflecting on what I suspected, and on what the morrow might reveal. "But come, Lilian, since Eva has so much place in your thoughts, tell me how it has fared with you since last we met."

"O, as well as could be expected, and you away," she answered, *naively*. "We have walked, and rode, and played, and sung, and read, and talked, and wondered fifty times a day where you were, and when you would return, and if Charles would come with you, and so on. To sum up, the spring, summer and most of the autumn have passed—but somehow the time has been more tedious than I could have wished. There is not the society here to please us, and on the whole we have not been very well contented.—There has been quite an addition of settlers here during the past season, and the village has much improved since you saw it. In fact, it begins to assume the aspect of a civilized town; but still I feel I could never be happy here."

"And would you like to return to the east?"

"O, dearly!"

"You shall start in the spring, then," I rejoined.

"O, that is joyful news! And Eva shall go also?"

"All that desire to accompany us, Lilian."

"Eva will be so rejoiced at this. But mother has invested what little means she had in the purchase of land."

"Well, that can be sold again; and it will have lost nothing in value, since the town has begun to flourish."

"And will you go, mother?" asked Lilian, addressing the good lady, who, meantime, had been conversing with Charles in an under tone.

"As my children desire," answered Mrs. Huntly. "I shall leave all to you, my children. But, come! Charles is about to tell us of his captivity; and although it is late, I am anxious to hear his tale."

Thus ended my conversation for the time with Lilian; and forming a half circle around her brother, we all attentively listened to his thrilling narrative. By the time he had concluded, the night was far advanced; and though I had a thousand things to say to Lilian, I deferred them all to another opportunity, and retired to rest with a lighter heart than I had known for many a long year.

CHAPTER XVI.

MORNING SALUTATIONS—MY FRIEND GLOOMY—
—OLD FRIENDS—CORDIAL GREETINGS—
MEETING OF CHARLES AND EVA—EMBAR-
RASSMENT OF BOTH—REASSURANCE—
PRAIRIE FLOWER DISCUSSED—NATURAL
SURMISES—SLIGHT JEALOUSY—GOOD TID-
INGS.

When I awoke on the following morning, the bright sun was already streaming through the half closed shutter of my room. Huntly was up and dressed, and standing by my bed.

"Come?" he said, as I partially aroused myself to look around: "Come, Frank, the sun is up before you, and breakfast is waiting!"

At first I felt a little bewildered, as a person sometimes will in a strange place. But it was only momentary; and remembering where I was, I sprang to the floor, hurried my rude toilet, and accompanied my friend to the larger apartment, where I found the table smoking with hot viands, and Lillian and her mother ready to welcome me with sweet smiles and cordial salutations.

"And how did you rest?" inquired Mrs. Huntly.

"Well!" I answered. "I slept soundly, I assure you, or I should have made my appearance ere this."

"I am glad to hear it, my son, for you needed rest. Lillian and I were not so fortunate; for the unusual events of last night drove all slumber from our eyelids, and we could do nothing but talk of you and Charles."

"I fear our presence, then," said I, smiling, "has robbed you of a sweet night's rest!"

"Do not be alarmed," returned Lillian, archly. "Your presence has been more beneficial than sleep, I assure you—and never did I behold daylight with more joy."

"That you might escape from your reflections, eh! Lillian?"

"That I might see you again," she rejoined, with one of her sweetest smiles.

"A kiss for that!" cried I gaily.

And I took it.

The morning meal passed off cheerfully with all save Charles, who appeared somewhat gloomy, at times abstracted, and rarely spoke.

"What is the matter, my friend!" inquired I. "One would look to see you cheerful, if not gay; and yet you are silent and thoughtful."

"I feel a little depressed in spirits," he answered. "But never mind me. I shall be myself in time. At present I am soberly inclined."

"Fatigue, perhaps?" suggested his mother.

"My father!" he answered, solemnly.

Instantly a dead silence prevailed, and the tears sprang to the eyes of both Mrs. Huntly and Lillian.

"But, come," added Charles, after a pause, "do not let me make you sad, my friends! You mourned my father bitterly, long ere I heard of his death. You must remember my cause for grief is recent."

"Alas!" sighed Mrs. Huntly, "we all mourn him still, and ever must."

Another gloomy silence succeeded.

"I saw Teddy this morning," at length pursued Charles, anxious to divert our thoughts from the painful channel into which his remarks had drawn them, "and I dispatched him to Prairie Flower, requesting the presence of herself and friends. She and they will soon be here."

"And I," added, Lillian, "have seen Eva. It would have done you good to have witnessed her surprise and delight, on hearing the joyful tidings I imparted. I expect her here every moment. Ha! she is here now!" she added, rising; "I know her step;" and hastening to the door, she conducted the object of her remarks and Madame Mortimer into the apartment.

I hurriedly arose and advanced to meet them.

"O, I am so rejoiced to see you, Francis!" cried Eva, springing forward and extending both hands, which I shook warmly. "This is a joyful surprise indeed!"

"And I," said Madame Mortimer, coming up, "I, too, believe me, am most happy to welcome you back, as it were, to the land of the living! We have felt your loss severely—most severely, sir;" and the

pressure of her hands, as she said this, convinced me her words were not idly said.

"I feel myself most fortunate and happy in having such *friends*," I replied, emphasising the last word; "and, I assure you, I am as rejoiced to meet them as they can be to see me. But, come! let me present you to my long lost friend;" and turning to Huntly, who had risen from his seat, I introduced both mother and daughter together.

Huntly bowed low to each, and, with unusual embarrassment for him, said it gave him extreme pleasure to meet with those whom he had seen years before, in a moment of peril, and of whom he had since heard so much from me.

I particularly noted the countenance of Eva, who now beheld Charles Huntly for the first time. As I presented her, she turned pale, then crimsoned to the eyes, then took a faltering step forward, as if to meet him, but finally paused and let her eyes sink to the floor, seemingly greatly embarrassed. Not so with Madame Mortimer. With a quick step she instantly advanced toward Charles, who met her half way, seized his proffered hand, and frankly said, in a voice tremulous with emotion:

"God bless you, Charles Huntly! I am most happy to behold you. You, sir, a stranger, saved the life of my daughter, at the risk of your own. You have had a fond mother's prayers for your safety and happiness ever since; but until now, I have never had an opportunity of expressing to you my most lasting obligations;" and she turned away her face to conceal the springing tears.

"You owe me no obligations," returned my friend, frankly. "If there were any due, they have long since been cancelled in your kindness to those I love. I did but my duty; and if the adventure was perilous at the time, it certainly brought its own reward afterwards, in a satisfied conscience."

Here he rested his eye upon Eva, with an expression as of uncertainty whether to advance to her side or remain where he was. At the same time Eva looked up,

their eyes met, and with a simultaneous movement, each approached and took the other by the hand.

"O, sir!" began Eva, in a timid voice, and then paused, while her snowy hand trembled with agitation. Then making a struggle to appear calm, she added: "I—I—am very—very grateful;" and the last word died away in an almost inaudible murmur.

What a perplexing predicament for my friend! Before him stood the first being he had ever loved, beyond the love filial and fraternal. She stood before him, face to face, her hand trembling in his, and her voice sounding the sweet words of a grateful heart in his ear. That voice and those words which once would have made him frantic with rapture. Which once would have sent the hot blood to his heart, only that it might again leap in burning streams through his swollen veins. Which once, in short, would have made him the happiest of mortals. How was it now! Time and circumstances work great changes in the human heart, and my friend was changed—at least changed in that impassioned sentiment he had once felt for the object before him. He was not cold and indifferent—not insensible to her lovely charms and noble virtues. No! he was affected—deeply affected—affected to tears, by her look and language. He loved her still—but with a modified love. The love of a brother for a sister. The love which is founded on esteem, for the high and noble qualities possessed by another, without regard to mere personalities. There was no ardency—no passion. No! all this was gone—transferred to another. Prairie Flower alone held the heart of Charles Huntly.

"Miss Mortimer," replied my friend—"or rather let me call you Eva—I am most happy to meet you; and feel it is I, rather than you, who ought to be grateful, for having been permitted to do an act which has already repaid me ten-fold. I am one who hold that every virtuous deed bears with it its own reward. Pray, be seated, and we will talk farther!"

"Ay," chimed in Madame Mortimer, "and you shall give us, Charles, some of

your own adventures. Since you came to the Far West, you have, if I am rightly informed, experienced much of the romantic."

"I have seen a little of romance, I believe," replied Huntly, as, pointing his friends to seats, he took another between them.

"Lilian," pursued Madame Mortimer, "has already told me something, and I am anxious to hear more. She says you are indebted to a beautiful Indian maiden for both life and liberty—certainly a heavy obligation on your part."

"I feel it such," rejoined Huntly, changing color.

"And who is this Indian girl? and to what tribe does she belong? The daughter of some great chief, I suppose—for in all novels, you know, the heroine must be some great personage, either acknowledged or incog."

"But you forget, madam," returned Huntly, smiling, "that the heroine in this case, as you are pleased to term Prairie Flower, is an individual in real life; whereas in novels, the heroine alone exists in the imagination of the author, and can be whatever he may see proper to make her. Therefore you should not be surprised, should she turn out some humble individual.

"Well," answered Madame Mortimer, "all romance is much alike, whether imaginary or real; for the novelist, if true to his calling, must draw his scenes from real life; and hence I may be permitted to suppose the heroine, in this case, a person of some consequence."

"And so she may be, for what we know to the contrary," said I, joining in.

"And do you not know who she is, then?" asked Madame Mortimer.

"We know nothing positive."

"Is she not the daughter of a chief?"

"No."

"Is she beautiful?" asked Eva, giving me a peculiar look.

"Very beautiful," replied I, glancing at my friend, who colored and seemed a little confused.

Both Eva and her mother caught the expression of Huntly's countenance, and the latter said:

"Then perhaps Charles has lost his heart with her!"

Eva turned to him quickly, with a searching glance, and immediately added:

"I believe he has—for he changes color at the mere mention of her name;" and her own features, as she spoke, grew a shade paler.

"One has his heart that is nearer at hand," observed Lilian, who, with her mother, had been standing a silent spectator of what had passed.

"I pray you drop this jesting!" said Huntly, with an effort to appear careless and unconcerned.

"Nay, but I must know more of this singular personage," pursued Madame Mortimer; "for I feel deeply interested in her. A girl that could and would do what she has done, can be no ordinary being."

"So think I," added Mrs. Huntly.

"And so you will find her," I rejoined.

"I am dying to see her," said Lilian.

"She must have taken great interest in the fate of Charles, to seek him out in captivity," observed Madame Mortimer. "Is it not so, Francis?"

"Her motto of life is to do all the good she can," I answered, rather evasively. "She would take an interest in any one who chanced to be in trouble."

"God bless her, then, for a true heart!" was the response.

"But how came she to think of visiting Oregon?" asked Eva.

"We persuaded her to accompany us home," I replied. "As she once saved both our lives, and afterwards ransomed Charles from slavery, not forgetting that night which you all remember, when she gave us timely warning of danger, whereby much boodshed was averted, I thought you would like to see and thank her."

"And you were right," said Lilian. "O, Eva, we will love her as a sister, will we not?"

"Certainly," answered Eva, rather abstractedly, and evidently not so well pleased with the idea of her being present as the other. "Certainly, we will love her as a sister."

Could a faint, a very faint spark of jealousy have begun to blaze in her breast? I

CHAPTER XVII.

observed her closely and drew my own conclusions. Let the reader draw his.

Meantime Huntly had remained seated, apparently indifferent to every thing said. Was he indifferent? Again let the reader, who knows something of the state of his heart, be his own judge. We who are in the secret can think what we please. And why did Eva suddenly become so thoughtful and abstracted? Was she thinking of Prairie Flower? and did she fear a rival in an Indian maiden?—for I had never intimated she was other than an Indian. Again let the reader decide. My design, as previously stated, was to bring all parties together, and leave matters to take their own course; and I now felt anxious for all the actors to be on the stage, that I might witness the *dénouement*.

For some time the conversation went on, gradually changing from Prairie Flower to my friend, who was called upon to narrate some of his adventures.

Anxious to entertain those present, and divert his thoughts from other subjects, he began the recital of a thrilling scene, in which he was an inactive, though not unconcerned spectator, and had already reached the most exciting part, holding his listeners breathless with interest, when Teddy entered the apartment in haste, exclaiming:

“Your honor—” Then pausing as he saw who were present, and making a low bow—“Beg pardon, ladies! My most obedient respects to all o’ yees, by token I’ve saan yees afore.”

“Well, well, Teddy—have they come?” inquired I, impatiently.

“Troth, and they has, your honor! and that’s jist what I’s a-going to say, whin the likes o’ so many beauthifull females put me out a bit”

“And where are they now, Teddy?”

“Jist round the corner, as ye may say.”

“Remain here, and I will soon set Prairie Flower before you,” said I, addressing the others, who were now all excitement to behold my fair friend.

And I hurried from the cot, followed by Teddy.

PRAIRIE FLOWER—HER APPEARANCE—EMOTIONS—INTRODUCTION—THE SURPRISE—THE LIKENESS—A THRILLING SCENE—A MOTHER’S FEELINGS—WILD INTERROGATIONS—STARTLING DÉNOUEMENT.

I found Prairie Flower seated upon her little pony, in company with her Indian friends, pale and agitated, but looking, if any thing, more beautiful than ever. She wore a plain neat dress, without ornament, which fitted her person well, and displayed her airy, symmetrical figure to the best advantage. Her dark glossy hair was braided and arranged, if not *a la mode*, at least in most exquisite taste; and altogether her appearance was such as could not offend the searching gaze of the most fastidious critic. All trace of the Indian was gone; and gazing upon her sweet, modest countenance, one could hardly realize her life, for the most part, had been spent in the wilderness, among the red children of the forest.

“And how fares my fair friend this morning?” I said, with a smile, as I came up.

“But indifferently well,” she answered, dismounting.

“I fear you did not rest well last night?”

“I did not rest at all,” she replied. “How could I rest, sir, with such momentous thoughts as kept me company! O, sir,” she added, vehemently, placing her hand upon her heart; “here, here were strange feelings, strange emotions, strange yearnings—but all powerful as strange—and they kept my senses from slumber. Every nerve was then strained, and I felt strong. But now—I am weak—very weak;” and as she spoke, she rested her hand on the neck of her little pony for support.

“Come!” I said, advancing to her side, “take my arm, and I will conduct you hence. It is intense excitement which so unnerves you; but you must not give way to it. It is necessary, for the present, that you be calm, and do not lose your wouted presence of mind.”

“And whither would you conduct me?” she timidly inquired.

"Within this humble cottage."

"And—and—are *they* there—of—of whom you spoke?" she fairly gasped.

"Ay! they await your presence to thank you for all your kindness."

"And do—do—they *know*?" she said, emphasising the last word, clasping my hand, and fixing her dark eyes, with a singular expression, upon mine.

"They know nothing, Prairie Flower, but that you are the author of many noble deeds, for which they are your debtors, and for which they are anxious to return you heartfelt thanks. My friend and I thought it best to bring you together, without even hinting our surmises."

"It was a happy thought in you," she replied, with some reassurance; "I am glad you did so; I am glad they know nothing; and I will try to be calm and appear indifferent. But, sir, believe me! this is a great trial. I have been used to danger, all my life. I—though you may think it strange, for I have never told it you before—have even stood upon the field of carnage, where the fierce battle raged, and the deadly missiles were whirling past me, fairly hissing in my ear, and there have striven to succor the wounded. I have had my life in danger many times, when I believed every moment would be my last. I have, for my years, seen much hardship and peril—but never, sir, a moment like the present—never a time when I felt my soul shrink within me, and refuse to do my bidding as now—never a time when I had less self-command and felt I needed it more. I am about to enter the presence of those whose blood, perchance, runs in my veins; and the doubts—the uncertainty—the hopes and fears, which are based upon this bare possibility, are mighty in their strength. O, sir! such feelings—such wild, strange feelings as rush over me at the thought, are beyond the utterance of mortal tongue—words could not express them. But I will say no more. I keep them waiting. I will nerve myself. I am ready."

"But perhaps your friends here had better wait till this first interview is over."

"True," she said, "they must not witness it;" and turning, she addressed a few

words to them, and then signified that she was ready.

At this moment my eye fell upon several of the villagers, who were sauntering towards us, attracted, some of them perhaps by curiosity, and others by the news of my arrival. As I did not care to see any at present, I said a word to Prairie Flower, and we hastened our steps to the threshold of the cottage.

"Courage!" I whispered, and led her in with a faltering step.

All eyes were instantly fastened upon her; and the involuntary exclamation from more than one was, "How beautiful!" Prairie Flower, pale and trembling, could not return their gaze, but sunk her own to the ground.

"My friends," I said, "I herewith present you our fair benefactress, to whom two of us at least, if not all present, are indebted for our lives. This is the Prairie Flower of whom I spoke; and taking slight liberty with her name, I may be permitted to term her the Flower of the Wilderness."

As I spoke, each of the ladies rose and advanced to meet her—but Lillian was the first to gain her side. With a quick step she came forward, and taking the inactive hands of Prairie Flower in her own, said in a bland, frank, affectionate tone:

"Welcome, sweet maiden, to the home of those who already love you for your many virtues. I have—"

At this moment Prairie Flower raised her eyes to those of the speaker, whose countenance suddenly changed to a look of bewildered surprise, and taking a step backward, she clasped her hands and ejaculated:

"Good heavens! how remarkable!"

"The charm works," whispered I to my friend, who had silently joined me.

He pressed my hand nervously, but said nothing.

"Yes, welcome to our humble abode, Prairie Flower!" said Mrs. Huntly, in a kindly tone, who, her gaze rivited upon the fair maiden, had not as yet noticed the surprise and agitation of her daughter. "Eh! what! how!" she added the next moment, as the dark eyes of Prairie Flower

er in turn rested upon hers; and she glanced quickly toward Eva, Madame Mortimer and Lillian, and then back again upon Prairie Flower, as if uncertain what to think or how to act.

"I thank you—for—for—your kindness!" faltered Prairie Flower, again dropping her eyes to the ground, and evidently scarcely able to support herself from sinking.

At the moment Mrs. Huntly spoke, Eva had extended her hand within a step of Prairie Flower, and her lips were just parted to utter a welcome, when the same look which had surprised the former, arrested her motions and held her spell-bound, as if suddenly transformed to a statue of marble. But it was Madame Mortimer which now fixed my whole attention. She had come up a little behind the others, with an expression of patronizing, benevolent curiosity on her fine, matronly features. The first glance at Prairie Flower had changed the idle look of curiosity, to one of surprise and interest at her maiden beauty, and the absence of that distinguishing mark of the Indian which she had expected to find. The next moment she evidently became struck with her strong resemblance to Eva, which had so surprised each of the others; and a sudden vague, wild thought—a suspicion—a something undefinable—rushed over her half bewildered brain; and her features grew ashy pale, her bosom heaved, and her very lips turned white with internal emotions. But it was when Prairie Flower spoke, you should have seen her. There was something in that voice, that seemed to thrill every nerve, and then take away all power of motion—suspend every animal function. At the first sound, she leaned a little forward, one hand, unconsciously as it were, stretched toward the speaker, and the other instinctively clasping her forehead; while the blood rushing upward crimsoned her features, and then retreating to her heart, left them paler than ever. Her lips parted, her eyes seemed starting from their sockets, her heaving breast ceased its throbbing, and she stood transfixed to the ground, motionless and mute, apparently without life, or only that life

of surprised and bewildered inaction, which the master sculptor of the passions sometimes transfuses into the otherwise inanimate object of his creation. It was a strange and impressive picture, and one that would have made the fortune and fame of any artist who could have accurately transferred it to canvas. A momentary silence prevailed—a deathly silence—that seemingly had in it the awful calm preceding the frightful tempest. For a brief space no one moved—no one spoke—and, I may add, no one breathed; for the internal excitement had suspended respiration. There they stood, as I have described them, a wonderful group—sweet Prairie Flower, as the central figure and object of interest, the cynosure of all eyes, and, if I may be permitted the expression, the very soul of all thought. Just behind Prairie Flower stood Huntly, my hand clasped in his and suffering from its pressure.

Madame Mortimer was the first to move—the first to break the silence. Suddenly taking a step forward between Mrs. Huntly and Eva, and clasping her hands before her, her eyes still riveted upon Prairie Flower, she exclaimed in a hoarse whisper, that had something sepulchral in its sound:

"Merciful God! who are you? Speak! speak! In Heaven's name, who are you?"

Prairie Flower looked up wildly, clasped her hands, fixed her eyes upon the other, and trembled violently, but said nothing.

"Who are you?" cried Madame Mortimer again. "For God's sake, speak! and break this terrible spell of painful, bewildering uncertainty! Speak! I charge you, speak!"

But the lips of Prairie Flower gave no answer.

"Speak you!" continued Madame Mortimer, wildly, appealing to me: "Speak any! speak all! but speak somebody! and tell me I am not in a dream—a dream from which it would be terrible to wake and know it but a dream."

"You do not dream," said I; "and, I have every reason to believe, are standing in the presence of——"

"Who?" she screamed, interrupting me.

"*Your long lost daughter!*"

"Ah!" she shrieked: "God of mercy! I thought so!" and staggering forward, she threw out her arms, fell heavily upon the breast of Prairie Flower, and swooned in her embrace.

CHAPTER XVIII.

CONFUSION—MADAME MORTIMER RESTORED—SECOND INTERVIEW OF MOTHER AND DAUGHTER—THE GRATEFUL PRAYER—FEARS OF PRAIRIE FLOWER—DOUBTS REMOVED—LIGHT CONVERSATION—A STROLL—OLD ACQUAINTANCES—OREGON CITY—LOVE'S MISGIVINGS—RETURN TO THE COTTAGE.

To describe minutely what occurred during the first half hour after this singular meeting between mother and daughter, is wholly beyond my power—for I was too much excited myself to note any thing distinctly. For a time all was uproar and confusion—persons running to and fro, calling for this thing and that, and uttering exclamations of terror, surprise and bewilderment.

Meantime Madame Mortimer was borne in an unconscious state to an adjoining apartment, where such restoratives as could be had were speedily applied, for a long time without success; while Prairie Flower, more dead than alive, was conducted to a seat, where Eva, the first alarm for her mother over, flew to embrace her, to twine her arms around her neck, call her "Dear, dear sister!" and weep and laugh alternately as one insane. Lillian and Mrs. Huntly seemed completely bewildered; and were now with Madame Mortimer, and anon with Prairie Flower, aiding the recovery of the one, wondering over the other, and continually uttering, "How strange! how strange!" Charles, pale as a corpse, had sunk upon a seat, and with his face buried in his hands, sat in silence; while I, after running up and down the room several times, found myself, much to my surprise, alone in the center of the apartment and dancing for very joy.

At last every thing began to assume a more tranquil and sane appearance. Prairie Flower found vent to her feelings in a flood of tears upon the breast of Eva, who, as she put in now and then a soothing word, begging the other to be calm, mingled her own with her sister's; while Lillian and her mother wept in sympathy of joy, and my own eyes, by the spontaneous action of an overflowing soul, would, in spite of myself, occasionally grow dim.—Madame Mortimer, too, gradually regained her senses, and looking hurriedly about her, anxiously inquired for her long lost daughter. Prairie Flower was at once conducted to her side, whither we all followed to witness the interview.

For something like a minute, Madame Mortimer gazed upon her daughter without speaking, during which her features displayed all the varying expressions of a mother's tender, yearning love for a long lost child.

"'Tis she!" at length escaped her lips, in that deep tone by which the very soul gives utterance: "'Tis she! the long-lost—the sadly-wept—the deeply-mourned.—Yes, 'tis she—there is no mistaking those features. The lost is found—the dead restored to life." Then pausing, clasping her hands and looking upward, she added: "God! all merciful, all wise, and all just—for this I thank thee, from the inner depths of a grateful heart! This day's happiness, O God! hath cancelled long years of suffering and sorrow; and henceforth the study of my life shall be to glorify thy name."

During this brief, solemn, but heart-felt offering of gratitude to the Great Author of the universe, Prairie Flower gradually sank upon her knees beside the bed whereon the speaker was lying, and covering her face with her hands, appeared lost in silent devotion. This over, she arose, and gazing upon Madame Mortimer a moment, with a look of unutterable affection, uttered the single word "Mother!" threw herself upon the breast of the latter, was strained to her heart, and the tears of both mingled.

It was a touching scene, and one that needs no comment from me.

"And now, my sweet child," said Ma-

dame Mortimer, pressing her lips warmly to the other's, "my long lost Evaline Mortimer—for by that name, which you bore in infancy, you must henceforth be known—tell me something of yourself, and how you came to be found among the Indians!"

Prairie Flower—or Evaline, as I will hereafter term her—started, turned pale and sighed heavily, but did not reply. At once I comprehended her thoughts and hastened to relieve her; for I saw in her look a secret dread, lest the unrevealed secret in her possession might even now dash the cup of joy from her lips, by proving her the child of another.

"She knows but little of her own history," I began, and then went on to recount our first suspicions as to who she might be, and what followed, up to her finding the hidden box, which probably contained a statement of the facts, but which she, for reasons explained, had not yet examined.

"Alas!" sighed Evaline, "and that is what troubles me now. I fear there may have been some mistake; and if, oh God! there be——"

"Give yourself no uneasiness, my child!" interrupted Madame Mortimer; "for you are my child, I feel and know; and for my own satisfaction, would never seek other proof than what I have—your likeness to Eva, and a mother's yearnings. But if you have any doubts, examine your left arm, and you there will find a scar, in the form of a quarter moon, which was impressed upon Evaline Mortimer in infancy."

Evaline started, and hurriedly bared her arm with a trembling hand. We all pressed forward to examine it. There, sure enough! just below the elbow, the identical scar could be traced—dim, it is true, but still the scar of the quarter moon.

Evaline gazed upon it a moment, faint and pale with joyful emotions, and then turning her soft, dark eyes above, with the sublime look of a saint, and clasping her hands, said solemnly:

"God! I thank thee!"

"My sister—my sweet, long lost sister!" said Eva affectionately, gently twining her arms around the neck of the other and

gazing upward also—"I, too, thank God for this!"

Evaline turned, clasped the other in her arms, and falling upon each other's neck, the beautiful twin sisters wept in each other's embrace.

"What a singular meeting is this!" observed Mrs. Huntly to Madame Mortimer, who now completely recovered arose from the bed. "And how remarkable, that both you and I should have a long lost child restored to us at the same time!"

"Ay," answered the other, "God sometimes works in wonders, and this is one. But not the least remarkable of all is the fact, that some years since your son saved the life of my daughter, and subsequently my daughter saved the life of your son—though each at the time wholly unknown to the other, with no apparent connection between the two striking events. The good we do returns to us, as the evil of our life often falls heavily upon our heads. I have experienced both;" and she sighed heavily. "But come, my daughter," she added, turning to Evaline, "you have friends with you whom we have long kept waiting. We must now entertain them, or they will think themselves slighted, and with good reason. When every thing is properly arranged and settled, we will have those secret documents produced and hear your tale."

As she spoke, she led the way to the larger apartment.

"Charley," I whispered, "I fear we have forgotten to congratulate Prairie Flower on the happy termination of this interview and change of name!"

He pressed my hand and answered:

"You must be spokesman, then—for at present I am unable to express my feelings."

"Be it so—but you must accompany me;" and advancing to Prairie Flower, I took her hand and said:

"I give you joy, Evaline Mortimer!—and so does my friend here, though at present too bashful to say it."

Both Huntly and Evaline blushed and became embarrassed. But quickly recovering herself, the latter returned:

"I thank you—thank you both—from

my heart. But for you, this might never have been;" and her eyes instantly filled with grateful tears.

"But for you, dear Evaline," rejoined I, "we might never have been here. The obligation is on our side—we are the debtors."

"Prairie Flower," began Huntly, taking the disengaged hand and making an effort to command himself—"Or rather, I should say, Evaline—I—I—Well, you understand! Imagine all I would say—for just now I can say nothing."

"Bravo, Charley!" said I, laughing and giving him a friendly slap on the shoulder. "Bravo, my dear fellow! Spoken like yourself!"

"Hush!" he returned, with a gesture of displeasure; "do not jest with me now, Frank!"

Meantime I noticed that Eva and Lilian watched the features of both Evaline and Charles closely, and then whispered to each other, and smiled, and again looked earnestly at each.

The secret is out, thought I.

At this moment Madame Mortimer, observing us together, approached and addressed my friend with a bland smile:

"Said I not, Charles, that the heroine of this life-romance must necessarily be a personage of consequence?"

"And I am rejoiced your words are verified," was the reply.

"Thank you! and thank God, I have found them verified in a way I little expected! But all heroines, you know, must fall in love!" she added, laughing. "How is it in the present case, eh?"

"It turns out on the most approved plan," I answered pointedly, glancing at both Charles and Evaline, who, judging from their looks, wished themselves for the moment any where but where they stood.

"I am rejoiced to hear it," rejoined the good dame.

"And how is it with you, Eva?" I asked, playfully.

"Why, I suppose I must resign all pretensions," she replied, in her wonted light tone. "Of course I was anxious to make a conquest—as what young lady is not?

But I see there is no chance for me," she pursued, glancing slyly at my friend; "and so I will e'er make a virtue of necessity, pretend I don't care any thing about it, and, heigh-ho! look some where else, with the old motto, 'Better luck next time.' Ay," she added, springing to the blushing Evaline, and imprinting a kiss on her sweet lips, "I am too happy in finding a sister, to mourn long for a lover—more especially if a certain somebody (again glancing at Charles,) has any design of becoming a relation."

"Well said!" I rejoined. "And now, Charley—"

"Hist!" he exclaimed, interrupting and dragging me away. "Come," he added, "let us take a stroll;" and arm-in-arm we quitted the cottage.

Considerable of a crowd had already collected around our Indian friends, and were listening to a story from Teddy, who, as he privately expressed himself to me, "Was in all the glory of making the spalpeens believe himself and us the heroes of a hundred mighty fights, and bathels, and scrimmages, and hair-length escapes, and thim things."

Among the number present, I recognised several of my old acquaintances, who appeared much delighted to see me, and to whom I introduced my long lost friend. After the usual commonplace observations were over, I turned to Teddy, and gave him instructions to conduct the Indians into the cottage forthwith, and then see to having their horses well taken care of. This done, Huntly and I sauntered down through the village, to note the improvements, and talk over the important events of the last few hours.

As Lilian remarked I would, I found the village of Oregon City greatly altered for the better, and that it had already begun to assume the appearance of a thriving settlement. During the past season there had been a large influx of population from the east, the effects of which were every where visible in new dwellings and workshops. Some three or four merchants had come on with goods, opened stores, and were now doing a thriving business, in disposing of their commodities at the

most extravagant prices. A grist-mill and saw-mill had also been erected on the Willamette, and were now in active operation—the former grinding out the staff of life, and the latter supplying such of the settlers as desired habitations superior to log cabins, with the necessary materials for more finished building. Here and there were the workshops of the carpenter, blacksmith, saddler, shoemaker and tailor—and, in short, every thing necessary apparently to a business place.

Strolling down to the Willamette, we halted upon a bluff overlooking the romantic stream, and, as chance would have it, upon the very spot where I had offered my hand to Lillian.

"Here, Charley," said I, "is ground which to me is sacred. Can you not guess from what cause?"

He only answered by pressing my arm and heaving a deep sigh.

"Come," added I, smiling, "a wager I can guess your thoughts!"

"Well, say on."

"You are thinking of Evaline."

He changed color and sighed:

"Well?"

"And now you begin to have doubts that all may not terminate as you desire!"

"You are good at guessing," he rejoined, gazing solemnly down upon the current below.

"Courage, man!" rejoined I. "Never despair on the point of victory!"

"Ah!" he sighed, "if I could be assured of that."

"Assured, Charley! What more assurance would you have? She loves you, I will vouch for that; and now that the mystery hanging over her early life is cleared up, you have nothing to do but be yourself and ask her hand."

"Do you think so?" he cried, suddenly confronting me with an eager look. "Do you think so, Frank?"

"Do I think so?" I repeated. "Why, man, where is your wonted assurance? Do I think so? No! I do not think—I know!"

"But I—I—some how—I have my misgivings."

"Pshaw! my friend—love's misgivings only. If you had not these, I should put

it down as a solemn fact that you did not love. She has her misgivings, too—but they spring from the same source as yours, and amount to exactly the same thing—that is, nothing. Why, how you have changed! You are as timid as a schoolboy at his first public declamation, and tremble more in the presence of one beautiful being, than you did in the clutches of a fierce banditti. Throw aside this foolish bashfulness, and act like a sensible fellow. There is nothing so very alarming in telling a young maiden you love and adore her, when you once set yourself about it. I have tried it, and speak from experience. Once, I remember, you talked the matter of matrimony over as deliberately as if making a bargain and sale—purchasing or transferring property."

"Ay," he answered, musingly, "but it was merely talk then—*now* it is quite a different thing. If—if—she should refuse——"

"Nonsense!" interrupted I, laughing; and then added, imitating him: "If—if—you should refuse, why——"

"Cease!" he exclaimed, almost angrily. "Why will you be ever jesting, Frank?"

"That I may bring you to sober earnest, Charley."

In like conversation we whiled away an hour or two, and then returned to the cottage—Huntly in a better flow of spirits than I had seen him for many a day.

The news of our arrival—the restoration of a long lost daughter to the arms of her mother—together with exaggerated and marvellous reports of the whole affair, had already made the dwelling of Mrs. Huntly a place of attraction to the villagers, whom we here found collected in goodly numbers of both sexes. In fact, the house was thronged through the day, and both Huntly and myself were kept busy in recounting our exploits to curious and eager listeners.

Night, however, came at last, and with its approach departed our visitors, much to our relief and gratification.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE TALE OF EVALINE MORTIMER—BRIEF HISTORY OF THE MYSTERIOUS TRIBE—THEIR PERSECUTION, MASSACRE, FLIGHT, PROSPERITY AND ADVERSITY—MORE MYSTERY—SPECULATIONS OF MADAME MORTIMER—EARLY IMPRESSIONS OF EVALINE—HER EDUCATION—ROVING LIFE, ETC.

It was about an hour after nightfall, that, every thing having become quiet, we formed a pleasant circle before a bright fire, in the dwelling of Mrs. Huntly, to hear the tale of Evaline Mortimer. Throughout the day, all had been too busy in entertaining guests to attend to private affairs; but now the transient visitors had departed, and none were by to listen save those most deeply interested. Evaline, in the course of the day, had managed to steal away for an hour, during which she had opened her "treasure-box," as she termed it, wherein she had found a parchment in the handwriting of Great Medicine, whose contents she had eagerly devoured, and the substance of which, together with what she knew of herself, she was now about to lay before us.

"Come," said Madame Mortimer, after some trifling conversation had passed: "Come, dear Evaline, now for the romance of your life! We are all eager for the story."

"And when I have told it," said Evaline in reply, smiling sweetly, "I shall have told a tale to which no mortal ear has ever before listened, and a portion of which has been unknown to myself till within the last few hours. I have examined the record of Great Medicine, and find much therein I did not know before; but still, with all the knowledge gained therefrom, I should have remained ignorant of the most important period of my history—important to me at least—but for this providential meeting with my dear mother and sister, the former of whom can perhaps put the connecting link between what I know and my birth.

"As the scroll of Great Medicine is in a language to you unintelligible, and as the narration on the whole is rather disconnected, I will, with your permission,

omit a translation, and tell the story in my own way, and thus in a more direct form bring to bear all the knowledge I have regarding myself and those with whom my fortune has been linked.

"My earliest impressions are of Great Medicine and the Indians with whom he was associated. Of his early history I could never learn any thing authentic. It was current with the tribe, that he had come from afar, had formerly been a great chief, and was now the sole remnant of his race. Some twelve or fifteen years prior to the period I speak of—or say a little more than thirty years ago—he had appeared among the various tribes then located in one of the more eastern territories, and had brought with him three white missionaries of the Moravian school, who at once set to work to convert the savages to the Christian faith. The influence of the old man—for even then Great Medicine was well advanced in years—tended much to allay the vindictive feelings which the savages were disposed to manifest toward his white friends, and to which they were secretly urged on by British agents—this, as you will bear in mind, being the period of the commencement of hostilities between America and Great Britain. The result of the matter was, that several of the Indians became converts to the true faith, renounced the barbarisms of their ancestors, and threw down their war implements to take them up no more. These converts were of various tribes, and were subsequently by each tribe denounced as impostors and coward squaws, and persecuted in many cases even to the death—so that the survivors were obliged to abandon their homes and seek safety in flight. These fugitives, by an arrangement of Great Medicine, all gathered together, and in solemn conclave formed themselves into a tribe, of which he was appointed chief—or rather Great Medicine—for the title of chief was by them abolished. A mode of worship was then established, of which several songs, composed by the missionaries, formed a striking feature, and made the ceremonies more impressive than they might otherwise have been."

"And these songs," interrupted I, "were the same you once translated to me?"

"The same," answered the sweet narrator; "with the exception of what they may have gained or lost by the peculiar dialect finally adopted by the new-formed tribe. The ceremonies of this tribe," she continued, "were not all established at once, and may now differ somewhat from those of the time in question, though the same I believe in the main features."

"As the Indian, by nature and association, is peculiarly fitted to believe in the marvellous, it is not surprising that some portion of this reverence for the supernatural should have clung to those of the new faith; and in consequence of this, Great Medicine was supposed to be invested with powers beyond the mere mortal. Whether or no he believed this of himself, I am unable to say; but certain it is, he took care the rest should think so; and ever excluding himself from the tribe, except when his presence was absolutely necessary, he succeeded by his peculiarities, eccentricities, strange incantations and the like, in drawing around himself a veil of mystery which none ever presumed to penetrate. On the whole, he was a very strange being; and though all loved, all feared him; and none ever knew for a certainty who he was or whence he came. If one presumed to question him, it was only for once. The silent look he received from that small dark eye, was enough. It thrilled and overawed him, and he turned away, resolved never to question again. Even I, whom he ever treated with affectionate care—who was constantly admitted to his presence when all others were excluded—who had the advantage of being with him in his most meditative and communicative moods—even I, was never made wiser than my companions. As I have said once before, he ever remained an enigma without a solution. Like the rest, I loved and I feared him—with this difference, perhaps—that the former with me was the stronger of the two passions. But to return from this slight digression.

"The tribe organized under the control

of Great Medicine, for a time flourished well, and constantly increased by new converts from the neighboring tribes. But this nearly proved its overthrow. The savages at last became jealous, and declared if this state of things continued, their villages would become depopulated. They swore revenge, and took it, and most dire revenge it was. They made a descent upon their harmless friends, and with ruthless hands slew their own relatives, and took the missionaries captives, whom they afterwards put to the tortures. It was a terrible massacre—a massacre without resistance on the part of the victims, whose peculiar tenets of religion forbade them to fight even in defence of their lives. At one fell swoop nearly all were cut off. None, upon whom the blood thirsty assailants laid hands, were spared. Women and children—the infant at the breast—the promising youth and tender maiden—the man in the prime of life and the hoary-headed veteran: all were alike victims—all shared one common fate—all found a bloody grave."

"What a terrible scene!" exclaimed Madame Mortimer, shuddering.

"Terrible! terrible!" echoed Lillian and Eva.

"And how many do you suppose perished?" asked Mrs. Huntley.

"I cannot say," answered Evaline. "All I know is, that only a few escaped—some half a dozen I believe—among whom was Great Medicine. They fled fast and far, to another part of the wilderness, but still firm in that faith by which they had been so sorely tried. When hundreds of miles had been placed between them and their fierce enemies, they paused in their flight, and selecting a pleasant spot, erected a few huts, and continued their devotions as before. Here they were visited by other tribes, who, knowing nothing of their history, and struck with their peculiarities and mode of worship, treated them with great respect and reverence, and called them the Wahsochee—equivalent to the English word *Mysterious*—by which name and the title of their founder they have ever since been known."

"Here Providence again favored them, and their numbers increased very rapidly. Their fame spread far and wide over the vast wilderness, and bold warriors from distant tribes came to see them, many of whom remained, converts to their faith. In this manner the Wahsochee village again became populous; and the different tribes, though at deadly enmity with one another, all concurred in respecting and leaving them unmolested. As those who joined them were among the most intelligent of their race, and as these were from a great many nations, the language of each was gradually introduced, until, besides a dialect of their own, the tribe had the advantage of understanding that of almost every other of note.

"Thus for several years all went on prosperous, and their number had augmented from six to an hundred and fifty, when that fatal malady, the small-pox, broke out and swept off four-fifths of the nation.—From this awful blow they never fully recovered—at least, never to be what they were before—for many who were on the point of joining them, were deterred by what they declared to be the angry frown of the Great Spirit; and although other tribes were scourged in like manner, still the more superstitious contended that the Wahsochee religion could not be good, or the Great Spirit would not have been angry with them, even though he were with their neighbors.

"This latter affliction occurred some two years prior to my being brought among them, of which mysterious event I shall now proceed to speak, as I find it recorded by Great Medicine himself."

"Permit me a word, Evaline, before you proceed farther!" said I, interrupting her. "Since you have briefly given the history of the Mysterious Tribe, may I inquire why it was, on our first acquaintance, you so strongly insisted I should question you not concerning yourself or companions?"

"In the first place," she answered, "Great Medicine had expressly declared (and his word was law with us) that nothing of our history must be told to strangers, whose desire to know, as a general thing, would proceed from idle curiosity,

to gratify which would avail us nothing. In the second place, of my early history I was ignorant—at least of that which referred to my parentage—and to be questioned, ever caused me the most painful embarrassment; besides, of what I did know, I had promised the old man to reveal nothing. I knew I was not of the Indian race; but to admit this, would lead to a thousand other inquiries, which could not be answered, and which I felt a stranger had no right to make. Are you answered?"

"Fully and satisfactorily. Go on with your story!"

"The location of the tribe, at the period of which I now speak," proceeded Evaline, "was near the Des Moines river, in the southern part of that territory since known as Iowa. While the tribe remained here, it was customary for Great Medicine to make a journey to St. Louis, as often as once a year, to trade his furs, skins, embroidered moccasins and the like, for powder, lead, beads, blankets, and whatever else he fancied the tribe might need. On his return from one of these excursions, (so he gives the story,) and when some ten miles above St. Louis, having fallen behind his party, he was overtaken by a fierce looking horseman, who bore in his arms a little girl some two or three years of age, and who at once accosting him in a very gruff manner, demanded whither he was going. This horseman, he says, was a very villainous looking white man, who wore a long flowing beard, had a black, fiery eye, was short in stature, and heavy set.

"On hearing the reply of Great Medicine, the former drew a pistol and dismounted, ordering him to do the same.—Once, he writes, he would have shot and scalped the bold intruder without a word; but now he had no such thoughts; and he obeyed him in silence, wondering what was to come next.

"'Here is a brat,' said the stranger, pointing to the child now crouching at his feet, 'which I wish out of the way, and am too much of a coward to effect my desires. Take her, it is your calling, and here is gold.'

"You are mistaken in me," replied Great Medicine, "if you suppose I will aid your base ends. I would not kill that innocent little creature to own the world."

"By ——!" replied the other, making use of an oath; "and you an Indian and say this! What in the name of —— ails the child, that all fear to harm her? She must die though; and if you will not undertake the job, why, then there is no other alternative;" and he placed his pistol to her head.

"Stay!" cried the old man, beseechingly; "I will not harm her myself; but if you wish to rid yourself of her, I will consent to place her far from civilization, and adopt her into my tribe."

"But she is a child of consequence," pursued the other, "the daughter of one who is a great chief in his own country, and stands between me and fortune. Should she return——"

"There is no likelihood of that," interrupted the other, "as I shall take her some hundreds of miles into the wilderness."

"But her father, who knows nothing of my design, and to whom I must report her lost or dead, may institute search.—How do I know she may not be found?"

"That I think impossible," rejoined the old man.

"But this will make all sure," continued the dark stranger, again pointing the pistol at her head.

"Nay, hold!" cried the other in alarm. "If you dare to murder her, I will make her spirit haunt you forever!"

"You make her spirit haunt me! Umph! what are you, but a decrepid old Indian? By heavens! I have a mind to murder you both. But I hate murder; for in fact one never feels safe afterwards. Do you believe in a God, old man?—for you talk as one the world denominates Christian."

"I do believe in a God," answered Great Medicine; "and if you dare to harm this child, His just retribution shall follow you even to the remotest bounds of earth and time."

The other paused, reflected, and then added:

"I would not have her blood upon my soul, for I have sin enough there already.

You think there is no danger of her being discovered?"

"Not the least."

"And you say you believe in a God?"

"I do."

"You hope for salvation, as men term it?"

"I do."

"Then swear, by your hopes of salvation, to keep her among the Indians as long as you live—to adopt her into your tribe, and never to mortal ear to reveal a word concerning this interview, or how she came in your possession—that you will never attempt to trace out her parentage, nor make any inquiries concerning her—swear this, and she is yours. Refuse, and her death and yours is the penalty."

"I swear to all," answered Great Medicine.

"Enough! take her, and speed thee to the wilderness; while I will away and report her dead—murdered by the Indians," he added, with a grim smile. Then leaping upon his horse, he muttered as he turned away: "All is safe, I think, for we shall soon be over the water;" and the next moment both horse and rider were lost in the forest.

"This child," writes Great Medicine, "behold in yourself, Prairie Flower! and this is all I know of your early history."

"Strange!" said Madame Mortimer, musingly. "Here is more mystery—I do not understand it. Who could have been this horseman? and what the meaning of his words? As you were stolen away on the night succeeding my desertion by your father, I had ever supposed—or hoped, rather—you had been taken away by him, and with him, wherever he went; and this hope proved my only comfort in affliction. But now I do not know what to think. This horseman could not have been your father, for the description is not at all like him. The latter was tall—dark complexioned, it is true—but with fine features and handsome person. And then he referred to your father, as knowing nothing of this dark transaction, and termed him a great chief in his country, and said you were standing between him and fortune. What

could he have meant by this last? Your father had no fortune to my knowledge, and mine was so fixed he could not get it. Ha! a thought strikes me. He was an exile from his native land—though for what he would never tell me—would never speak of his early history. It is possible he may have been a personage of consequence, banished for some state intrigue, and again restored. It may be he had news of this when he came to declare his intention of leaving me. And now I remember, he once intimated that he would some day be independent of me, though I did not know what was meant. This must be it!" she continued, as if soliloquising; "this must be it! and this stranger, some fiend in human form, plotting to succeed him in wealth and station. Oh! the wickedness of all mankind! But I forget, my friends, you do not know of what I speak, as I have never told you my history."

"Nay, madam," returned I, "we know more than you think."

"Indeed! and how?"

Lilian blushed, and I became embarrassed—for I felt I had, in my heedlessness, said a word too much.

"Pardon me!" I returned, "and do not blame my informant! I must own I have heard the tale before. But you will not regret it, perhaps, when I say, that to this very knowledge you are partially, if not entirely, indebted for the presence of your long lost daughter."

"I blame no one," she answered solemnly; "for all, in the hands of God, has worked for my good. I understand it all," she added, glancing at Lilian and Eva. "These tell-tale blushes reveal the truth. Eva told Lilian in confidence, and love wrung from her the secret. I am glad it is so. You are all my friends, and the tale by rights belongs to you. I might never have told it myself, unless on an occasion like this—for I do not care to have the cold, idle world speculating and jesting on the secrets of what has long been an unhappy, if not wretched heart. In my younger days, I was headstrong and rash, and did many a wrong, as I have since felt to my cost—and might have done more, perhaps, but for my dear daughter Eva's sake. Ay!

for her, I may say, I *lived*; for had she been taken from me, the grave ere this had covered a broken heart."

Her last words were said in a trembling voice and with deep emotion.

"God bless you, mother!" exclaimed Eva, in a tone which brought tears to the eyes of all present.

"He has blessed me, my child—blessed me beyond my deserts. Had I been what I should have been, perchance your father had never left me, my daughters. But enough of this. This past now—gone beyond recall—and the result is before us. But go on, dear Evaline—go on with your story!"

"Were I to tell the whole," resumed the latter, "it would take me hours—nay, days—but that I shall not attempt to-night, only so far as relates to my earliest years and earliest impressions. In future I will give you more, little by little, until you get the whole.

"As I have said previously, my earliest recollections are of Great Medicine and his tribe. I remember his dark, keen eye, and of his gazing upon me for hours, when none were by, and he thought I did not notice him. But I was older in thought than he was aware of; and I used to wonder at this singularity, when he believed I wondered at nothing. I remember many and many a time of kneeling down to a spring of clear water, gazing at my features, and wondering why I was so different from my companions. I saw, even then, that my features were fairer and of an entirely different cast; and this, to my young fancy, seemed most strange, as I believed myself of the same race as those around me.—Great Medicine I then thought my father—for so he bade me call him, and so I did. As I grew older, this contrast—this difference in person—struck me more and more, and at last I made bold to interrogate the old man concerning it.

"Never shall I forget his look, as I, in childish simplicity, asked the question. He started, as if stung by a serpent, and his small black eyes fastened upon mine as though to read my very soul. Never had I feared him till then. There was a wild fascination in that gaze, which thrilled and

overawed me, and made my own seek the ground. Never shall I forget his words, as he advanced and took my hand. It was not so much what he said, as his impressive manner of saying it.

"'Child,' he replied, 'you seek to know too much, and the knowledge you seek would render you in future years the most unhappy of mortals. Something I feel you must now know—and this it is: You are not of my race; you are a pale-face; I am your guardian. Seek to know no more, for all is dark beyond. Be one of us, and be happy in ignorance. Breathe this I have told you to no mortal ear! and never, never question me again. You promise, girl?' he added.

"'I do.'

"'Enough! Go!'

"I left his presence a changed being, though he knew it not; for his strange language and manner had roused that eternal thirst for knowledge, which he had thought and sought to allay. I questioned him no more; but his singular words I pondered in secret.

"'There is mystery here,' I would repeat to myself; but I took care to repeat it to no other human being.

"To detail my strange conjectures from that time forth, would be to lay bare the secret workings of an ever active spirit. I shall not attempt it, but leave it to your imagination.

"About this period, a few missionaries set up a temporary station near our locality, for the double purpose of making converts to their faith and imparting knowledge to the unenlightened Indians, by teaching them to read and write. At the request of Great Medicine, three of their number came and took up their abode with us, for the latter purpose. I was at once placed under their instruction, as were all the younger members of the village. On my first appearance before them, they seemed surprised, and questioned me regarding my name and parentage—at the same time expressing their belief I was not an Indian—or, at the most, only a half-breed. I replied, that as to myself they might conjecture what they pleased, but that I was not then at liberty to answer

any questions, and there the subject dropped.

"A year's tuition and close application made me quite a scholar, and I could now read and write the English language quite fluently, as could several of the more intelligent of my companions. At the close of the period mentioned, our teachers, after presenting each of their pupils with a Bible, and distributing among us several other religious books, departed to another section of country. Soon after this, Great Medicine proposed that we should adopt a more roving life, as in this manner he thought greater good might be effected.—Accordingly we began moving from one quarter to another, striving to subdue the wild passions of the Indians of the different tribes we met. In this of course we were not in general successful—though our exemplary mode of life ever appeared to make a favorable impression on their savage hearts, and win their respect. In course of time we became personally known in every section of the broad west, and were allowed to come and depart as we saw proper. Whenever we heard of a battle about to be fought between two nations, we would generally follow one party or the other, that we might be on the ground to succor the wounded. If we gained tidings of a strong party about to assault a weaker, we would manage, if possible, to warn the latter. Or, in the event of the forces being equal, if we knew of a surprise one tribe had planned for another, it was ever our design to warn the unwary. Whites as well as Indians received from us the same warnings—though how our information was obtained, generally remained a mystery to those not in the secret. And moreover, great caution was required by the informant in these cases, to avoid exposing himself to the aggressors, who, in the heat of passion, would be likely to seek revenge. On many of these errands of mercy—for I think I may so term them—hate I been sent, when I knew a single error would cost me my life. But I believed I was doing my duty, put my trust in a Power above, and faltered not in my purpose. I was never detected but once to my know-

ledge; and in this instance, fortunately for me, I had rendered the tribe aggrieved the same service as that for which they brought me to trial before their council. This being proved, it was finally decided the obligation on their part cancelled the aggression on mine, and I was allowed to go free, with a very significant intimation, however, that if caught in the second offence, my sentence would be death.

"But as I do not intend to enter into detail to-night, and as I already feel somewhat fatigued, I will drop my narrative here, and, as I said before, give you from time to time the most striking incidents of my life, as they occur to my recollection. I have briefly told you all I know of my early history, and by your leave will so end the story."

CHAPTER XX.

EVALINE'S RESOLVE—SOME PLANS FOR THE FUTURE—RETIRE FOR THE NIGHT—SUBSEQUENT EXCITEMENT OF MY FRIEND—IMAGINARY DUEL—A HAPPY MISTAKE—LOVE TRIUMPHANT—THOUGHTS OF HOME.

"Poor child! my own sweet Evaline," said Madame Mortimer, affectionately, as the former concluded; "what a singular life has been yours! and how much you must have suffered!"

"For which she shall be made happy the rest of her days," said Eva, springing to and imprinting a kiss on her lips.

"Ah!" chimed in Lilian, following the example of Eva, "did I not say we would love her as a sister?"

"Ay, but I had no idea you spoke so much truth, and in a double sense," rejoined Eva, glancing archly toward Charles. "I trust we may love her as a sister both!"

"Indeed you may," chimed in I, laughing. "Eh! Charley?"

"Be quiet, I beg of you!" answered my friend, in some confusion, while Evaline hung her head with a blush, and a pleasant smile played over each face of the rest of the group.

"And now, dear Evaline," said Madame

Mortimer, "I suppose we may count on your spending the remainder of your days with us?"

Evaline seemed to muse seriously, but did not reply.

"Surely you do not hesitate, my child?"

"Why, to tell the truth," she answered, "I love the Indians, and know they will be loth to part with me."

"And has a mother no tie stronger than that of mere association?" rejoined the other, reproachfully.

Evaline looked up, and her eyes filled with tears.

"Nay, mother," she said, "do not speak thus! Yes!" she exclaimed, suddenly rising and throwing her arms around the other's neck: "Yes, dear mother, I will go with you, even to the ends of the earth—for I feel I could not part from you again. From my very childhood, I have yearned for this happy moment, to hear the sweet voice of one I could call mother. It may be wrong to forsake my calling; but if it be, I feel I must err; for I am only mortal after all, and cannot withstand the temptation of being with those I already love beyond all others I have ever seen."

"Bless you, Evaline, for those words!"

"But I must return to them," she added. "I have promised that. I must return and bid them a last farewell."

"But where are you to find them, my child?"

"They will winter on the Black Hills, some sixty or seventy miles from Fort Laramie."

"And will they remain through the spring?" asked I.

"I cannot say. They *may* remain there through the summer, for all are particularly attached to the spot; and if any place can be called their home, it is the one in question."

"Then you can visit them on our way to the east; and every thing prosperous, we shall start as early in the spring as practicable."

"O, then we are to go east in earnest!" exclaimed Eva, clapping her hands for joy.

"Yes," I replied, "I am anxious to see home, and cannot think of leaving my friends behind me."

"Thank you for this welcome news!" she returned; "for I am already tired of the forest."

"But you do not regret having come here, Eva?" said her mother, inquiringly.

"Why, I have regretted it all along, till I found my sweet sister. Of course I can not regret being made happy by her presence, which but for this journey had probably never been. At the same time, I am not the less anxious to return now, and take her with me."

"And I," said Mrs. Huntly, "now that I am blessed with my children, begin to feel anxious to see my native land again, to there pass the remainder of my days, and lay my bones with those that have gone before me."

"God grant it may be long ere the latter event!" returned Charles, with feeling.

"Amen!" added I.

"It seems," observed Madame Mortimer, after some reflection, "as if Providence especially directed our steps hither; and it is the only way I can account for my anxiety to visit this part of the world, and thus expose myself and Eva to hardships and perils. What need had I to come westward! I had a handsome competence; and no ambition to be a pioneer; and yet something whispered me I must go. Truly, as I said before, God works in wonders!"

In like conversation an hour or two flew by, when the party broke up, and Madame Mortimer and her daughters were conducted by Huntly and myself to their own abode, which was close at hand, and the fatigue and excitement of the day was soon by each forgotten in the pleasant dreams of the night.

Time rolled away pleasantly, and the third night after this, having retired at the usual hour and fallen into a sweet sleep, I was awakened by Huntly, whom I found pacing up and down the room, apparently in great excitement.

"Good heavens! what is the matter?" exclaimed I, rubbing open my eyes and starting up in bed.

"So, then, you are awake at last!" he replied, his eyes sparkling with what to me seemed unnatural fire. "Why, Frank,

I was beginning to think you were taking your last, long sleep, and that I might as well call to a log of wood. Come! up, now, and give me joy! It is all settled, my dear fellow—all settled!"

"Is it?" rejoined I, completely at a loss to comprehend what he meant, but somehow, in my sleepy confusion, mixing it up with a duel of which I had been dreaming the night previous. "And so it is all settled, eh? Well, I am glad to hear it, Charley."

"I knew you would be," he replied; "and I awoke you on purpose to have you share my happiness. Come, give me your hand!"

"But how did you settle it, Charley?"

"O, I made bold to take up the matter at last and press it to a conclusion."

"And so you settled it?"

"Ay, and it is to come off at the same time as yours."

"As mine! But my friend, I have no such affair on hand, to my knowledge."

"What!" exclaimed Huntly, looking at me in astonishment. "Why, you have given me to understand, all along, that you had."

"I! No, you must be mistaken."

"Ha! then you have quarrelled!"

"No! exactly the reverse. But you told me a moment since you had settled the whole matter, and now you say it is to come off with mine. Somehow I do not understand it. Either you or I must have made a great mistake. When you said it was all settled, I supposed you to mean amicably settled; but I see now you simply referred to manner, time and place.—Well, at all events, I will stand by you to the last, though I sincerely regret the affair could not have ended without a meeting. Pistols or rifles, Charles?"

"Pistols or rifles!" he repeated, gazing at me with a peculiar expression. "Why, Frank, what do you mean by this strange language? or are you still asleep? In the name of all that is curious, pray tell me if you know yourself what you are talking about!"

"Why, fighting, of course."

"Fighting?"

"Ay, you were speaking of a duel, were you not?"

For a brief moment Huntly looked at me seriously, and then broke forth in a roar of laughter that fairly made the cabin tremble. It was some time ere he could command his voice sufficiently to make himself intelligible.

"Go to bed, Frank!" were his first words, as, half bent over, his hands clasping his ribs, he stood gazing at me with a comical look. "Go to bed, Frank, and dream yourself into a sensible fellow—for just now you are as wild as a night-hawk."

"But if you did not allude to a duel, Charles, pray tell me to what you did allude!"

"To matrimony—neither more nor less," he answered, laughing.

"Ha! I see it all now. Why, how stupid I must have been! But I was dreaming of a duel last night, and being awakened so suddenly, and seeing you so excited, got completely bewildered. And so you have been *tele-a-tele* with Evaline, found your tongue at last, and said the sensible thing, eh?"

"Ay! and am now the happiest fellow living."

"You found it all right, did you, just as I said you would?"

"So far that I found she loved me, and had from the date of our first meeting; but that, believing herself a poor, nameless girl, she had avoided me, and striven in vain to crush her passion in the bud.—Though she would have loved me, she said, to the exclusion of all others, even to the day of her death, yet had matters not turned out as they have, she would most assuredly have refused my hand, though backed by all the eloquent pleadings of which the human tongue is master."

"Ay, and indeed would she!" I rejoined, "for such is her proud, noble nature. You remember our conversation years ago respecting her. My remark then was, if I mistake not, that though she might love, she would reject you; and gave, as one reason therefor, that she was too noble minded to wed above herself. Strange! what has since transpired, and for which you may thank your stars! You and I little dreamed then what the future had in store—that mighty future, which to all

mortal eyes is a sealed book, on whose pages are impressed the destinies alike of worlds, of nations, and of individuals, which none may read but as its pages are o'erturned by the wizzard fingers of old Time. Well, well, thank God all has turned out for the best!"

"Ay, Frank," returned my friend, solemnly, "we may well thank God, and congratulate each other that we are here alive, after the thousand dangers to which we have been exposed."

"And she accepted your hand?" I said, after a pause.

"She did, though not without much urging; for she contended that even now she was but a simple forest maiden, unused to the ways of civilization, and far my inferior in education, and said that I might aspire higher and be successful. But she loved—that was enough for me—and love and my pleadings at last overcame her scruples, and I left her with a lighter heart than I have known for many a long year."

"Well, my friend, I sincerely congratulate you on the happy termination. And so, to speak plainly, your wedding is to come off with mine?"

"Even so."

"Mine was to have come off on the day you returned; such were the conditions; but the day passed as you know how, and as we are determined on going east in the spring, Lillian and I have thought best to defer it till we arrive at home. Ah! Charles, how that word thrills me! Home! Ah, me! how long since I have seen it! and who knows what disappointment and sorrow may be there in store for me! And how must my dotting parents have mourned my long absence! Perchance they think me dead! Merciful Heaven! perchance they may be dead themselves! Oh God! should such be the case—But, no! I will not, dare not, think so. I will hope for the best, and strive not to borrow trouble. It is enough to bear it when it comes. Come, my friend, to bed! for the thought of home has driven all others from my mind, and I can talk no more to-night."

CHAPTER XXI.

HAPPY MOMENTS—WINTER AMUSEMENTS—
PREPARATIONS TO DEPART—THE WAH-
SOCHEES — TEDDY'S IDEA OF DOUBLING
OR QUITTING MY SERVICE—HOMEWARD
BOUND—ARRIVE AT FORT LARAMIE.

How sweetly time passes when with those we love. Moment then follows moment in unbroken succession, and commingling like drops of water, forms the great stream of Time, which, flowing past flowery banks and lulling us with its gentle murmur, glides swiftly and evenly away, bearing us on its broad bosom to the boundless and fathomless ocean of Eternity. It is when in sweet and constant communion with those we love, we forget the jars and discords of our past life, in the enrapturing harmony of the present. We then lose sight of the world as it is, and only behold it through that magic glass of inner joy, which shows all its beauties, but conceals its defects. These moments of earthly beatitude are most precious and evanescent. They are as so many of golden sunshine, streaming upon the otherwise gloomy path of the traveller, and showing him a thousand beauties, of whose existence so near him he had previously no conception.

This it was with myself and friends.—Time rolled away almost unnoted, and ere we had prepared ourselves to bid old hoary-headed Winter adieu, we found, to our surprise, he had gone, and that light-footed Spring was gaily tripping and smiling in his place.

Although far in the wilderness, Oregon City was not without its attractions. Of the settlers, many were young people, who had been well brought up in the east, and had come hither to try their fortunes.—They did not believe in renouncing all their former amusements; and in consequence, gay parties, festivities and balls succeeded one another in rapid succession. To these myself and friends were always invited, and a number of them we attended. They were rude in comparison to some in older settlements it is true; but being in general conducted with great

propriety, often proved very agreeable pastimes, and enlivened the otherwise rather dull monotony of the village.

As spring advanced, we began gradually to prepare for our journey. The real estate previously purchased by Mrs. Huntly, was readily sold for cash, and the receipts doubled the purchase money. As we designed taking nothing with us but what was absolutely necessary, the furniture of both Mrs. Huntly and Madame Mortimer was also disposed of—possession to be given so soon as the premises should be vacated.

As our party of itself was not strong, and as there were many here who designed going east—some to procure goods, some to remain, and others, who had come here in advance, to bring on their families—we decided to join them, and thus journey in comparative security.

Great was the delight of Lilian and Eva, as the time drew near for our departure. In fact, towards the last, they could think of nothing, talk of nothing, but the pleasure of quitting their present abode, and what they would do when they should safely arrive at their destination.

With Evaline it was different. In this journey she only saw a change of life and scene—which, if truth must be told, she rather regretted than rejoiced at—and a sad parting from her Indian friends. Where Lilian and Eva saw welcome faces and a thousand fascinations in the haunts of civilization, she beheld nothing but the cold gaze of strangers and the gossiping speculations of the worldly-minded. She was beautiful and fascinating in her personal appearance—refined, polished and graceful in her manners—but withal, so excessively modest as to underrate her own powers, and fancy herself an awkward forest maiden, unfitted for the society in which she was destined more or less to mingle. Both Charles and I, as also the others, ever strove to eradicate this unpleasant impression, and we in part succeeded. But still she was diffident, sober minded, and without a particle of that enthusiasm so strongly manifested by her sister and Lilian.

The Indian companions of Evaline had remained in the village through the win-

ter, and by their quiet, unobtrusive manners, their steady, upright mode of life—so different from the drunken, brawling natives of the neighboring tribes, who occasionally visited the village—had won the respect and regard of the citizens, and, in fact, become decided favorites with all.—While the former were sought for, the latter were shunned; and the widest distinction in all cases was ever drawn between the Wahsochees and their red brethren of other nations. But notwithstanding this partiality, the Wahsochees were evidently not contented in their present situation. To them, civilized customs had less attraction than the more rude and simple ones of their own tribe; and they were now anxious to depart and join their friends. It was arranged that all should proceed in company as far as Fort Laramie, whence Evaline could either accompany the Indians home, or let them go in advance to herald her approach, as circumstances might determine.

In enumerating the different personages who have figured in this narrative, I must not forget Teddy. For the last five or six months he had been in his glory; and between taking care of our horses, spinning long yarns to the villagers, (whom, by the way, he ever succeeded in astonishing,) and making love to Molly Stubbs, he had, as the phrase goes, had "his hands full." Of his success in the last, I must let the reader judge by the following colloquy, which took place between us a week or so previous to the time fixed on for our departure.

Approaching me with a rather timid step, hat in hand, and making a low obeisance, he said:

"The top of the morning to your honor."

"The same to you, Teddy."

"Sure, your honor—(a pause and rapid twirl of the hat)—sure, and is it thrue ye're aften taking yoursilf and frinds from these diggins (as the spalpeens call the likes) in a week for that mather!"

"All true, Teddy, nothing unforeseen preventing."

"Troth! and ye'll be missed from this country whin the likes of that happens."

"I trust so, Teddy."

Another pause, another twirl of the hat, and a scratching of the head. After some hesitation—

"Sure, and it's me own mother's son, Teddy O'Lagherty, as 'ud like to be axing yees a question?"

"Well, Teddy, say on!"

"Faith! and it's mesilf as has been long in your honor's sarvice, now."

"Some three or four years, I believe, off and on."

"And it's not a bether mather I'd iver want, no it isn't."

"Well?"

"But ye's a-going home, now, and maybe doesn't care for the likes of me inny longer?"

"I see: you wish to be discharged!"

Another twirl of the hat and scratch of the head.

"Why, now, your honor—no offence at all—but—but to spaak the thruth, and make a claan breast of it, it's that same I'd ayther be axing for, or doubling the sarvice, jist."

"Doubling the service, Teddy? I do not understand you. You mean I must double your wages, eh?"

"Will, it's not exactly that—but—but ye sae—(Here the hat fell to the ground, and Teddy made an unsuccessful effort to recover it.)—"Murther take the luck, but I'll say it now if I dies for it betimes! Ye sae, your honor, I've axed Molly, and it's all settled, and there's a-going to be the pair of us, barring that the two counts one Scripeter-wise."

"So, so—I understand now—you are about to be married to Molly!"

"Why, yes, I may say that's the short way of saying the likes, your honor."

"Exactly; and unless I wish to employ you both, you desire to quit my service!"

"Troth! and your honor's a gentleman at guessing."

"Well, Teddy, as I have no use for Molly at this time, I will give you an honorable discharge, and a handsome wedding present for your valuable services besides."

"God bless ye for a gentleman, ivery inch of yees! and it's mesilf as'll niver forgit ye in me prayers," was the warm-

hearted response, as, grasping my hand, he shook it heartily, while his eyes filled with joyful tears. "God bless ye for a noble heart!" he added, as he turned away to communicate his success to her with whom his fortune was about to be linked.

Suffice it here, that I kept my word with Teddy, who had no reason to regret having entered my service and secured my esteem.

The long wished for day of our departure came at last, and being one of the brightest and most pleasant of the season, was hailed with delight as an omen of prosperity. Every thing having been previously arranged, there was little to do but take leave of those who remained; and this being soon over, we were on the move at an early hour, a goodly company of thirty souls, two-thirds of whom were of the sterner sex.

As much of importance is yet to be told, and as the reader has once or twice followed me over the ground now traversed, I will not trouble him with a detail of our journey from Oregon City to Fort Laramie. Suffice, that we reached the latter place in safety, though much fatigued, about the middle of July, Anno Domini 1844, and some four years subsequent to my former visit here, when I first beheld the beautiful Prairie Flower, otherwise Leni-Leoti, now Evaline Mortimer, and soon to be—— But let me not anticipate.

CHAPTER XXII.

A JOURNEY TO THE BLACK HILLS—CAMP—SLIGHT ALARM—SLEEPLESS NIGHT—MEETING WITH THE TRIBE—JOY AND SORROW—THE FINAL FAREWELL—A BEAUTIFUL LANDSCAPE—THE PROPOSED RIDE—A NEW CHARACTER INTRODUCED—UNHEEDED FOREBODINGS.

To the great delight of Evaline, as well as those who sympathised with her, it was ascertained soon after our arrival at the fort, that some of the Mysterious Tribe had been seen quite recently in the vicinity; from which we drew the conclusion, that they were still at their winter quar-

ters on the Black Hills. It being Evaline's desire to see them as soon as possible, it was finally agreed that her sister, Lillian, Charles and myself should bear her company, along with her Indian friends, while her mother and Mrs. Huntly should await our return at the fort. On learning our determination, some five or six of the party with whom we had crossed the mountains, volunteered to go with us—a favor which we gladly accepted, as this would strengthen our party, and render us less liable to attack, should we chance upon hostile savages. The rest of the company, after remaining over night at the fort, being anxious to proceed, bade us adieu, and resumed their journey on the morning following.

Before starting for the Black Hills, we procured a couple of tents for the females, which we packed on mules, and then mounting each on a good horse, with all the necessary equipments for defence, we set forth on the second day at an early hour. For a number of miles we made rapid progress, but at length came to a stream, whose current being swift and banks precipitous, delayed us some time in seeking a place to ford. This crossed, we soon came to another where a similar delay awaited us. In short, our progress was so many times checked through the day, that when night at last began to draw her sable curtains, we found, to the best of our judgment, that hardly two-thirds of our journey had been gone over.

Selecting a pleasant spot, we pitched our tents, liberated our animals and encamped. An hour or two was passed in a very agreeable manner, when the females, who appeared more fatigued than we of the sterner sex, withdrew to their quarters, leaving the rest of us squatted around a large fire, which we had started, not to warm ourselves by, for it was a sultry July night, but to keep off the wild animals, of whose proximity we were several times reminded by dismal howls.

A couple of hours preceding midnight, our animals were driven in and picketed, and a guard set, more from caution than apprehension of danger. This done, the remainder of the party stretched them-

selves around the fire, and, with the exception of my friend and I, were soon in the enjoyment of that sweetest of all blessings, a sound and healthful sleep. For some time I lay musing on the singular events of my life, and then turned to Huntly.

"Well, Charley," said I, "this seems like old times."

"So I have been thinking," he rejoined, "with one exception, Frank."

"The ladies, eh?"

"Exactly. I trust nothing may occur to make us regret their presence," he added, seriously. "You and I have faced danger too often to fear it for our own sakes—but if any thing should happen now——"

"Surely you do not dream of danger here?" I interrupted.

"Why, to tell you the truth, Frank," he replied, "I have my misgivings that we shall see trouble ere we again reach the fort."

"God forbid! What makes you think so?"

"I can give no reason. It is simply a presentiment of evil."

"But from what source do you apprehend danger?"

"From no particular one, Frank."

"Merely a fancy of yours, probably, springing from your intense interest in those more dear to you than life."

"God send it be only fancy!" he rejoined, gloomily.

His words made me sad, and, added to the restlessness I had previously felt, kept me awake a long time. At last I fell into a feverish slumber, and was gradually progressing toward a state of utter forgetfulness, when a snorting and stamping of the animals aroused me, and together with Huntly I sprang to my feet in alarm.

"What is it?" I cried to the guard, whom I found standing near me, pale as death, with his rifle pointed in the direction whence came the disturbance.

"I do not know," he answered; "this is the first I have heard. Shall I give the alarm?"

"No! remain quiet a moment where you are, and I will steal in among the animals and ascertain the cause. I do not

think it proceeds from savages, or we should have had on onset ere this."

"What then, Frank?" asked Huntly, taking his position by the tents, rifle in hand.

"Most likely some wild beast, which, urged on by hunger, has ventured a little nearer than usual."

My conjecture this time proved correct; for on cautiously approaching the frightened animals, I discovered a small wolf in the act of gnawing a tether rope of buffalo hide. I could have shot him from where I stood; but this I did not care to do, as it would only create unnecessary alarm.—Retreating a few paces and selecting a good sized club, I informed the guard and Huntly there was no cause for alarm, and returning with a stealthy pace, got close to the hungry beast without making him aware of my presence. His head was from me, and he was eagerly engaged in getting a morsel to eke out a half-famished existence. I believe I could have killed the poor creature with a single blow, and raised my club for the purpose; but pity gained power over my resolution, and I gave him only a gentle tap, which rather scared than hurt him, and he ran away howling.

This little incident, though nothing in itself, tended so to increase the nervousness of both Huntly and myself, that we did not fall soundly asleep till the first sign of day-break streamed up golden in the east. An hour later we were all on our feet, and having partaken a slight repast, and laughed over our fears of the departed night, we mounted our horses and again proceeded on our journey.

No more delays occurred, and ere the sun gained the meridian, we came in sight of the village, when our Indian companions, unable to restrain themselves longer, uttered shouts of delight and darted away in advance of us. I turned to Evaline, and beheld her seated quietly on her little pony, her gaze rivetted upon the village, but apparently laboring under no excitement. A closer scrutiny convinced me I was mistaken. There was little outward display of her feelings; but I perceived in her ashen cheeks and absent stare, that

thoughts, mighty in their power, were stirring the soul within. For a short time she seemed unconscious of any thing around her, and it was not until Eva had addressed her thrice that she received an answer to her question:

"Is this the spot, sister?"

On the second repetition, Evaline started, turned to the fair querist and sighed:

"This is the spot."

Then covering her face with her hands, she remained silent until addressed again.

"Why are you so sad, Evaline?" inquired Lillian.

"Ay, sister, tell us!" added Eva.

"I am thinking of the past and the future," was the answer, in a low, tremulous tone. "Oh, my friends!" she continued, "you cannot know my feelings. I am about to bid farewell to those who have been to me as brothers and sisters. I am about to leave—to see them no more—to go far away to the land of the stranger.— True, you will say, I go not alone; I shall have with me a kind mother and sister, and other dear friends; but still you know not what it is to suddenly and utterly tear yourself away from old ties and old associations. You know not the fascinations of the wilderness, to one who, like myself, has never known aught else. Even danger has a charm to those who are bred to it; and it is hard, with all the inducements before me, to break the spell of unlimited freedom with which I have roamed over thousands of miles of uncultivated territory. But I feel it my duty to go with you. I can not think of parting from my dear mother again in life. As she has suggested, the tie binding me to her I acknowledge to be stronger than that of mere association."

"And have you no other inducement to part from the Mysterious Tribe?" asked Huntly, a little reproachfully.

Evaline looked up, her eye met his, a slight flush colored her pale features, and frankly taking his hand, she replied, in a sweet, timid voice:

"Yes, dear Charles, there is more than one."

"God bless you, Evaline!" was the hearty response. "We will all strive

to make you happy; and in the joy of the future, you will ere long forget the past."

"Forget, say you?" she repeated, looking earnestly in his face. "Forget the past!—forget my old friends? Nay," she continued, "you know not yet the heart of Prairie Flower, if you think she can ever forget."

"No, no, not exactly forget," returned Huntly, endeavoring to recover from his mistake: "Not exactly forget: I do not mean that, Evaline—but rather that you will cease to regret this change of life."

"Perhaps so," she sighed.

"See!" I exclaimed, "the Indians have nearly gained the village, and the inhabitants are already flocking down the hill to meet them. Let us quicken our pace;" and galloping forward, we soon drew rein in the center of the crowd.

"Leni-Leoti!" "Prairie Flower!" was the universal cry on every hand, as Evaline leaped from her saddle and sprang to the embrace of her Indian friends, who pressed around her as children around a parent—old and young—men, women and children—each eager to be first to greet her with a hearty welcome. For some time the rest of us remained wholly unnoticed. At length, the first joyful excitement over, Evaline pointed to us, and bade the Indians give us welcome, which they did in a hearty manner.

Approaching Eva, Evaline took her by the hand and said:

"In this lady, my friends, you behold the sister of Prairie Flower."

"Another Prairie Flower!" "Another Leni-Leoti!" was the almost simultaneous exclamation; and instantly collecting around, they gazed upon her in surprise, and began talking to each other in their own dialect. Then, one after another, they approached and took her hand, and said, in broken English, that they were most happy to see her, and that she was welcome, as the sister of Prairie Flower, to a share in all they possessed. This reception over, they invited us to the village, where every thing in their power was done to make us comfortable and contented.— Our animals were taken in charge and

liberated, and three or four lodges assigned us during our stay among them.

On learning that Evaline had only returned to bid them a final farewell, the Wahsochees one and all became very sad, and a gloom pervaded the village, as on the funeral day of one universally beloved.—The women and children wept at the thought, and some of them begged of her in piteous tones not to leave them. Evaline could not witness these sincere manifestations of lasting affection unmoved, and in consequence her eyes were continually filled with tears. As it had been arranged that we should leave on the following morning, she was kept busy through the day in making preparations therefor. Her costume for different occasions, which had been procured for her by Great Medicine, and which she had preserved with great care, together with sundry other articles and trinkets, some of which she had purchased in Oregon City and brought with her, she now proceeded to distribute one by one, giving something to each as a remembrance. This occupied her time and attention till night, when a conference of the nation was called, to which none of our party save Evaline was admitted. This conference lasted till midnight, and long before it broke up, I, as well as most of my companions, was sound asleep.

At an early hour in the morning, our horses were caught and saddled, our two mules packed, and every thing prepared for our immediate departure. Evaline was silent and sad, and her features showed traces of having passed a feverish, restless night. Thinking she might feel a diffidence in having us present at her last interview, I approached her and said:

"Evaline, the time has come to take our final leave."

"I know it," she faltered.

"As there are some strangers in our party, perhaps it were better, all things considered, that we should go on before, and await your coming at a proper distance?"

"Thank you!" she replied; "the very favor I would have asked, had I dared."

"It shall be so. There is a little hill you see yonder, somewhat out of the di-

rect course to the fort, whither we will ride, merely for the view it affords of the prairie beyond, and there remain till you join us."

She again expressed her thanks, and I returned to the others and informed them of the new arrangement. We then proceeded to shake hands with each of the tribe, which occupied us some ten minutes, and mounting our horses, rode slowly away down the mountain, crossed the little streamlet, and galloped over a short level to the hill in question, on whose summit we came to a halt as preconcerted.

It was a warm day, and the sun, about an hour above the horizon, streamed down his golden, mellow rays, beautifying each object, by giving it that soft and dreamy appearance, which, in the poetic mind, awakens those sweet fancies that fill the soul with holy meditation and make earth seem a paradise. A heavy dew had fallen during the night, and its crystalline drops, still hanging on leaf, blade and flower, sparkled in the morning sunbeams like so many diamonds. Above us gay plumaged birds flittered from branch to branch, and poured forth their morning carols in a variety of strains, or, flapping their wings, darted up and away through the deep blue ether. Around and about us, bees, beetles and insects of divers kinds were buzzing or basking in the sunlight, now dipping into the flower to sip its sweets, now alighting on the leaf to take a dainty morsel, now plunging to the ground with no apparent design, and then each and all up and away, filling the air with a drowsy, pleasing hum.

Not the least enchanting of all was the beautiful landscape that here lay spread to our view. Behind us was the little valley we had just crossed over, carpeted with green and variegated with bright flowers, through which wound a silvery streamlet, and beyond which, like some mighty barrier, the Black Hills lifted their heads far heavenward. To the right and left, at some little distance, was a wood, over the top of which loomed hills one above another, but gradually retreating, till the last one, far, far in the distance, either showed

the fleecy like palace of eternal snow, or gently blended with the cerulean blue.

But before us was the scene which fixed our whole attention. Here, for miles upon miles, stretched away a vast prairie, whose tall, rank grass, gently touched by a light breeze, undulated like the swelling of the sea in a calm, over which fluttered and hovered myriads of birds and insects, now dipping down, skimming along the surface and disappearing altogether, or soaring upward, cleaving the balmy air, and displaying their little bodies as mere specks upon the blue background. To relieve the monotony otherwise attendant, here and there, at long intervals, rose little knolls, clustered with trees, resembling islands pushing up from the glassy surface of a tranquil ocean. And away, and away, and away to the dim distance stretched this same sea-like prairie, till the eye, unable to trace it farther, saw nothing but the soft blending of earth and sky.

For some moments we all remained silent, gazing upon the scene with feelings peculiar to each. Lilian was the first to speak:

"O, how beautiful!" she exclaimed, rapturously. "How beautiful and how sublime is this great ocean of earth!"

"Ay, sublime indeed!" rejoined Eva.— "It is just such a scene as ever fills me with rapture—inspires me with the sacred feeling of poesy. O, that like one of those gay birds, I could wing my way above it! Would it not be delightful, Lilian?"

"Charming!" answered the other.

"But can we not skim its surface on our fleet steeds? Come! for a ride! a ride! What say you, gentlemen?" she added, appealing to us.

"So pleasant a request, from so fair a petitioner, must needs be complied with," returned one of the party, gallantly, bowing gracefully to Eva.

The speaker was a young man, some twenty-five years of age, of fine person and good address, with a handsome and prepossessing countenance, whereon was legibly stamped frankness, generosity and nobleness of soul. There was an eloquence in his soft, dark eye, and a loftiness of purpose on his clear, open brow, which

would have ranked him far above the herd, had even a finished education, of which he was possessed, been wanting. To be brief in my remarks, he was the only son of one of the merchants who had emigrated from the State of New York to Oregon City during the previous summer, and one of the party who had so far been our companions of the long journey. He was now on his way east, to arrange some unsettled affairs and purchase more goods for his father, with the design of returning to Oregon the following season. During the past winter, Elmer Fitzgerald (so he was named) had once or twice met with Eva Mortimer; but no acquaintance had been formed with each other previous to both parties setting forth on the present journey, where, being daily and hourly thrown together, sharing alike the hardships and perils of the wilderness, it was but natural, that, between two such individuals of refined manners and cultivated tastes, there should gradually spring up an intimacy, which time and circumstances might ripen to something more. But, as I have said before, let me not anticipate.

As Elmer spoke, I noted that both his own and the countenance of Eva slightly flushed, and quickly turning to me, the latter said:

"And what say you, Francis?"

"I shall echo the words of Mr. Fitzgerald."

"Then we will go!" said Lilian, joyfully. "But brother," she added, turning to Charles, "you appear gloomy and dejected. Do you object to this arrangement?"

"Why, to speak candidly," he answered seriously, "I do."

"For what reason?" I inquired.

"I can give you no other than what I told you last night—a presentiment of danger."

"Pshaw! Charley," I rejoined, "there is no danger here. The sadness of Evaline has made you gloomy, and a brisk ride over this prairie will set you right again."

"And it will be beneficial to dear sister Evaline also," chimed in Eva, "by diverting her thoughts from her present cause of grief."

"Suit yourselves in the matter," rejoined Huntly. "I shall of course do as the rest. I merely spoke my apprehensions, which, after all, may only be foolish fancies."

"Lo! yonder Evaline comes!" cried Lillian; and looking toward the village, a part of which was visible from where we stood, we beheld her rapidly descending the mountain on her little pony.

Charles instantly wheeled his horse and rode away to meet her, and presently returned in her company. She was sad, and silent, and her eyes were red with weeping, while her features generally, showed traces of having recently passed through a very trying scene.

On being informed of our present design, she silently acquiesced; and liberating our mules, that they might not suffer in our absence, we rode slowly down to the prairie, and set off at a gallop, most of us in gay spirits, with the understanding that, in case we became separated, we should all meet again at the starting point.

Man plaus and God performs. That meeting, for some of the party, was destined never to take place.

CHAPTER XXIII.

A MERRY RIDE—ANOTHER BEAUTIFUL VIEW—AN EXCITING RACE—SEPARATION—THE CONTEST DECIDED—ALARM—THE PRAIRIE ON FIRE—FLIGHT—TERRIBLE CONFLAGRATION—APPALLING STRUGGLE—HORRIBLE SCENE—LIFE AND DEATH.

For an hour or two we spurred on to the eastward, in company, through the tall grass which brushed our feet at every step, and made our horses labor exceedingly, when we came to one of the small hills or knolls previously mentioned, where we halted to give our panting and foaming steeds a few minutes' rest. This knoll was clustered with beautiful trees, under whose refreshing shade bubbled up a spring of clear, cold water, wherewith we first refreshed ourselves and then our horses. From the brow of this, the view of every thing was

more delightful than from that of the one we had left behind us. Then we were locking on the prairie only in one or two directions—now we stood above and surveyed it on all sides. To the north of us was a small ridge, in shape resembling an ox-bow, the southern bend of which was about five miles distant. This, after running due north for a considerable distance, appeared to take a zig-zag course and unite with the Black Hills, which, sublime in their grandeur, bounded the view to the west. To the south and east, as far as the eye could penetrate, stretched away and away the beautiful prairie, with nothing to relieve its monotony but an occasional knoll like the one whereon we stood, and which forcibly reminded me of the oases I had seen in the great desert.

"O, this is delightful—enchanting!" exclaimed Eva, with a flush of animation. "This is what I love. It expands the soul, and bears one above the grovelling thoughts of every day life. Nature!" she added, apostrophizing, "I love thee in thy grandeur and thy simplicity! and know, as I gaze upon thee, that I behold the handiwork of that Great Power above, which regulates alike the mighty systems of ten thousand times ten thousand worlds, and the most trifling event that takes place upon them. All alike move by a universal and immutable law; and each, as it were complete in itself, is but a minor branch of that great machine which works for one almighty and incomprehensible design. Were I a poet that could pen my thoughts, I would seek such a place as this, and alone, away from the discords of my fellow beings, write such inspiring words, that ages yet to come should read and wonder over my pages, and call them the result of a holy inspiration."

"Ay, sister," cried Evaline, "thus have I felt a thousand times; and thus it is it comes so hard for me to part from these enrapturing scenes. Now can you blame me for my regrets?"

"No, sweet sister," answered the other, "I do not blame you—far from it. I only feel you are a gem too rare to part with."

"And so think we all," I rejoined; "and one of us at least, if I may be permitted.

the expression, thinks doubly so;" and I glanced at my friend.

"Ay, Frank," he answered, "treble that if you like. But come, my friends, the day is advancing—had we not better return? They will look anxiously for us at the fort."

"One ride more first," said Eva, quickly. "I cannot bear to quit this scene forever, without one more glorious ride."

"Whither shall it be, then?" asked Lilian.

"To yonder knoll," and she pointed away to the eastward.

"That is far," rejoined Huntly, "and I fear we shall not get back till night, and the day will be lost."

"Lost?" echoed Eva, her eyes sparkling with animation. "Call you such a day as this lost? Come, gentlemen," she added, turning to the rest of us, "you do not think so, I'll wager! On! let us on! I dare you to a race! and my glove to him who first puts feet on yonder hill in advance of me."

So saying, she gracefully waved her hand, and tightening her rein, pressed her fiery steed down the declivity and over the prairie at headlong speed.

"A race! a race! The glove! the glove!" cried some half a dozen voices, and instantly the whole party was in commotion.

Those who chanced to be dismounted, at once sprang to their saddles, and all dashed away after their fair champion, who, sitting erect, with the air of a queen, was now urging her gallant beast to do his utmost.

Next behind Eva rode Elmer Fitzgerald, striving hard to overtake her, followed by Lilian, myself and the rest of the party, some in couples and others alone, each and all contending to be first at the far off goal. I say all, but I must except Charles and Evaline, who brought up the rear at a tardy pace, and seemed rather deliberately following us without excitement and interest, than taking any part in the race.

With the balance of us, for the first five minutes, the contest appeared equal—neither gaining ground on the party, nor falling away from the position he had ta-

ken at the setting-out. All was life and excitement; and merry shouts and gay jeers rang out, as on we pressed our panting steeds through the tall grass, startling thousands of small animals from their quiet retreats, and scaring up flocks of birds, which, as they soared away, twittered their discontent, and looked down upon us with wonder and fear. On, on we rushed, completely lost in the enlivening chase, and heeding nought but the still distant goal we were striving to gain. On, on! still on! with the fire of youthful ambition urging us to renewed exertions.

At length the difference in the speed of our horses began to be seen. Eva yet kept her position in advance, but was gradually losing ground before the fleetest steed of Elmer Fitzgerald. Lilian and I, side by side, still managed to hold our own, and were gaining on all the others, who were now strung out in a long single line behind.

Half an hour passed, and the change in our previous positions became more distinctly marked. Elmer now rode head-to-head with our fair leader, but both had increased the distance between themselves and us materially. I looked back, and beheld the line stretched out for more than a mile, far beyond which I could dimly discern my friend and Evaline slowly bringing up the rear. Most of the party had by this time despaired of winning the race, had even withdrawn from the contest, and were now following at a leisure pace. A few yet held on, but only for a few minutes, when they took pattern by the others, and we were left masters of the field.

For another quarter of an hour we pushed on with vigor, when the panting of our foaming steeds warned us to check them. Elmer and Eva were the first to take this precaution, and on our coming up to them, the latter said:

"I suppose as we have distanced all the others, there will not be much strife between us. At all events, we must not kill our horses, and they are already pretty well blown. How much was I deceived in the distance! When I proposed this race, I had no idea there were more than five miles between point and point; and yet

some eight or ten miles, if I greatly err not in judgment, have been gone over, and yonder hill is still miles ahead."

"Distance on level ground, from an elevated point, is always deceiving," I answered. "But come! I do not see the necessity of going farther. Give your companion the glove, for I acknowledge him winner, and let us return."

"Pray, take Mr. Leighton's advice, Miss Mortimer!" urged Fitzgerald; "for it is a long distance to where we left our mules, and our horses will suffer enough at the best."

"Ay, ay, modest sir!" exclaimed Eva, with a ringing laugh. "I understand. You wish to be acknowledged victor, before you have won. By my faith, sir, I had thought you possessed of more spirit than that. I am willing to return, for that matter; but I cannot yield the glove until the conditions on which it was offered are complied with."

"Then the glove shall be mine, if I have to make the remainder of the journey alone!" cried Elmer. "Do not flatter yourself, Miss Mortimer, that I have exerted myself thus far for nothing. The prize I must have; I insist upon it; and it remains for you to say——"

"Good heavens! what is that!" exclaimed Lillian, interrupting the other, and pointing toward the south.

We all turned our eyes in the direction indicated, and beheld, stretching along the horizon, what appeared to be a dense, black, rolling cloud.

"A heavy thunder storm is approaching," said Fitzgerald in reply, "and we stand a fair chance of being thoroughly drenched."

"I think you are mistaken," rejoined I; "for I have never seen a cloud of such singular appearance. See! how it gradually creeps away to the right and left!"

"And there are bright flashes, too!" exclaimed Eva, breathless with intense excitement.

"What is it! what is it!" cried Lillian, grasping my arm with a trembling hand, and gazing upon the scene with a pale, terrified look. "It is not a cloud—it cannot be a cloud—it is something more awful—

See! see! how fast it spreads! And there! there! mark you those flashes!"

Suddenly the whole horrible truth flashed upon me, and for the moment held me dumb with terror.

"You are pale with alarm!" pursued Lillian, turning to me and noting the agonized expression of my countenance.

"Speak, Francis! what is it!" screamed Eva.

"Merciful God!" I gasped, "the prairie is on fire! We are lost!—our doom is sealed!"

"Lost!" shrieked Lillian and Eva.

"Oh, God! is there no escape!" added the latter, wildly. "We must—we must escape!"

"Flight—flight alone can save us!" shouted Fitzgerald. "Perchance we may reach yonder hill. It is our only hope."

As he spoke, he spurred his steed, struck Eva's with his bridle rein, and away bounded both with all the speed in their power.

"Follow!" cried I to Lillian, imitating the example of the other, and in the wild excitement of the moment completely losing all my wonted presence of mind.—"Follow hard—strain every nerve—and God vouchsafe us victory!"

It was no longer a race of pleasure, but one of fearful agony—our lives the stake, and heavy odds against us. Can I describe it, reader!—describe our feelings in those awful moments of horrible suspense? No! it is beyond the strength of the pen—the power of language—and must be left to your imagination.

Four miles, at the least—four long and seemingly interminable miles—intervene between us and our destination. Can we reach it! We have but little hope. On, on we urge, with whip and spur, our already drooping horses—and on, on comes the mighty destroyer, as if sent to execute the long pent up vengeance of an offended God.

Away to the east, and away to the west, and rushing toward the north, with the fury of the devastating tornado, comes this terrific Avenger, sweeping all in his course, making all black and desolate which a few minutes since had seemed so lovely, rolling up, to the very dome of Heaven his

huge volumes of smoke, of gigantic and hideous shapes, with red sheets of flame issuing from its appalling blackness, as they were the burning tongues and eyes of hell's unchained demons, so shaped by our wild and distorted imaginations. On, on!—how our horses snort, and foam, and tremble! They have caught our fears, and are doing their utmost to save us and themselves. On, on, on!—two miles, thank God! are passed—but, alas! there are two more before us, and our gallant beasts are already beginning to falter with fatigue. On, on!—behold our terrible foe advance! his fiery banners streaming up brighter, redder and more bright as he nears us—his ten thousand scorching and blasting tongues, hissing, roaring and destroying every living thing that comes within their reach.

Oh! how sublime—how awfully sublime this spectacle! on which we rivet our fascinated eyes, while our hearts leap to our throats, and our lips are compressed with an indescribable fear.

Now listen to these apparently unearthly sounds! The prairie is alive with millions of voices, which fancy would give to the fiery tongues of this rushing Monster, as the cheering song of his death-dealing advance—but which stern reality tells us are the frantic cries of droves and herds of wild animals, of all species, mad with affright, all pressing forward together, pell-mell, to escape one common, but ever conquering enemy.

Look yonder! There goes a stampede of buffalo. Yonder! Another of wild horses. How they tear ahead, with foaming mouths, expanded nostrils, dilated eyes, and a tread that makes the very earth tremble beneath them!

Look closer—nearer! Here—here they come!—above us, before us, behind us, beneath us—on all and every side—birds, beasts, reptiles and insects. How they dart past us now with lolling tongues, and fiery eyes half starting from their sockets, entangling the very legs of our horses, and causing them to rear, and plunge, and snort, and shriek with appalling terror! Here are wolves, and wolverines, and rabbits, and bears, and serpents—each and all

howling, shrieking, and hissing their fears.

God of Heaven! what a scene!

On, on, for our only hope! Another mile is passed: oh! that it were another—the last! We near the haven of our safety. Can we—shall we ever reach it! Behold the Destroyer, where he comes! Up, up to the mid-heaven now rolls the smoke of his conquest! and the sun grows dark behind it, as he were mourning for the destruction he is forced to look upon.

Hark! what sound is that!—that roaring sound! It is the voice of the Fire-Spirit, as he were mocking our hopes. Must we die now, with safety almost within our grasp! Why do our horses stagger and reel! Have they not strength for this last effort! See! we are almost saved. Yon hill looms up invitingly before us. Oh! for strength of another five minutes' duration! Five minutes—only five—an eternity to us!

Ha! the dense smoke is lowering upon us, and we shall be suffocated! No! that breeze drives it back. All thanks to God for that! There is still hope.

On, on! still on! How swift is the flame, and how tardy our horses! They have no spirit, seemingly. They only creep and crawl like snails. My fortune all, to hold out another two minutes.

Ha! God help us now! Lillian's steed reels—totters—stumbles—falls! She is down. I hear her shriek for help. How strangely that shriek mingles with the roaring and crackling of this great prairie fire! Now on my feet I seize her hand. Now my horse staggers under a double weight. But he is a gallant beast; and plunging forward, with a dying effort, falls at the base of the knoll, which Elmer and Eva have gained in advance of us. One desperate effort more, and Lillian, all unconscious of fear or danger, is borne in my arms into a dense thicket, where I sink upon the earth, and, half stifled with smoke, amid the roaring of a mighty conflagration, thank God its flames can neither reach me nor the being I love.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE MEETING—ALARM FOR OUR FRIENDS—
A SCENE OF DESOLATION—TERRIBLE SUS-
PENSE—REGRETS—PRISONERS FOR A DAY
—A NIGHT OF HORROR—A GOLDEN MORN-
—OUR STEPS RETRACED—HIDEOUS SPEC-
TACLES—OUR WORST FEARS SEEMINGLY
CONFIRMED—JOY AT LAST.

No tongue can portray my feelings, my deep emotions of gratitude to the All-wise Preserver, as, with the still unconscious Lillian reposing in my arms, I remained motionless a minute, enveloped in a pall of smoky darkness, listening to the roar of the awful flames, that surged around and onward, scorching the green leaves and grass within a few feet, but leaving me unharmed. Once, for a moment, when the smoke settled in so thick that day became night, and the air too much heated for respiration, I fancied we might die of suffocation. But it was only for a moment. A draught of wind revived me, and lifted the smoke, which rolled away in mighty masses after its master spirit, the devouring element; while day-light again streaming in through the interwoven branches of this beautiful retreat, made my heart bound with rapture at our safe deliverance.

Lillian now opened her eyes, and for an instant gazed upon me with a bewildered expression. I strained her to my heart, pressed my lips to hers, and whispered:

"We are saved, dearest."

"Saved?" she echoed: "Saved? Then it was not a horrible dream, but a frightfully hideous reality, at the thought of which the soul sickens and grows faint!"

"All that language has power to depict of the awful, it was, and ten times more."

"Lillian! Francis!" now called the voice of Eva; and springing through the bushes, accompanied by Elmer, she rushed up to the former, threw her arms around her neck, and each wept tears of joy in the other's embrace.

"But Evaline and Charles—what of them?" cried Eva, looking up, pale with alarm.

"Gracious God!" shouted I, "what of

them indeed!" for in the frantic bewilderment of the last few minutes, all thought of every thing but escape from death, had been driven from my mind. "Perchance they have perished! Great God! what a thought! To the brow of the hill let us speed at once!"

As I spoke, we all rushed up the acclivity, and soon gained a point whence we could gaze upon the desolated scene.—What a fearful change a few minutes had wrought! Where, a short time since, all was life and beauty—the tall grass softly undulating to the light-winged zephyr—we now beheld only a black, smoking, dismal waste, without a sign of living thing to relieve its gloom. The fire had passed us entirely; but away to the east, to the north and the west, spread a dense cloud of rolling smoke, amid which we could perceive the lurid flashes of the Death-dealing Victor, as on, on he sped, seeking new victims to feed his insatiable maw. Here and there, in every direction on his smoking trail, were strewn the blackened carcasses of such animals as had been overtaken in their flight. At the foot of the hill whereon we stood, in the exact spot where he had fallen, lay the remains of the gallant beast which had borne me through so many perils, and which, at the very last, had saved my life at the expense of his own. A few rods farther on was the one Lillian had ridden, now an ungainly mass of charred flesh. Altogether, it was an appalling scene of desolation, that made the heart sick to look upon.

All these things I took in at a glance, but without dwelling upon them for a moment. One wild, maddening thought alone occupied my brain. My friend and Evaline—were they lost or saved? What a torturing uncertainty, where nothing could be known! I strained my eyes, and vainly strove to penetrate the sable veil which curtained the view to the west. All there was wrapped in the frightful gloom of impenetrable darkness. Perchance they might be living, but even now in the agonies of a most terrible death!—and I groaned, and shuddered, and felt my brain grow dizzy and my heart sicken at the bare possibility.

For some minutes we all stood and stared as if rooted to the spot, pale and speechless with the agony of suspense. At length the smoke began to clear away between us and the point from whence we had set out for the race. Alas! it brought no hope, but rather despair. All, as elsewhere, was black and lifeless, and we felt our doubts removed by the worst of certainties.

"Oh, fatal day!" cried Eva, wringing her hands; "and most fatal adventure!—Oh, God! my sister and friend lost! and all through my rashness. Strong headed and giddy, I would not heed his foreboding counsels, but madly rushed away, dragging him to his own death. May God in his mercy forgive me! for I can never forgive myself. Never—no, never—shall I be happy again."

"Nay, dearest Eva," said Lillian consolingly, twining her arms around the other's neck: "Nay, my dear sister—for a sister to me you seem—do not reproach yourself thus! You were to blame in this no more than I, or the rest. You knew not, dreamed not, there was danger—neither did any of us—and the forebodings of Charles were merely vague fancies without even a foundation. Had he warned us of certain danger known to himself, then we might have been considered rash in disregarding his counsel. As it is, I feel we have been only the blind instruments in the hands of the Almighty, for working out one of His mysterious designs. But do not let us despair. I still have hope that Charles and Evaline are safe. They were far behind us, and it is possible may have turned back and gained yonder hill in safety."

"God send it be so!" ejaculated I—"though I have my fears. But, Eva," I added, "be the consequences what they may, I insist you do not blame yourself. If any one is to blame, it is I."

"You, Francis? But you merely say this to console me."

"Nay, I will prove it. But for my plan, we had all ere this been far on our way to Fort Laramie. It was I proposed to Evaline we should leave her alone with her friends, and designated the spot whither we would ride and await her. It was I

that made light of the presentiment of Huntly, and scoffed at his idea of danger. So blame not yourself, Eva! Heaven knows, the blow falls heavy enough upon us all, without the additional weight of either one thinking it the result of his or her individual misdoing."

"Ay," rejoined Elmer, "so think I. If one is to blame, all are—but in my opinion, none are at fault; and certainly not you, Miss Mortimer."

But I will not follow in detail our gloomy conversation, nor longer dwell upon our feelings. Suffice, that for something like an hour we stood watching the fire, as on it rushed, away and away to the dim distance, until it became lost to our vision, leaving behind it the most dismal scene I had ever beheld.

Another hour passed, and still we stood in the self-same spot, uncertain what course to pursue. We had eagerly scanned every object, and strained our eyes in every direction, in the hope of being rejoiced by the sight of one living thing. But the hope proved fallacious. All was silent, and black, and motionless, on this great field of death and desolation.

But what should be done, was now the all important question. The earth was still smoking with heat, and the sun, in mid-heaven, pouring down his scorching rays, with scarcely a reviving breath of air; so that we could not venture from our shady retreat with any safety. Besides, but two of our horses had been spared, and these were so exhausted as to be of no service to us for the day at least.

How long the earth would remain heated, we could not tell; but in all probability till the day should become too far advanced for us to gain another safe point ere nightfall—in which event, we would again be in imminent danger from the ravenous beasts, that would come with the darkness to prey upon the half-burnt carcasses of their fellows. In view of all this, there appeared no alternative but to remain where we were over night, and make the best of the circumstances we could not alter.

This, after the proposal, discussion and final rejection of several plans, was at last

reluctantly consented to, when Elmer and myself immediately set about constructing a rude lodge for Lilian and Eva, who, to their praise be it said, bore their misfortunes with a firm, patient and heroic resignation, that would have won our admiration, even had we, in every other respect, been wholly indifferent to their many noble charms.

Our present asylum was a beautiful and romantic spot, of some half a dozen acres in extent, watered by a fine spring, shaded with trees, and carpeted with a velvet-like sward of sweet, green grass, interspersed with white, red, purple, yellow and gold colored flowers. In short, it seemed a Garden of Eden on an arid waste; and had our friends been with us, or even had we been assured of their safety, we could have spent, the night here with pleasure.

With our hunting-knives we cut several withes, and bending over a few saplings, bound them together so as to form a regular arbor, which we roofed with bushes, leaves and turf, sufficiently to keep off the dew at least. With our rifles, which we fortunately had with us, we next ransacked the bushes, and were successful in scaring up and shooting some two or three hares, which we dressed and cooked, and found very palatable—the more so, perhaps, that we had eaten nothing since morning—our provisions for the journey having been left with our mules.

During the day we saw nothing of our companions, and as night slowly shut in the scene, we gradually began to lose the faint hope that had thus far been our consolation. True, if saved, the same cause which prevented us, might also them, from venturing forth upon what seemed almost certain destruction. But there was no certainty—no, scarcely a possibility—they had escaped; and this torturing thought, added to our lonely situation and the surrounding gloom, made us wretched with despair.

Oh! what an awful night was this we passed in the wilderness! One which, were we to live a thousand years, would ever be a yesterday to us, so deeply and painfully was it engraven upon the outer tablets of our memories. To add gloom,

as it were, to accumulated horrors, a dark, angry cloud began to spread along the western horizon, from which shot vivid flashes of lightning, followed by the booming roar of heavy thunder, as if the spirits of the air, bent on making "assurance doubly sure," were now marshaling their grand reserve-forces to triumph over a vanquished foe.

On, on came the Storm-King, flinging out his black banners in advance, and veiling the light of Heaven's starry host, as if unwilling one single thing should be left undone to make his triumph most dismally, impressively terrible. On, on he came, amid the almost incessant flashes and thunders of his mighty artillery!

Huddled together in our rude arbor, before which blazed a lurid, flickering flame, that gave our pale features an unearthly appearance, and made our grim shadows dance fantastically behind us, like dark spirits in a hellish revel, we sat and gazed upon vacancy, silent with emotions too deep for utterance.

Now the storm was at its height. Sheet upon sheet of the hot lightning, flashing in our faces, blinded our eyes; peal upon peal of crashing thunder, shaking the earth beneath, almost deafened us with its roar; while the rain, pouring down in torrents, thoroughly drenched and stiffened our cramped up bodies and limbs.

For two hours thus we remained in breathless awe, motionless and silent, ere the storm abated its fury; and then only, as it were, that we might hear the howlings of surrounding wolves, which, to our distorted fancies, seemed the loud wailings of the damned over the final wreck of Nature.

Serenely the morning broke upon the night, and the sun again rose as bright and golden as if nothing had happened. Never was a day hailed with more joy.—With the first streak of light, we caught our two overridden horses, and found, to our great delight, that they were still capable of performing a heavy task. Mounting two on each, we set out over the blackened plain to retrace our steps, and, if possible, gain some tidings of our friends.

For an hour or more we saw nothing to

attract particular attention, when suddenly Eva uttered a fearful shriek, and pointing to an object before us, cried:

"My God! look on that!"

We did look, with dilated eyes, and felt our blood freeze with horror. It was the blackened and mangled corpse of a human being—probably the remains of one of our companions of the previous day. A few feet from it lay the half-eaten carcass of a horse, too fatally confirming our suspicions.

Elmer and I dismounted and examined the body of the unfortunate young man; but all trace by which we might identify it was lost; and with a sickening shudder and trembling steps, we passed on, with such feelings as none can ever more than faintly imagine.

About a mile from this, we came upon the carcass of a horse, beside which lay the stirrups of a saddle, several scraps of burnt leather, and, oh God! another human body!

"Another victim!" groaned Fitzgerald, covering his eyes to shut out the hideous spectacle. "Who next?"

"Great God!" gasped I, "should the next be Charles and Evaline! But come, Fitzgerald! this is a trial unfitted for ladies. See! both Lillian and Eva seem ready to fall from their horses! Let us mount and away, and take them from this awful scene. If we gain no tidings of our friends when we reach the Wahsochees, we will at least get some of them to assist us in the painful task of searching for their remains.

Shaping our course more to the right, we rode away over the plain, fearful to look beneath our feet, lest our eyes might chance upon another revolting spectacle. In the course of a couple of hours, we had passed the first hill, leaving it away to our left, and were fast nearing the second, the point from whence we had first viewed the beautiful prairie, in all the enchantment of its loveliness only the morning previous, and which we had fixed on for our rendezvous, in case we became separated, little dreaming, in our merry thoughtlessness, of the mighty calamity hanging over us, and that grim Death was even then

invisibly stalking in our midst to select his victims. Suddenly Lillian exclaimed: "God be thanked! they live!" and overcome with joyful emotions, she could only point her finger and faintly add: "See! see!"

"Ay, thank God!" cried I, "they are saved!" and I pointed to Charles and Evaline, whom we now descried rushing down the hill before us, followed by some fifteen or twenty of the Mysterious Tribe.

Five minutes later, we stood clasping each other, weeping and speechless with joy.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE ESCAPE—RETURN TO THE FORT—JOY—
THE DEAD ALIVE—HOMEWARD BOUND—
THE ROUTE—REFLECTIONS—DESTINATION
GAINED—HAPPY MEETING.

It is unnecessary for me to dwell upon this rapturous meeting, one of the most joyful I had ever experienced. No one can conceive our feelings, but such as have been placed in like situations. Each party had looked upon the other as dead, and mourned their loss accordingly; and it was with tears of gratitude for our deliverance from an awful fate, that we narrated to each other the manner of escape. That of Charles and Evaline was briefly as follows.

At the time they discovered the fire, they were some four miles in our rear, and at least two behind the hindmost of the party. Made aware of their danger, they sought to avert it by flight; and as the hill behind them was the nearest elevated point, they had striven to gain it in advance of the flames. In this they had been disappointed. The fire, driven by a strong breeze of its own creating, rushed forward with such frightful velocity, that when within a mile or so of the desirable point, they found, to their dismay and horror, all hope of escape in that quarter cut off.

"Imagine my feelings," said Huntly, as he told me the tale, "when, all hope of

escape over, I threw my arm around the waist of Evaline, and pointing to the flames, which, driven forward by a strong breeze, had already passed the hill to the westward and were fast sweeping around to enclose it with a fiery wall—when, I say, viewing all this, with the calmness of utter despair, I whispered:

“At least, dear Evaline, we will die together.”

“Rather say live together,” she exclaimed, “if you have any means of striking fire.”

“Only a pistol,” I replied.

“That will do,” she answered. “Quick! let us dismount, tear up the grass around us, and fire it.”

“In an instant,” pursued Huntly, “I comprehended all; and springing from my horse, with hope renewed, labored as a man may, when his own life and that of another more valuable are depending on his exertions. In two minutes a small spot was cleared, and placing my pistol within a bunch of torn up grass, I fired. The flash ignited it, and a bright flame shooting upward, caught on all sides, and sped away on its work of death, leaving a blackened circle, within which we stepped and remained unharmed. As soon as the fire had passed, we remounted and dashed over the heated earth to the hill before us, where, like yourselves, we passed a terrible night of agonized suspense. Not having seen any signs of you or the rest of the party during the day, we finally came to the melancholy conclusion that all were lost, and at day-break this morning set off for the Indian village with the heart-rending intelligence. Some twenty of the tribe at once volunteered to go back with us; and on this sad journey we had already set out, when, to our unspeakable joy, we espied you galloping over the plain, and hastened to meet you.”

“Strange!” said I, in reply, “that I should have overlooked a means of escape so simple as firing the prairie! It would have saved us a world of trouble; but from the first I lost my presence of mind, and thought of nothing but escape by flight. Alas! for our companions! Have you seen any of them, Charles?”

“Not one,” he answered, with a sigh.

“Then I fear all have perished!”

“What are we to do under the circumstances?” he inquired.

“Why, I think we had better set out for Fort Laramie at once; for our friends there, even now, are doubtless becoming exceedingly uneasy at our long absence.”

“And leave the bones of our late companions to bleach on the open prairie, Frank?”

“No! We must get the Indians to hunt up their bodies and give them decent burial.”

This plan was finally adopted; and in the course of a couple of hours, we had again parted with the Wahsochees, and were on our return to the fort.

The journey proved a tedious one, for all were sad and silent with gloomy thoughts. Travelling some thirty miles, we encamped, and resuming our route the next morning, reached the fort in the afternoon of the same day.

As we rode into the area, the inmates all rushed out to greet and welcome us, and among them came Mrs. Huntly and Madame Mortimer, almost frantic with joy. At first, we were at a loss to comprehend the cause of this strong ebullition of feeling; but did not long remain in ignorance; for the next moment, desecrating two of our late companions in the crowd, the whole truth flashed upon us.

“Oh, my children! my children!” exclaimed Mrs. Huntly; and overcome with her feelings, she could only first clasp one and then the other to her heart in silence.

“My daughters! and do I indeed see you alive again!” cried Madame Mortimer, pressing Eva and Evaline to her panting breast. “Oh! could you but know a mother’s agony for the last twenty-four hours, during which she has mourned you as dead, you would never leave her again.”

But not to dwell upon this affectionate meeting, it will only be necessary to state, that two of the party whom we supposed dead, had escaped, by flying from the field and taking refuge on the ridge to the north. Here they had paused for a few minutes, to gaze upon the sublime scene of the burning plain; and then, believing all save

themselves had perished, had made the best of their way back to the fort and so reported. No wonder, then, there was surprise, and joy, and unusual commotion, on beholding in us the dead alive, the lost ones found.

The second day following our return, we again set out on our homeward journey, in company with a small party of emigrants who had recently crossed over the mountains from California. For several days my friends and myself were unusually thoughtful and serious; but as we neared the confines of civilization, and felt we were about to quit the wilderness, with all its hardships and perils, to mingle with scenes more suited to our tastes, our spirits gradually grew buoyant with the seemingly unalloyed happiness of youthful days.

Never shall I forget the singular feelings we experienced—I speak of Huntly and myself—as we rode into the small town of Independence, Missouri, and recalled the many striking events of the long period which had intervened since last we beheld the place. Then, giddy with the wildness of youth—alone—free from restraint—with no tie stronger than the filial, binding us to any one particular spot—we were just setting forth upon a new world of adventure!—Now, sobered by painful experience, and in company with those we loved, we were retracing our steps, perfectly satisfied there was “no place like home,” and no scenes so dear to us as those of our native land. We had seen danger in every form, suffered all that we could suffer and live, had had our souls tried by the sternest tests, been miraculously preserved through all, blessed beyond our deserts, and now felt contented to leave the field forever to such as might fancy it, and retire to the sweet seclusion of domestic life.

The countenance of Evaline, as day by day we progressed toward the east, gradually brightened with a sweeter happiness than she had ever known—the happiness of being with her mother and sister—of knowing she was not a nameless being, cast astray by some untoward freak of fortune—of feeling she loved and was in turn beloved. She was now entering a

world where every thing, opening up new and strange, filled her with wonder, excited her curiosity, and kept her in a continual state of pleased excitement. Eva was happy in the company of one who could appreciate her noble qualities, and lend her those affectionate and tender sympathies which the ardent soul ever craves, and without which it languishes, and droops, and feels there is a mighty void within.—Lillian was happy, and my vanity sometimes whispered me a reason therefor. In sooth, by the time we reached St. Louis, there was not a sad heart in the party—unless, in a reflective mood, a dark shadow from the past might chance to sweep across it for a moment—only, as it were, to make it seem more bright in the glorious sunshine of the present.

With what emotions of wonder and joy did Evaline view those mighty leviathans, that, by the genius and mechanism of man, are made to play upon the mighty rivers of the Great West, and bear him on his journey as he passes to and fro to all portions of the habitable globe! And then the delight we all felt, as we glided down the turbid waters of the great Mississippi, and steered up the beautiful Ohio, past villages, and towns, and cities, where the pleasing hum of civilization, in every breast save one, awoke sweet memories of former days, and made our hearts bound with pleasing anticipations of what was yet to come.

On, on we swept up the Ohio, past the flourishing cities of Louisville and Cincinnati, (making only a short stay at each) to that of Pittsburgh, where our steamer was exchanged for another, that for the stage, to bear us over the romantic Alleghanies, and that in turn for the rushing car, to land us in Baltimore, again in Philadelphia, and lastly in that great emporium of the western continent, New York. And so on, on—ever changing, continually progressing—toward the golden haven of our desires—which, Heaven be praised! we at last reached in safety.

During the latter part of the journey, my feelings became very sad. I was nearing the home of my youth—the abode of my dearly loved parents—after many long

years of painful and eventful separation. What changes might not have occurred in the interval! Changes, peradventure, to rend my heart with anguish. My parents—my affectionate mother—my kind and indulgent father—how I trembled to think of them! What if, as in the case of my friends, one or both had been called from the scenes of earth, and were now sleeping their last sleep in the mouldering church-yard—never to bless me more with the soft light of their benign eyes! Oh! what a heart sickening feeling, of almost utter desolation, the very thought of it produced! until I forced myself to think no more, lest I should lack physical strength to bear me on to the knowledge I longed yet dreaded to gain.

Pressing invitations from us, and I scarcely need add a more eloquent persuasion from the soft, dark eyes of another, had induced Elmer Fitzgerald to extend his journey a few hundred miles beyond his original intention. Arrived in the city, we all took rooms at a hotel, until such time as we could notify our friends of our presence—or rather, until I could see my parents, if living, in advance of the others.

With a heart palpitating with hope and fear, I hurried into a carriage, and ordering the driver not to spare his horses, leaned back on my seat, and gave myself up to the most intense and painful meditations—occasionally listening to the rumbling of the swift whirling wheels, and wondering when they would cease their motion at their present destination—or gazing from the window at the thousand objects flitting past me, with that vague look of the occupied mind, which takes in each thing distinctly, and yet seems to see nothing whatever.

“Crack went the whip, round went the wheels,” and on we sped at the same rapid pace. At length my attention was arrested by objects familiar from my boyhood, and my heart seemed to creep to my throat, for I knew I was close upon the mansion of my father. A few moments of breathless suspense, and the carriage stopped suddenly, the door swung open, and, leaping out, I rushed up the steps and into the dwelling of my parents.

Two minutes later, unannounced, I stood in the presence of both, but saw I was not recognized.

“Mother! father!” I cried, “have you forgotten your long absent son?”

There was a brief moment of speechless, joyful amazement, and the next I was in my mother's arms, while my father stood by, pressing my hand and weeping as a child.

CHAPTER XXVI.

A GORGEOUS SCENE—THE MYSTERY SOLVED
— FORTUNE PROPITIOUS—HAPPINESS —
THE FINALE.

Reader! I am about to close—about to present to you the last scene of scenes I shall ever give of this my drama of life. I am about to bid you farewell, perchance forever. May I not trust we part as friends!—as boon companions, who have together made a long pilgrimage, with an ever cordial attachment and friendly understanding! From the land of my nativity, you have followed me through a period of years, over the wilderness of the far, Far West, back again to my native land. You have seen me in prosperity and adversity—in sickness and health—in moments of ease and safety—in moments of hardship and peril—in the calmness of quiet meditation, and amid the turmoil, and strife, and din of battle. From first to last, I have been ever present to you—made you my confidant—laid bare to your gaze the secret workings of my ardent spirit. May I not trust I have had your sympathy? that you have felt an interest in my fate, and also in the fate of those with whom my fortune has been so closely connected? Yes! I will trust we part as friends—that when you have perused the last page of this, my humble scroll, you will not cast it aside as altogether worthless—that you will long after spare me and my friends a single thought of pleasing remembrance. I cannot see you—cannot hear your answer—and yet something whispers me it is as I desire—that

we shall not separate but with mutual regrets. Be this as it may, the farewell must be said—the solemn farewell—

“That word which must be and hath been—
That sound which makes us linger.”

* * * *

It was a brilliant scene. In a large saloon, made gorgeous with all the luxuries wealth could procure from all parts of the habitable globe—with soft carpets from Turkey, antique vases from China, old paintings from Germany, and statues from Florence—with long hanging mirrors, that doubled the splendors of the scene—with chairs, and sofas, and ottomans, cushioned with the softest, and most costly of velvets—with every thing, in short, to please, dazzle, and fascinate the eye—over which streamed a soft, bewitching, alabaster light—where strains of melodious music stole sweetly upon the enraptured sense of the hearer;—in such a gorgeous apartment as this, I say, were collected bright faces, sparkling eyes, snowy arms, and lovely forms—set off with vestures of broadcloths, and silks, and satins, and ornamented with chains of gold, and jewels of diamond, and ruby, and pearl, and sapphire. Ay! in such a place as this—in the mansion of my father—were assembled the elite of Boston, to witness the nuptials of Evaline and Charles, Eva and Elmer, Lillian and myself.

Need I dwell upon the scene? Need I say it was as happy as gorgeous? Need I add, that the fair maidens, led to the altar, looked more sweet and lovely than any had ever before seen them? No! it is unnecessary for me to enter into detail here, for the quick perception of the reader will divine all I would say. Enough, that the rough scenes of the wilderness, through which we had passed, could not be more strongly contrasted than on this never-to-be-forgotten occasion of unalloyed happiness.

The solemn nuptial rite was followed with congratulations—with music, and dancing, and festivities—and it was long past the noon of night, ere the well pleased guests departed, and a small circle of happy friends were left to themselves.

When all had at last become quiet, and none were present but the newly married and their nearest and dearest relatives:

“Now,” said Madame Mortimer, with a bland smile, “to add pleasure to pleasure—to make the happy happier—I have a joyful surprise for you all.”

“Permit me to doubt,” said I, “if aught any one can say, can in any degree add to the happiness of those here present. I look upon the thing as impossible. However, I may be too confident; but, at least, I speak for myself.”

“And yet,” pursued the other, smiling archly, “would it not add pleasure even to you, Francis, were I to tell you a dark mystery has been cleared up, and a wrong matter set right?”

“What mean you?” asked I, while the rest turned to her with eager curiosity.

“What would you think, should I now proceed to prove to you, my friends, that the person you have long known as Madame Mortimer, is from this time forth to be known as Marchioness of Lombardy?”

“How! what! speak!” exclaimed one and all in a breath.

“Ay, such is the fact. Since my return, I have received letters from England and France, stating that my late husband—for he is now dead—was none other than the Marquis of Lombardy, who was banished from France for some state intrigue, and afterwards restored to favor. Fearing, before his death, that some future revolution might again endanger his property, he managed to dispose of sufficient to purchase a large estate in England, which he has generously bequeathed to me and my heirs forever. Accompanying his will, which I have now in my possession, is a long letter, in which he asks forgiveness for the wrong he had formerly done me in separation, and wherein he states as a reason for never mentioning his title, that at some future time he had designed taking me by surprise; but that the news of the restoration of himself and fortune, coming at a moment when his worst passions were excited, he had left me in an abrupt manner, taking Evaline with him, whom, he sorrowfully adds, was afterwards lost or murdered; that of

this foul deed he had always suspected a near relation of his—a villain who brought him the intelligence of his fortune being restored—and that in consequence he had taken what precautions he could, to put his property, in case of his sudden decease, entirely beyond the other's reach. This, my friends, is all I will tell you to-night; but to-morrow you shall have proofs of all I have said. And now, my daughters, that you are happily wedded, I give you this estate as a marriage portion."

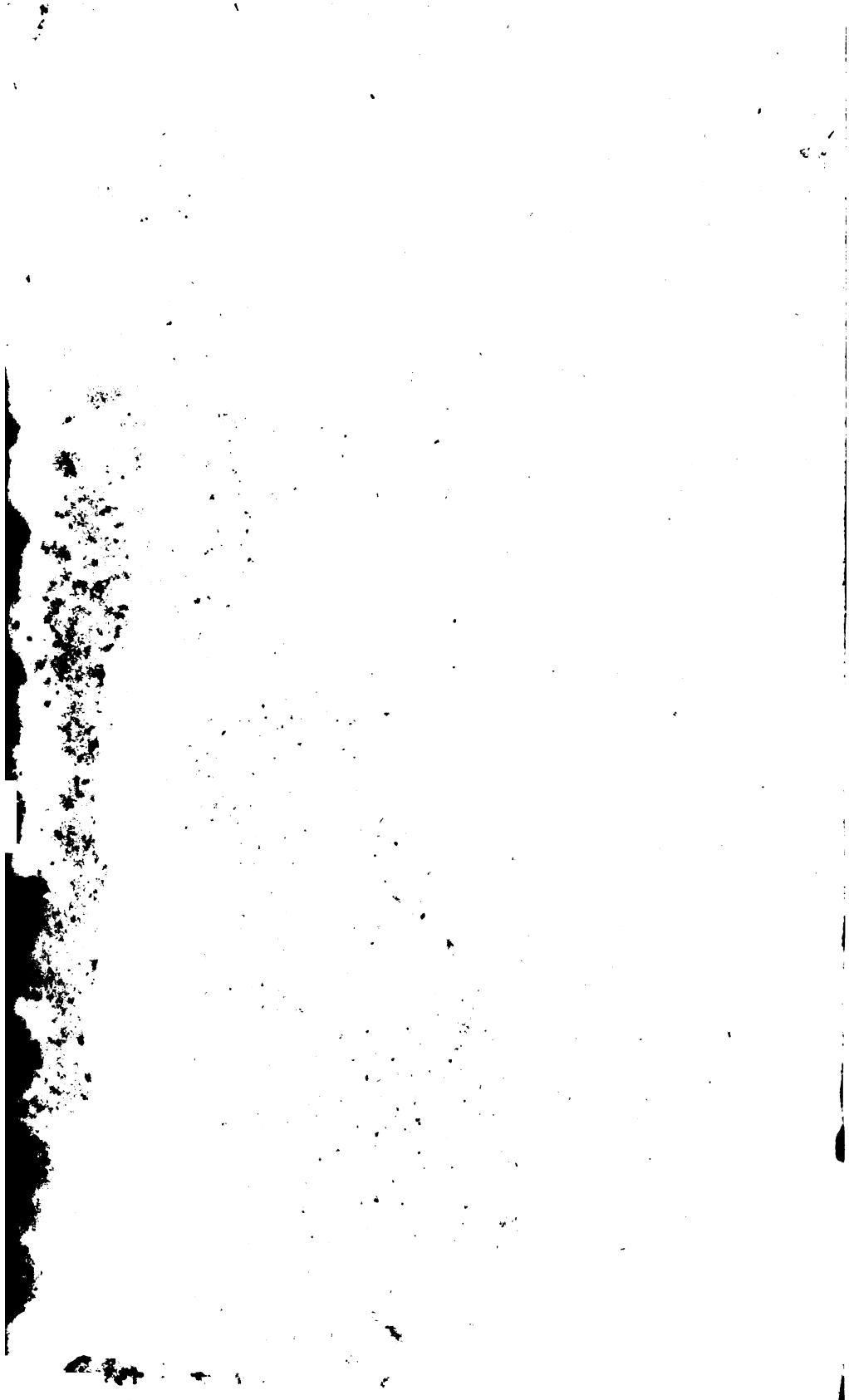
I will not dwell upon the emotions of joyful surprise which this revelation excited in the hearts of those who heard it. Suffice, that it did add pleasure to pleasure, and made the happy happier.

A sentence more, and I have done. The words of the Marchioness of Lombardy were subsequently verified in every particular, and Charles Huntly, and Elmer Fitzgerald, have had no cause, thus far, even in a pecuniary point of view, to regret the choice they made in the wilderness of the Far West. Propitious fortune now smiles upon all, and all are happy.

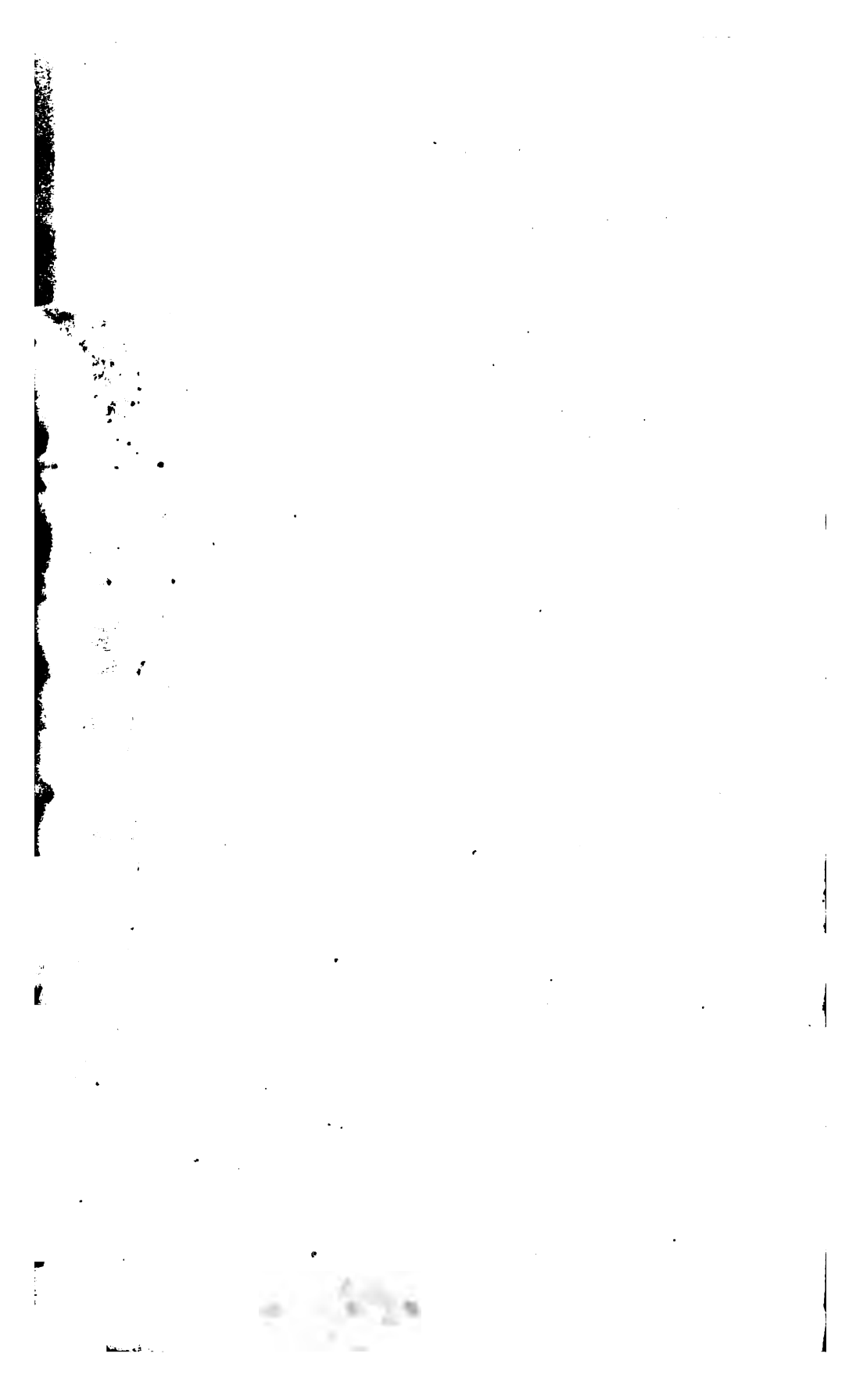
Thus is it ever. To-day we rise—to-morrow fall—to rise again perchance the next. Prosperity and adversity are ever so closely linked, that the most trivial event may make or mar our happiness. The Past we know—the Present we see—but who shall say aught of the Future.

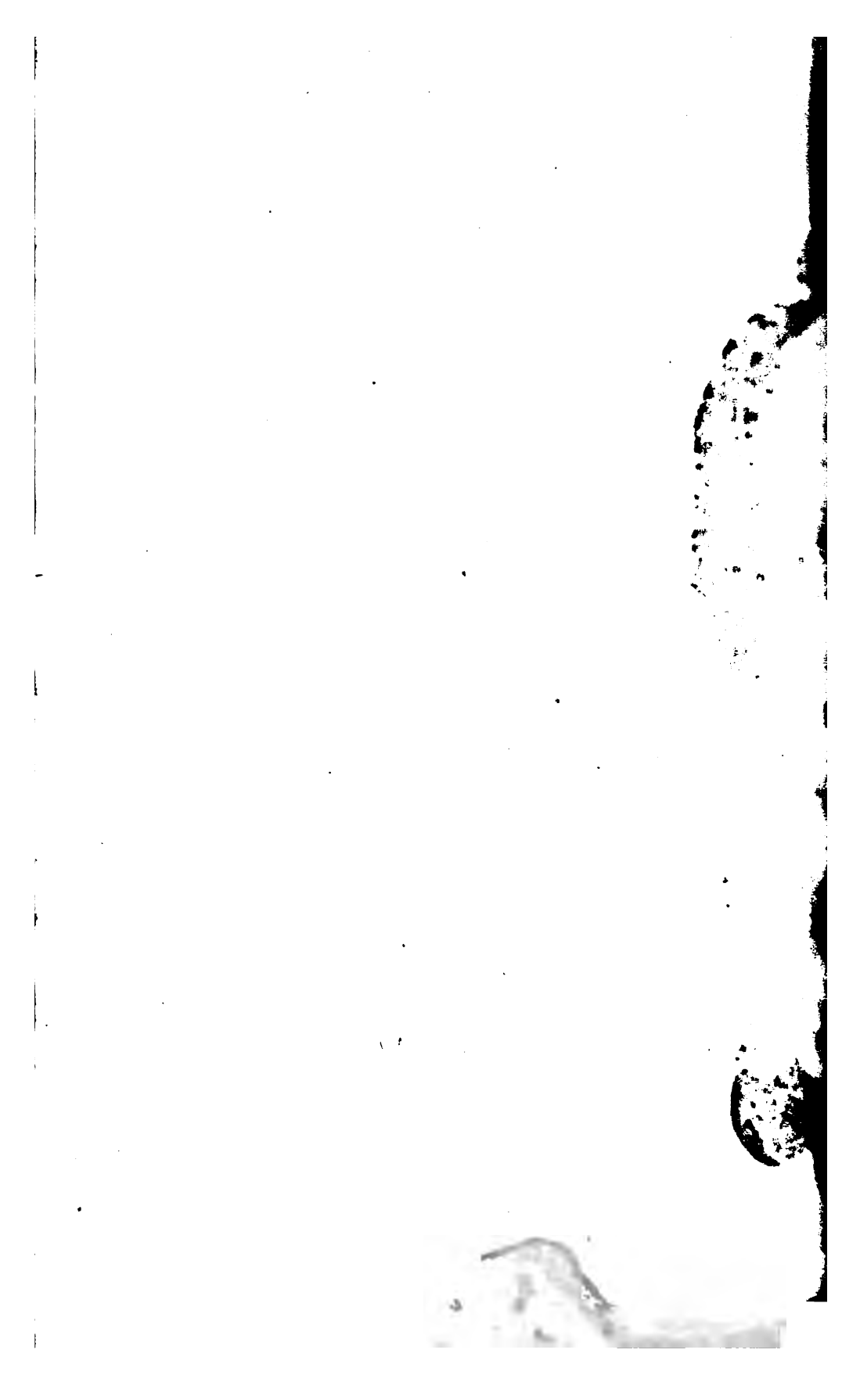
So ends the scene.

THE END.









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