

FICTION

Edward Sylvester Ellis

Camp-fire and Wigwam

A PUBLIC DOMAIN BOOK

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FICTION

CAMP-FIRE AND WIGWAM.

By EDWARD S. ELLIS

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JACK'S WRESTLING BOUT WITH THE YOUNG INDIAN.

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CAMP-FIRE AND WIGWAM.

CHAPTER I.

AT HOME.

On the evening of a dismal, rainy day in spring, a mother and her son were sitting in their log-cabin home in the southern portion of the present State of Missouri. The settlement bore the name of Martinsville, in honor of the leader of the little party of pioneers who had left Kentucky some months before, and, crossing the Mississippi, located in that portion of the vast territory known at that time as Louisiana.

There were precisely twenty cabins, all of which had been constructed with a view to rugged strength, durability, and comfort. Lusty arms had felled the trees, that were cut the proper length and dovetailed in the usual manner at the corners, the crevices being filled with a species of plaster, made almost entirely from yellow clay. The interiors were generally divided into two apartments, with a broad fireplace and the rude furniture of the border. Colonel Martin himself, with the assistance of his two full-grown sons, erected a more pretentious dwelling with two stories and a loft, but the other houses, as has already been stated, were of such a simple and familiar character that the American reader needs no further description.

Mrs. Carleton was a widow, whose husband had been slain by Indians in Kentucky some time previous, and who, in the daily requirement of her duties, and in her great love for her only child, Jack, found some relief from the dreadful sorrow that overshadowed her life. Kind neighbors had lent willing hands, and her home was as well made as any in the settlement. Jack and his companion, Otto Relstaub, had arrived only a couple of days before, and each had wrought so hard in his respective household that they had scarcely found time to speak to or see each other.

The evening meal had been eaten, the things cleared away, and wood heaped upon the fire which filled the little room with cheerful illumination. The mother was seated at one side, the silent spinning-wheel just beyond, while her deft fingers were busy with her knitting. Jack was half reclining on a rude bench opposite, recounting, in his boyish fashion, the adventures of himself and Otto on their memorable journey, which has been fully told in the "Lost Trail."

The good mother possessed an education beyond the ordinary, and, knowing its great value, insisted upon her son improving his spare moments in study. Jack was well informed for his years, for no one could have been blessed with a better teacher, counselor, and friend, than he was. Even now, when we reintroduce him to the reader, he held an old-fashioned spelling-book in his hand. He had tried to give his attention to his lesson, but, boy-like, his mind persisted in wandering, and his mother, looking fondly across the fire, was so pleased to hear him chat and to ask and answer questions, that she could not find it in her heart to chide him.

"You have never seen Deerfoot, have you, mother?" he asked, abruptly breaking in on his own narrative.

"Yes, I have seen him; he saved the life of your father."

"What!" exclaimed Jack, straightening up and staring at his parent in open-mouthed amazement: "I never heard of that before."

"Didn't Deerfoot tell you?"

"He never hinted anything of the kind. He once asked me about father's death and about you, but I thought it was only a natural interest he felt on my account. But tell me how it was, mother."

"Some months before your father's death, he was absent a couple of days on a hunt to the south of our home. He kindled a camp-fire in a deep valley, where the undergrowth was so dense that he felt sure of being safe against discovery. The night was very cold, and snow was flying in the air. Besides that, he had eaten nothing all day, and was anxious to broil a wild turkey he had shot just as it began to grow dark. He started the fire, ate his supper, and was in the act of lying down for the night, when a young Indian walked out from the woods, saying in the best of English that he was his friend. Your father told me that he was the most graceful and handsome youth he had ever looked upon----"

"That was Deerfoot!" exclaimed the delighted Jack.

"There can be no doubt of it, for he told your father that such was his English name. I forget what his own people called him. Well, he said to your father, in the most quiet manner, that a party of Shawanoes were very near him. They had heard the report of his rifle, and, suspecting what it meant, were carefully arranging to capture him for the purpose of torture. Deerfoot had seen them, and, having also heard the gun, learned what was going on. If your father had stayed where he was five minutes longer, nothing could have saved him. I need not tell you that he did not stay. Under the guidance of Deerfoot he managed to extricate himself from his peril, and, by traveling the entire night, was beyond

all danger when the sun rose again. Deerfoot did not leave him until certain he had no cause for fear. Then, when your father turned to thank him, he was gone. He had departed as silently as a shadow."

"That was just like Deerfoot!" exclaimed Jack, with kindling eye; "it seems to me he is like Washington. Though he has been in any number of dangers, I don't believe he has so much as a scar on his little finger. He has been fired upon I don't know how often, but, like Washington, he carries a charmed life."

The serious mother shook her head, and, looking over her knitting at her boy, made answer:

"Such a thing is unknown in this world; more than likely he will fall by the knife or bullet of an enemy."

"I suppose he is liable to be shot, like any one else; but the Indian that does it has got to be mighty smart to get ahead of him. Plenty of them have tried it with knife and tomahawk, but they never lived to try it on any one else. But that ain't the most wonderful part of it," added Jack, shaking his head and gesticulating in his excitement with both arms; "Deerfoot knows a good deal more about books than I do."

"That does not imply that he possesses any remarkable education," said the mother, with a quiet smile.

The boy flushed, and sinking back said:

"I know I ain't the best-educated fellow in the settlement, but who ever heard of a young Indian knowing how to read and write? Why, that fellow can write the prettiest hand you ever saw. He carries a little Bible with him: the print is so fine I can hardly read it, but he will stretch out in the light of a poor camp-fire, and read it for an hour at a time. I can't understand where he picked it all up, but he told me about the Pacific Ocean, which is away beyond our country, and he spoke of the land where the Saviour lived when he was on earth. I never felt so ashamed of myself as I did when he sat down and told me such things. He can repeat verse after verse from the Bible; he pronounced the Lord's Prayer in Shawanoe, and then told me and Otto that if we would only use the English a little oftener the Great Spirit would hear us. What do you think of *that*?"

"It is very good advice."

"Of course it is, but the idea of a young Indian being that sort of fellow! Well, there's no use of talking," added Jack, as though unable to do justice to the theme, "he beats anything I ever heard of. If the truth should be written as to what he has done, and put in a book, I don't 'spose one person in a hundred would believe it. He promised to come and see us."

"I hope he will," said the mother; "I shall always hold him in the highest esteem and gratitude for his kindness to your father and to you."

"I tell you it would have gone rough with Otto and me if it hadn't been for him. I wonder how Otto is getting along?" said Jack, with an expression of misgiving on his face.

"Why do you ask that?" inquired his mother.

"I think Deerfoot was worried over him."

"I do not understand you."

"Why, you know Otto has got the meanest father in the whole United States of America----"

"Those are strong words," interrupted the parent reprovingly.

"It is contrary to your teaching to talk that way, but you know, too, that it is the solemn truth. Deerfoot stopped at Jacob Relstaub's cabin, in this very settlement, some weeks ago, when it was raining harder than now, and asked for something to eat, and to stay all night. What do you 'spose Relstaub did? He abused him and turned him away."

"What a shame!" exclaimed the good woman indignantly. "Why did Deerfoot not come here or to one of the other cabins?"

"I don't know, but he went off in the woods by himself. Otto tried to befriend him, and was whipped for it; but Deerfoot never forgot it, and he risked his life to help Otto and me."

"It was very unkind in Mr. Relstaub, but you have not told me why you and Deerfoot were alarmed for Otto."

"Otto had the best horse that his father owns. It ran away from us, and, though we tried hard to get him again, we couldn't, and Otto and I came home on foot. Knowing his father as well as we do, Deerfoot and I were afraid the poor fellow would be punished because he lost the animal. I haven't had a chance to say much to Otto, and when I did, I

didn't want to ask him about it, but I would like to know whether he has been punished for what he couldn't help."

"I can answer that question," said Mrs. Carleton, softly; "his father whipped him most cruelly yesterday."

"The old scamp----"

"Tut, tut!" warned the parent, raising her finger, "it *was* cruel, but Otto will survive it, as he has many other times, and before many years he will become so large that his father will not be able to punish him."

"I hope he will undertake it, and Otto will knock him----"

"Stop!" said the mother, more sternly, "you have already allowed your feelings to lead you too far."

"Pardon me, mother," said Jack, humbly, "I would not hurt your feelings for the world; but there is such a contrast between his father and you, and his mother is just as bad----"

Jack checked himself again, for his quick ear detected something. He turned quickly toward the door of the cabin, and his mother, reading the meaning of the movement, did the same, holding her fingers motionless while both listened.

The rain beat upon the roof, dashed against the window-panes, and rattled on the logs of the cabin, with a melancholy sound that made the interior seem doubly cheerful by contrast. At times the wind roared among the trees, and some of the pattering drops found their way down the chimney, and hissed among the flaming brands, making tiny black points that were instantly wiped out by the ardor of the fire itself.

Suddenly the latch-string, which was only drawn in when the inmates were ready to retire, was pulled, the latch raised, the door opened, and Otto Relstaub, his garments dripping water, entered the room.

"Good-evening!" he called, pausing a moment to close the door against the driving storm.

Both greeted the visitor, and Jack, laying aside his book, advanced and warmly shook the hand of his friend, bringing him forward and giving him a seat on the bench, which was drawn still nearer the fire.

Otto was attired very much as when we saw him last, but he did not carry his gun with him. He took off his peaked hat, shook the water from it, and then his broad, good-natured face, gleaming with moisture and rugged health, was raised to meet the mild, inquiring gaze of the lady, who asked him how he was.

"Oh, I ish well," he answered, speaking English much better than he did a short time previous, "I have been working so hard dot I couldn't come over before."

"I'm real glad to see you," said Jack, cordially, slapping him on the back and making the water fly; "if you hadn't called to-night I would have dropped in to-morrow to see you. We've hardly had a chance to speak to each other since we got back."

"No, dot ish so," said Otto, with a sigh. "Father, he makes me work harder as I never did, to make up for the time dot I wasted in play, he says. By Jiminy! I don't think dot was much play, do you, Jack?"

"It was the worst play I ever went through; two boys never worked harder for their lives than did we, and if it hadn't been for Deerfoot, we never would have reached Martinsville. I suppose your father gave you a whipping for losing Toby?"

"I should thinks he did! I hadn't been home one hours, when he went out and cut a stick, and used it up on me, and he doned the same yesterday."

Jack was about to break forth into vigorous language, when his mother anticipated him. Her voice was slightly tremulous, for, despite her enforced calmness, she could not altogether restrain her feelings.

"Surely he could not have understood the matter; I will speak to your mother."

Otto shrugged his shoulders, with a laugh in which there was more sadness than mirth.

"Moder is worse than him; she tole him he didn't whips me half enough, and so he tried it again yesterday. I heard her tells him to-night dot I needed more, so I slips out and comes over here before he could get everythings ready. May I stay here all night?"

"All night!" repeated Jack, "you may stay a week--a month--a year--yes, *forever*."

"I don't want to stay dot long," said Otto, with his pleasant laugh; "but fader, he tells me he will beat me every day till I brings back de horse."

"Very well," said Jack, compressing his lips, "you won't go back till you get the horse--if it takes five years."

"Did your father tell you to stay away till you recovered the animal?" asked Mrs. Carleton.

"Dot vos just vot he says."

"Then it is proper that you should obey him."

Otto nodded his head to signify that his sentiments were those of his friends. He glanced slyly around the room, but did not explain what he was looking for, and, unfortunately, neither mother nor son suspected the meaning of the look; but Otto's hard-hearted parents had actually driven him from their home without allowing him to eat a mouthful of dinner or supper. He was suffering with hunger, but was plucky enough to bear it without complaining, since his friends had partaken and cleared away the table long before.

"What do you intend to do?" asked Mrs. Carleton, who deeply sympathized with the poor lad.

"I goes home in de mornings and gets my gun and powder-horn before they can whips me, and then I goes off to hunt for Toby."

"And I'll go with you!" exclaimed the impulsive Jack, springing to his feet; "you'll let me, mother, won't you?" he asked, turning beseechingly toward her.

Recalling the perils through which her only child had passed so recently, the widow could not but contemplate with dismay the prospect of having him venture into the wilderness again; but she felt deeply for poor honest Otto, who was so willing and good-natured, and who had shown such a desire to help her while her own boy was in Kentucky.

Furthermore, she knew that Louisiana was a much less dangerous country than the Dark and Bloody Ground. Few of the Shawanoes, Hurons, and other actively hostile tribes ever crossed to the western side of the Mississippi, where the Osages gave little trouble to the settlers scattered through that immense territory.

Otto's eyes sparkled when Jack Carleton leaped to his feet and declared he would go with him on the search for the lost horse (subject, of course, to the consent of his mother), and the German youth looked pleadingly toward the good woman, who, it is hardly necessary to say, yielded consent, giving with it a large amount of motherly counsel, to which the boys listened respectfully, though candor compels me to say that the thoughts of both were far away among the green woods, beside the sparkling streams, and in the shadows of the chasms, ravines, and gloomy mountains, whither, as they well knew, the curious search would lead them.



CHAPTER II.

A DOUBTFUL ENTERPRISE.

One of the commendable habits of the early settlers and old-fashioned folks was that of retiring and rising early. They were ardent believers in the saying of Poor Richard that "early to bed, and early to rise, makes a man healthy, wealthy, and wise."

It was not yet nine o'clock, when Jack and Otto, despite the deep interest they felt in their projected campaign, voluntarily withdrew to the other room, where they fell asleep within five minutes after their heads touched the pillow. The mother remained by the fire some time after the boys withdrew. Her small white fingers flitted hither back and forth, while her mild brown eyes seemed to look beyond the flashing needles, and into the glowing coals on the hearth. Her thoughts were sad and sorrowful, as they always were when she sat thus alone. They wandered back to that awful time when her loved husband was stricken down in defence of her and their little boy.

But to-night she was thinking more of that boy than of the father. She saw how much like the latter he was growing, and she trembled when she recalled that he was soon to start on another excursion into the wilderness, to be gone for days, and likely for weeks, and with no certainty of ever returning again.

As the night advanced, the fury of the storm diminished. At "low twelve" the fall of rain ceased altogether. The wind blew strongly, sometimes with a power which caused the strongest trees to bow their heads to the blast. As the morning approached, it died out altogether, and the sun rose on one of the fairest days that ever was seen.

Early as was the orb, the inmates of the cabin were waiting to greet it when it appeared above the horizon. The boys were in high spirits over the beautiful morning, and both felt that it promised well for the venture before them.

"I tell you *we're going to win!*" said Jack, compressing his lips and shaking his head. "I feel it in my bones, as your father says, just before a storm comes."

"Dot's vot I dinks," assented Otto, whose only discomfort was his exceeding hunger: "Vot you dinks, Mrs. Carleton?"

"I hope you will not be disappointed; that is the most I can say. Jack's feeling that you are going to succeed is simply his pleasure over the prospect of a ramble in the woods. We will eat breakfast, after which you can go home and make your preparations for the journey."

When they were seated at the table and Otto's hunger was nearly satisfied, he told his friends with a grin, that it was the first food he had tasted in twenty-four hours. They were shocked, and both took him to task for his failure to make known the truth the evening before. He made the philosophic reply that if he had done so he would have missed the boundless enjoyment of such a meal as that of which he was then partaking.

Mrs. Carleton on rising in the morning felt that Otto ought not to be allowed to go on the expedition until after a further talk with his parents, who, despite what they had said, might be unwilling for him to engage in such an undertaking; but when she learned how the poor fellow had been made to suffer with hunger her feelings changed. It was hard to repress her indignation, and she made up her mind to talk to the cruel folks as they had never been talked to before; but she allowed no impatient word to escape her in the presence of their son. She simply advised him to depart as soon as he could upon the hunt for the horse, and not to return, if possible, until it was recovered or another obtained.

"Dot is vot I does," replied Otto with a shake of his head and a determined expression; "Otto doesn't comes back till he brings some kind of animal--if it's only a 'coon or 'possum."

When he walked over to his own home (the building for which was precisely the same as that of widow Carleton), his father and mother were eating their breakfast. They looked surlily at him as he entered, and the mother showed her incredible heartlessness by asking her only child in German:

"Where is Toby that you lost?"

"How can I tell, mother, except that he is in the woods? I tried hard to find him again, and had it not been for Deerfoot I would have lost my life; but he is gone."

"Did I not tell you to go and not come back until you brought him with you?" demanded the father, glaring at his boy as though he was ready to throttle him.

"So you did--so you did; but I couldn't do much last night, when it was so dark and stormy. I have come over to get my gun and ammunition."

The father and mother looked in each other's faces, as though in doubt whether they would let the lad have the property, but before the question could be debated Otto had flung the powder-horn over his shoulders, adjusted the bullet-pouch, shoved the hunting-knife in the girdle at his waist, and walked to the front door, where he halted and looked back.

"Can't I have breakfast before I go?"

"No!" fairly shouted the father; "begone; you shall not have a mouthful under my roof till you bring back the colt you have lost."

"Nobody wants anything you've got on *that* table," the lad was indignant enough to reply: "I've had one meal that was worth more than a dozen like that. Good-by!"

And before the dumfounded parents could rally from the unparalleled impudence of the youth he was gone.

When he reached the home of Jack Carleton, the latter was waiting and impatient to start. Jack had already kissed his mother good-by several times and he repeated the fond embrace. Tears were in the eyes of both, and the mother stood in the door of her cabin shading her eyes with her hand until the two passed from sight in the forest beyond the clearing.

Several of the pioneers who were busy about the settlement greeted the boys and inquired their errand. Colonel Martin shook hands with them, and asked all the particulars of the business on which they were engaged. His age and position authorized him to ask such searching questions, had the couple been full-grown men instead of boys.

Otto answered truthfully, and the colonel smiled grimly and shook his head.

"It's mighty little chance you have of ever finding *that* horse again, but you may come upon another. Take my advice, however," added the colonel with a wink of his left eye, "make certain the owner isn't in sight when you walk off with the animal."

"Why, colonel, you don't think we mean to steal a horse!" exclaimed the horrified Jack.

"Certainly not--certainly not," the principal man of the settlement hastened to say, "I don't believe you could be persuaded to do such a thing--that is if the owner was looking."

"We couldn't be persuaded to do such a thing *under any circumstances*," exclaimed Jack, his face flushing over the idea that any one who knew him should suspect him capable of such a crime.

"See here," said the colonel, dropping his voice and stepping in front of them, "you tell me you are going after a horse. Have you the money with you to buy one?"

"No; we cannot get one *that* way."

"I judged not; how then do you propose to obtain him?"

"Toby, the colt belonging to Otto's father, is wandering in the woods not very far away----"

"How do you know he is?" interrupted the colonel.

"Why, he was doing so only a few days ago."

"That is no proof that he is keeping it up; in fact it is scarcely possible that such is the case. Recollect, my boy, that several tribes of Indians hunt through this portion of Louisiana, and they would be much quicker than you to observe the trail of a horse wearing an iron shoe; they would be inquiring enough also to investigate for themselves, and, when they came upon the colt, they would snap him up quicker than lightning."

The boys felt that somehow or other the wonderful young Shawanoe would appear at the right moment and lend them the help which they were certain to need. Should he fail to do so, they could no more recapture and take the colt to his owner than they could penetrate into the Dark and Bloody Ground and bring back the great war chief Tecumseh as a prisoner.

But neither Colonel Martin nor any one in the village knew anything about the extraordinary Indian youth, and, while Jack was asking himself whether he should linger long enough to explain the situation, the gentleman relieved them from the embarrassment by a hearty slap on the shoulder of Jack, and the exclamations:

"I was once a boy myself! I haven't forgotten that jolly time: we always liked to have some sort of excuse when we went off on a frolic. You see what a lot of work there is to do in clearing the ground and getting it ready for cultivation; you

would much rather be hunting and rambling through the woods; I can't say I blame you, so off with you, and when you come back with word that the horse was mean enough to keep out of your way, why we won't be too hard on you."

And with another resounding slap, the hearty colonel gave the boys a vigorous shove which sent them forward among the trees, near which they had halted.

CHAPTER III.

WHAT MIGHT HAVE BEEN EXPECTED.

Jack Carleton was too sensible a youth to suppose that the Lost Trail could be found by a blind wandering through the immense expanse of wilderness, which stretched hundreds of miles in almost every direction from the little settlement of Martinsville. Both he and Otto had a strong hope, when they reached home after their stirring adventure with Deerfoot, that the colt Toby would follow them of his own accord. He belonged to a species possessing such unusual intelligence that there would have been nothing remarkable in such a proceeding, and the fact that he did not do so, gave ground for the belief that he had fallen into the hands of parties who prevented the animal from doing as he chose.

One fact was clearly established; Toby had been within a comparatively short distance of the settlement, and, if he had remained anywhere in the neighborhood during the late storm, traces of him must be found without much difficulty. But one of the easiest things in the world is to theorize over any problem; to push that theory to a successful conclusion is altogether another matter.

While it lacked a couple of hours of noon, the boys reached an elevated section which gave them an extended view in every direction. Looking to the eastward, Otto fancied he could detect the gleam of the distant Mississippi, but Jack assured him he was mistaken. Too many miles lay between them and the mighty Father of Waters for the eye to traverse the space.

Young Carleton took off his cap and drew his handkerchief across his perspiring forehead. Then he sighed and smiled.

"This doesn't appear so hopeful to me as it did last night, when we sat around the fire and talked it over; but of course we won't give up so long as there's the least hope."

"And it won't do for me to give him up then," replied Otto, with a meaning shake of his head; "you don't know my fader as well as me."

"I don't want to either," remarked Jack, who did not think it his duty to refrain from showing the contempt he felt for the miserly, cruel parent of his friend.

"No," observed Otto, with a touch of that grim humor which he sometimes displayed, "I doesn't dinks dot you and him could have much fun together."

The young friends were too accustomed to the immensity of nature, as displayed on every hand, to feel specially impressed by the scene which would have held any one else enthralled. It may be said they were "on business," though it had very much the appearance of sport.

"Halloo! I expected it!" called out Jack Carleton, whose gaze abruptly rested on a point due southwest, and more than a mile away.

His companion did not need the guidance of the outstretched arm and index finger leveled toward the distant spot, where the smoke of a camp-fire was seen climbing toward the blue sky. The scene on which the boys looked was similar to that which met the eye of Ned Preston and Deerfoot when they lay on the broad flat rock and gazed across at the signal-fire in the distance.

The wooded country gradually sloped to the south and west from the elevation whereon the young friends had halted, slowly rising and undulating until the eye could follow the blue wavy outlines no further. At the point already named, and in the lowest portion of the intervening country, a camp-fire was burning. The smoke, as it filtered upward through the branches of the trees, and gradually dissolved in the pure air above, was seen with such distinctness that it caught the eye of Jack the moment it was turned in that direction.

It was not a signal-fire, such as one is likely to detect when journeying through an Indian country, but the vapor from the camp of some body of men who were not making the slightest attempt to conceal themselves, for it cannot be conceived that they had any reason for doing so.

If the party were Indians, they surely had no necessity for stationing a sentinel on the outskirts of their camp to watch for danger.

Jack and Otto looked in each other's faces and smiled; the natural question had presented itself at the same moment. It was, "Can it be that the horse we are seeking is with them?"

"The only way to find out is to go forward and see for ourselves," said Jack, after they had discussed the question for several minutes.

"Spouse dot de horse is with them--what den?"

Jack shrugged his shoulders.

"Deerfoot used to say that he could never answer such a question until he knew exactly how everything stood. Now, we can't be certain whether they are Indians or white men, and I don't know as it makes much difference one way or the other, for our own horse thieves over in Kentucky were dreaded as much as were the Shawanoes. They were a good deal meaner, too, for they oppressed their own race."

"Dot is vot I sometimes dinks of fader," was the unexpected remark of Otto; "if he was only a colored man or Injin I would have more respect for him; dot is so."

"Come on; we have started out to do something, and we can't gain anything by staying here."

The brief halt had refreshed the boys, and they now moved forward with their naturally vigorous and almost bounding steps. While they had much curiosity, and a somewhat singular misgiving, yet they were in no particular fear, for it was impossible to believe they were in any real peril.

It was quite a tramp to reach the camp in which just then they felt so much interest, and the sun was close to meridian when Jack, who was slightly in advance, slackened his gait, and remarked in an undertone:

"It can't be far--halloo!"

While picking their way through the valley, they lost sight of the wavering column of vapor, except once or twice when they were able to catch a glimpse of it through the tree-tops. Jack's exclamation was caused by another sight of the murky column, which, as he suspected, proved to be little more than a hundred yards distant.

There was so much undergrowth that nothing of the fire itself could be observed, though the smoke showed itself distinctly in the clear air above.

"Vell, vot does we does now?" was the natural query of Otto, as he placed himself beside his young friend.

"I guess we may as well keep on, until we find out who they are."

"After we finds out vot we does den?"

"We shall see--come on."

It was simple prudence that they should speak in whispers, and step with as much care as if they were scouts entering the camp of an enemy. It would have been rashness to neglect so simple a precaution, no matter how favorable the circumstances.

"Holds on!" whispered Otto, "I dinks I goes around the oder side while you takes a look on dis side."

"There is no need of doing that," interposed Jack; "we found out the consequence of separating when in danger. You needn't keep behind me, but you may walk at my side."

"All right," responded Otto, obeying the suggestion.

A rod or two further, and something red gleamed, among the trees and undergrowth. Smoke was observed at the same moment, and immediately after came the hum of voices and the sight of persons stretched on the ground in lolling, indolent positions, while some were sitting on a fallen tree, and two were engaged in broiling some venison, which evidently was meant to furnish dinner for the rest. The majority were smoking a species of red clay pipe, and the appearance of the party suggested that they were resting after a laborious tramp through the woods.

There were precisely ten, and they were Indians--every one. Jack could not be certain of the tribe to which they belonged, but inasmuch as it was apparent they were neither Shawanoes nor Hurons, he was confident they were Osages, though it was not impossible that their totem was another altogether.

Several peculiarities about the strange Indians interested the youth. They were noticeably shorter in stature than the Hurons and Shawanoes whom they had been accustomed to meet on the other side of the Mississippi. The poetical American Indian is far different from the one in real life. It is rarely that a really handsome warrior or squaw is met. They are, generally a slouchy, frowsy, lazy, unclean people, of whom nothing is truer than that distance lends enchantment to their view.

Those upon whom Jack and Otto gazed with natural curiosity, were not only shorter in stature, but of homelier countenance. Their eyes were smaller, more piggish, and further apart, their cheek-bones more prominent, the foreheads lower and more sloping, while Jack always asserted that they had much larger mouths than the Indians with whom he was familiar.

While asking themselves whether it was wise to go any closer and to make their acquaintance, the lads stood side by side, each with the stock of his gun resting on the earth, while their whole attention was absorbed by the curious scene before them.

It would naturally follow that if the Indian party was in such plain sight of the boys, they themselves must have been visible to the red men had they chosen to cast their searching glances towards the spot where the two were standing, even though the latter were partially hidden by the undergrowth.

Had Jack and Otto been as vigilant and suspicious as they ought to have been, their misgivings would have been awakened by what took place within the next ten minutes. Two of the warriors, leaving their rifles where they were leaning against a fallen tree, leisurely rose and sauntered into the woods, taking a course directly opposite to that which would have led them to where the boys stood. The latter observed the movement, but thought nothing of it.

"What do you say?" finally asked Jack, in a guarded voice; "shall we go forward and make their acquaintance?"

"Dey haven't any horses that we can see, and I dinks dot we better goes away till some other time."

"I am inclined to believe you are right----"

At that moment, and without the least warning, a brawny, coppery arm shot over the shoulder of Jack Carleton, and, grasping his rifle with an iron grip, snatched it from him. At the same instant, a precisely similar movement deprived Otto Relstaub of his most important weapon, the two friends being made prisoners before they dreamed they were in the least danger.



CHAPTER IV.

CAPTORS AND CAPTIVES.

With an exclamation of affright, Jack Carleton whirled on his heel and found the broad, grinning face of one of the warriors almost against his own. Holding the rifle back, as if expecting an attempt to recover it, the savage thrust his head forward, with a tantalizing expression overspreading his ugly features. At the same moment he muttered something very rapidly in his own tongue. Not a word was understood by Jack, but he was sure the warrior said, "Ah, ha, young man, I've caught you, and you can't help yourself."

The experience of Otto Relstaub was slightly different from that of his companion. When he found his rifle gone and a squatty Indian at his elbow, he was panic-stricken.

"Mine gracious!" he exclaimed, "this ain't de best place for me; I dinks I goes to some oder place."

Naturally he made a dash to retrace his steps, but the warrior was too quick for him. He had taken his second step only, when his captor grasped the ankle of the foot that was rising from the ground, and drew backward with such force that Otto sprawled on his face.

Jack, who could not believe that these red men were of a very sanguinary disposition, laughed outright over the discomfiture of his friend.

"Can't you kick him loose?" he called.

"If he don't hang on too tight," replied Otto, trying with might and main to free himself.

The moment the boys were captured, the attention of the entire company was centred upon them. All talking ceased, and every one stood up and looked toward the point of interest. Several went forward to meet the captives, and the general grin that lighted up the aboriginal countenances seemed to shed a mild sort of sunlight among and under the trees.

"It's no use," said Jack to his friend; "we can't get away until they are ready to let us go."

"Vot does they mean to do mit us?"

"That is hard to tell," replied the young Kentuckian, with a serious countenance; "I don't know to what tribe they belong, but I believe they ain't half as bad as the Shawanoes."

"Dey couldn't be any more cruel don dem," was the truthful observation of the young German.

In the course of a few seconds the boys were fully introduced to the camp-fire of the strange Indians, who were not in war paint, and who, as the boys rightly believed, belonged to a less bloodthirsty totem than did the redskins on the eastern bank of the Mississippi.

Every warrior was standing on his feet, and they all crowded around the boys, as though they had never seen any of their race until that moment. They continually talked in their guttural, grunting fashion, smiling and nodding their heads. Two of them pinched the limbs of the boys as though testing their muscle. So far from showing any alarm, Jack Carleton clenched his fist and elevated his arm, swaying the hand back and forth as if proud to display the development of his biceps. But Otto was in too doleful a mood to indulge in anything of the kind.

As a matter of course, the Indians could not feel the slightest misgiving on account of their prisoners. They must have known of the settlement only a few miles distant, and they had not offered to disturb it, nor had they molested any of the pioneers when they ventured into the woods in quest of game.

Such being the case, it can be readily seen that, so far as the settlers were concerned, the Indians were safe. Although within gunshot of Martinsville, the red men took no precaution at all against molestation from them.

It struck Jack as curious that among the warriors gathered around them, not one had as yet spoken a word that he could understand. The American race have shown a quickness from the first to pick up expressions from the language of those near them. Who has forgotten Samoset's "Welcome, Englishmen!" uttered to the first settlers at Plymouth, who were at a loss to understand where the red man learned the pleasant words?

Jack Carleton, who retained his self-possession much better than did his friend, listened hopefully for some word which he could recognize.

While he was disappointed in that respect, he could not believe that he and Otto were in any imminent peril from their captors, though, on the other hand, he was very far from feeling safe against harm. With a coolness that must have awakened admiration among the barbarians, the youth, standing in the middle of the group, folded his arms, and smilingly looked in the repellant faces, none of which were at a greater altitude than his own.

After pinching different parts of the bodies of the boys, the Indians seemed to be satisfied and stepped back. The majority sat down on the log, others sauntered away, relighting their pipes that had burned out, and the two who had been serving as cooks, gave their attention to the venison steak, whose appetizing odor filled the surrounding space.

"Otto, we may as well take it quietly," said Jack, sauntering to the butt of the log, and seating himself, "they don't mean to tomahawk us just yet, and I hope they will give us some dinner before they dispose of us."

The German imitated the action of Jack, but he did not share his self-possession. He shook his head in a way which showed he was far from feeling comfortable.

"You seem more scared than when we were behind the logs, with the Shawanoes and Hurons on the outside," said Jack; "I don't understand how that can be. I am sure there is less to dread from these Indians than from them."

"It ain't de Injins dot makes me feel so bad," replied Otto with a rueful expression, "but fader."

"What's the matter with him?"

"De colt is lost and now dey takes mine gun from me; if I goes back dot way, fader will whip me harder than ever."

Jack was serious for a moment and then he laughed.

"I never dreamed that *that* was your trouble. Of course, if you go home without your gun the old gentleman will be angry, but there is one good thing about the matter."

"What's that?"

"No matter what happens, he can't be any meaner and more cruel than he is now."

Otto removed his tall, conical hat, looked thoughtfully down at the ground in front, and slowly scratched his head. Manifestly he was in deep thought. Suddenly he looked up, his face aglow.

"Dot is so. I don't care now vot dey takes, I will walks home and tells fader and moder dot I lost it, den won't they be mad! Oh, mine gracious!"

And leaning far back on the log and donning his hat, he slapped his knee with his right hand and shook all over with laughter. There is something contagious in such an exhibition, as we all know, and not only did Jack laugh in unison, but several of the warriors showed they were amused.

"I thought all the time Otto was alarmed on account of the Indians," said Jack to himself, "and it was nothing of the kind; he was only afraid that his father will be madder than ever when he goes back not only without the lost horse, but without some of the property he took away with him. Now that fear is gone and Otto begins to feel better than I do, for," thought the youth, looking around him, "we certainly are not in the best situation in the world."

The youth could not help observing that while the Indians seemed to pay little attention to them, he and Otto were under strict surveillance. As no motion had been made to bind them, the boys could make a sudden break or dash for liberty whenever the whim took possession of them, but nothing could be gained and a great deal might be lost by such an attempt. Stumpy and heavy-set as were the warriors, they could easily outrun their captives, and rather than permit them to get away, they would doubtless riddle them with bullets. Consequently, while the same thought came to each of the friends more than once, as they sat conversing on the log, neither proposed any effort to get away.

They had brought nothing in the shape of lunch with them, and it may be doubted whether any one of the Indians was more ravenously hungry than were they. It would go hard with them, if deprived of their share of the dinner, prepared by the aboriginal cooks.

When the huge slices of venison were half broiled, the distribution followed. The cooks handled their hunting-knives with such deftness, that in a twinkling, as may be said, the jaws of the entire party were vigorously at work. After receiving their respective shares, few made the slightest use of their knives. The aborigines live and eat so much like wild animals, that, almost without exception, they possess admirable teeth which need no artificial assistance.

"My gracious!" whispered Jack, "I believe they don't mean to give us so much as a bite."

"If dey doesn't do so, den I dies mit hunger," was the despairing exclamation of Otto, who forgot that only a few hours

had passed since he had partaken liberally of food. "I never felt so hungry as I feel now, and now I'm growing worse--"

Something thumped against the side of the speaker's head with such force that his hat fell off. Jack had just time to see that it was a piece of cooked venison, when a similar blessing struck him.

The two Indians were dexterous throwers, and they and half a dozen were grinning over the result.

The result was satisfactory in every way to the victims, if such they may be considered, for, besides furnishing them with the much-needed nourishment, it was a strong proof of the indifference, if not the good-will of their captors. Had they felt ill inclined toward the boys, they would not have shown such kindness toward them.

"When you are in Rome, do as the Romans do," laughed Jack, seating himself on the fallen tree and devouring the half-cooked meat with the gusto of those around him. Indeed he and Otto had eaten many a time in a similar style, and few persons find difficulty in making savages of themselves in every respect, whenever the inclination so to do takes possession of them.

The boys would have relished double the amount of food, but enough had been given to remove all discomfort, and they would have found it hard to describe the thorough enjoyment the lunch imparted.

But now that the troublesome question was answered, the thought of the youths naturally turned to the immediate future. Had these Indians formed any purpose respecting their prisoners? If so, what was it likely to be? Did they intend to kill them with rifle, tomahawk, or knife? Or would they be taken away captives? Did the red men belong to the Osage tribe of Indians, or was theirs some fiercer or milder totem from a distant part of the country?

It is a fact that among many of the early settlements in Missouri and other Western States, the warriors who were occasionally encountered in the forests, or who fired from the cover of the trees, belonged to tribes whose hunting-grounds were many leagues away. They were not Shawanoe, Huron, Pottawatomie, Osage, Miami, Delaware, Illinois, Kickapoo, or Winnebago. Sometimes a veteran trapper recognized the dress and general appearance that he had noted among the red men to the northward, and far beyond the Assiniboine; others who had ventured hundreds of miles to the westward, remembered exchanging shots with similar dusky warriors on the slopes of the Rocky Mountains.

Indeed it cannot be questioned that the American race not only produced warriors, orators, and magnificent leaders, but it had its travelers and explorers--the name being accepted in its restricted meaning.

More than once Jack had wondered whether this party had not come from a long distance in the interior, perhaps hundreds of miles, and that having completed the errand on which they had journeyed so far, were now on their return.

"If this is so," he said to Otto, when they observed the party making preparations to leave, "they will take us on a good long march."

"I dinks maybe dey knocks us in the head, so as not to makes us feel bad apout going away from home."

Further conversation was checked by some minutes of bustle and activity. The Indians seemed to have come very suddenly to the conclusion to depart, and the boys naturally shared the excitement; but possibly their dismay can be imagined, when it became apparent that the red men intended to divide into two parties, and that as a consequence the boys would have to part company, and who shall say whether it was to be for a few days, a few years, or forever?



CHAPTER V.

JOURNEYING SOUTHWARD.

It never occurred to Jack and Otto that their captors meant to separate until the division actually took place. As if by a general understanding, one half of the party moved to the right, and the rest partly to the left, the course of the former being due west, and of the latter directly south.

"Halloo, Otto!" called Jack, turning his head and stopping among the members of his own division who were moving off; "they're going to part company."

"Dot is vot it looks like; but I guess it ain't going to be for one great vile. Good-by!"

Jack was unwilling to part with his friend in this abrupt fashion, and he started toward him with a view of shaking his hand. He did not dream that his movement would awaken the least opposition; but he presumed too much on the indulgence of the red men, for, before he could take three steps, one of the warriors caught his arm, and, with a violent wrench, flung him in the opposite direction.

It required the utmost effort of Jack to save himself from falling, and a stinging pain ran through his shoulder. His hot Kentucky blood was aflame, and the instant he could poise his body he drew his knife and rushed upon the Indian with the fury of a tiger.

"I'll show you that you can't treat me that way!" he exclaimed.

The warrior whom he was about to assail faced him in a crouching posture, both hands resting on his knees, while his ugly countenance was bisected by a tantalizing grin which showed the molars of both jaws. His black eyes gleamed like those of a rattlesnake, and his whole attitude and manner showed that he was seeking to goad the lad to attack him.

The impetus was not needed. Jack Carleton had no thought of hesitation, though even in his rage he felt that there was scarcely a shadow of hope that he would escape with his life from such an encounter.

The moment Jack was close enough he bounded forward and made a sweeping blow, with the knife gripped in his right hand. Had the weapon struck where it was aimed, there would have been one Indian less before the spectators could have realized what had taken place. The other warriors were looking upon the picture as though in doubt of what was coming. Among those watching the scene was Otto Relstaub, whose eyes were riveted on his friend. The thrilling encounter had opened so suddenly that he fairly held his breath, certain that Jack would not live two minutes longer.

But the knife of the boy missed its mark altogether. The keen point whizzed through empty air, the spiteful force of the blow turning the lad half way around on his feet, and leaving him utterly at the mercy of the warrior; the latter could have smitten him to the earth with the suddenness of the lightning stroke.

But the Indian did not so much as draw his weapon. With a quickness which the eye could scarcely follow, he snatched the wrist of the boy's hand and bent it back with such force that poor Jack was glad to let the weapon fall to the ground. He was discomfited and helpless.

Jack folded his arms, so as to bring the injured wrist against his left side and under his elbow. Pressing it close to his body, he shut his white lips and forced back the cry that struggled for utterance.

With wonderful coolness the triumphant red man stooped to the ground, picked up the hunting-knife, and with the same expanse of grin, presented it to Jack, the handle toward him.

"Takes him, Jack!" called out Otto, who was probably the most astounded spectator of the scene; "but don't try to kills him ag'in."

Young Carleton for a moment was as bewildered as a child; but his good sense rapidly returned, and, with a smile in answer to that of the Indian, he accepted the weapon and shoved it back in its place.

Jack was mortified beyond expression at the sorry show he had made. He had cut a ridiculous figure, and no wonder a general smile lighted up the faces of the red men gathered around.

But the youth made a mistake when he believed he had lowered himself in the eyes of his captors. The American race (like all others) admire true courage and pluck, even though judgment may be lacking, and the dauntless style in which the young captive attacked his tormentor, when there was no prospect of success, awoke a responsive chord in the breast of all. Had Jack shown himself a coward, they might have treated him as they often did such captives; but the

brave young fellow was in no danger, at least for the present.

The occurrence took but a fraction of the time that has been occupied in the telling, and Jack was only given opportunity to replace the knife, when his captors, arranging themselves so as to surround him, resumed their march to the westward. Precisely at the same instant the other half of the company did the same in the other direction, and once more Otto Relstaub called out:

"Good-by, Jack! good-by to you!"

"Good-by, my friend!" shouted Jack, his heart filled with a deep misgiving over the singular event. "Keep up a good heart, though there's no telling whether we shall ever meet again."

"If I get home before you gets dere I will tell Colonel Martin, and we'll follow you to the Rocky Mountains----"

Even in that serious moment Jack Carleton broke into laughter when he saw that the usual fortune of Otto clung to him. His foot caught in some obstruction, and while in the act of waving his hand and exchanging greetings with his friend, he stumbled forward and went down. Clambering to his feet he turned to complete his words, but his captors seemed to have lost patience on account of the delay. One seized his right and another his left arm and began walking him rapidly off. The last sight which Jack gained of the fellow showed him between two Indians, who were hurrying him along with such vigor that his head rose and sank with each unwilling footstep, as though he was alternately lifted from and pressed down to the ground. A few seconds later and the intervening trees hid him from sight.

It would have been difficult for Jack Carleton to describe his varied emotions when forced to admit the fact that he was an actual prisoner among a band of wandering Indians. The memorable journey from Kentucky into Louisiana had been attended by many stirring experiences, and more than once every avenue of escape seemed to be closed, but, now for the first time, he found himself a captive within a few miles of his own home.

Whither would these red men take him? Did they mean to hold him a permanent captive, or, as is often the case with their race, would they put him to torture and finally to death? The settlements of Kentucky and Ohio were crimsoned with the deeds of the red men, and, though some tribes were less warlike than others, it was not to be supposed that any of them were distinguished for mercy and forbearance.

"If Colonel Martin only knew this," thought Jack, while tramping forward, "it wouldn't take him long to gather the men together, and they would come down on these folks like a whirlwind; but Otto and I may be gone for weeks before any one will suspect we are in trouble. Even then they won't know what to do. No, sir," added Jack, compressing his lips, "whatever is done must be done by myself, and, with the help of heaven, I shall part company with these red men just as soon as the chance presents itself."

Any one in the situation of Jack Carleton cannot lack for themes on which to employ his brain. It is safe to assert that the boy did more thinking while on that eventful march than he had done in the same space of time for years.

It may be said that while the party were on the march, and the warriors were together, it was utterly out of the question for Jack to leave against their will. Three strode along in front, while two were in the rear. Every one was fleet of foot than he, and they had six rifles in their possession, while he had none at all. Could he secure several hundred yards' start, they would have no difficulty in trailing and running him down, for the sky was clear, the sun bright, and the footprints of the boy would show as distinctly to the keen eyes of the red men as though made in the dust of the highway.

No, he must wait for the darkness of the night, when a few yards between him and his enemies would prove like a stone wall; when insidious sleep would seal the eyes of the dusky barbarians, and he could steal out in the gloom, leaving them to wait for hours before taking up his trail.

One person was continually in the thoughts of Jack Carleton--*Deerfoot*. "Where is he? Is he days' journey to the south? Is there any hope of him playing the part of a friend for Otto and me?"

These and similar questions were asked again and again while the youth was tramping through the wood in the company of his captors, and his heart sank when his own good sense obliged him to answer each one in the most unsatisfactory manner.

He recalled that *Deerfoot* parted with them only a few days before in a manner which implied that considerable time must pass before they would see each other again. The young Shawanoe could not suspect that when his friends reached home, they would immediately proceed to get into trouble, as they had just done.

"No," added Jack, with a sigh, "from what I know and have heard of *Deerfoot*, he has a wonderful way of turning up when wanted, but it's no use to look for him in this case."

The conclusion of the boy was a sensible one, and he resolutely faced the situation as it presented itself to him. It was most serious, and it may be said that every passing hour rendered it more so, for he was moving away from home, and thereby increasing the difficulties of returning thither; should it become his good fortune to gain the opportunity to do so.

The warriors who were walking in front, followed the usual custom of their people--that is, they proceeded in Indian file, so that the boy was given a fair view only of the one immediately before him--the glimpses of the others being fragmentary. Glancing behind, he observed the same fact, so that the entire party made but the single trail, for Jack himself was wise enough to fall in with their custom.

"It may be," he muttered, after traveling several miles in silence, "that they live hundreds of miles off and that I won't have a chance to leave them for weeks or months or--years," he added in a hushed voice, and with an additional heart-throb, "but I shall never be reconciled to live in the wigwams of the red men."

It seemed curious to the young captive that a party of friends, like the Indians, should tramp mile after mile as they did without speaking a single word. Now and then, some one would utter an exclamation which sounded more like the grunt of a porker than anything else, but frequently they advanced steadily for an hour or more in perfect silence.

Sometimes the forest was open and free from undergrowth, then it was cluttered up with running vines which would have annoyed any one unaccustomed to them, but which proved no obstacle to the Indians. In fact, they walked without showing the least regard to them. Where Jack, if leading, would have lifted his feet, they shoved ahead and without effort snapped and turned them aside as though they were so many cobwebs.

"It all comes from training," concluded our friend, as he attempted to catch a switch which swung back and struck him across the face; "if I was alone, it would take me twice as long as it takes them, and then I would fare worse than they do."

All at once, they came upon a creek. It was barely twenty feet in width, but muddy, swift and deep. There was something impressive in the speed with which the volume of water rushed through the woods, as if fleeing in a panic from some peril at its heels.

The entire party came to a halt, ranging themselves along the bank and surveying the turbid torrents, as though they wished to talk with each other upon the best method of placing themselves on the other side.

"I hope they won't swim it," Jack said to himself, "for their people make no allowance for those that are not as skillful as they, and I will get into trouble."

CHAPTER VI.

AN INVOLUNTARY BATH.

It was not to be supposed that a party of Indians could be checked by a stream of water. If necessary they could swim across, but, inasmuch as the party separated, and while several went up, the rest walked down the stream, it was evident they were searching for a more suitable spot in which to make the passage.

Jack Carleton followed the larger party, which had gone only a few rods when a whoop from the others made known they had found what was wanted. The rest immediately turned around and joined them.

Jack saw at once that the means were provided for passing over dry shod. A tree, some six or eight inches in diameter, lay with the butt on one shore and the upper portion on the opposite bank. A glance showed that it had been felled by the axe of some pioneer, who probably thus formed a bridge for himself and friends. The limbs had been trimmed away, and the abraded bark proved that it had served a similar purpose for many wild beasts in passing to and fro. The faded color of the gashes in the trunk showed that a long time had passed since the bridge was made by the woodman's axe.

Nothing better could be required, and several grunts of satisfaction escaped the warriors during the minute they stood together viewing the support that awaited the pressing of their feet.

Jack Carleton stepped forward, but one of the Indians grasped his arm and drew him back so violently as almost to throw him to the ground. The boy looked wonderingly in his face, and saw that it was aglow with passion. He shook his head rapidly and spoke fast and furious.

"I think I can guess what you mean," said Jack, stepping back, so as to allow the others to precede him, "and I will now await your commands."

He stood still until three had gone over, when they beckoned him to follow. Jack had noticed that when the Indians were walking on the log, they were obliged to move carefully, for their foothold was narrow and the swift running current was apt to make one dizzy. The lad, however, stepped forward without hesitation and advanced slowly but with certainty.

The three warriors, who stood facing him on the shore, showed that like Deerfoot the Shawanoe, they possessed a certain vein of waggery, for at the moment Jack was over the middle of the stream, one of them stooped, and, grasping the head of the trunk, moved it quickly fully a couple of feet to the right, all three bursting into an audible snicker at the same moment. The lad was looking downward, meanwhile stepping carefully, when he glanced across to learn the meaning of the action, the stooping Indian being in his field of vision.

Jack understood the trick, but he was without the means of defeating it. He stooped quickly with the intention of grasping the support with both hands, but before he could do so, he lost his balance, flung his arms aloft, and down he went with a loud splash that sent the spray flying in all directions.

No audience of countrymen ever laughed more heartily at the ancient jokes of a clown than did the five Indians when the boy disappeared under the water, his eyes staring with the shock of affright which came with his sudden contact with the current.

Jack was a capital swimmer, and he was satisfied there was no wish to drown him; but he had scarcely passed below the surface, when it occurred to him that there was a possibility of turning the jest upon his captors. The water was very deep, and he kept sinking until his feet softly touched the bottom. As he gave himself the slight impulse which sent him upward again, he not only swam swiftly with the rapid current, but moved as close to shore as possible, and began creeping up the side of the bank.

In doing this, he over-estimated his own strength. It took him a longer time to reach the surface than he calculated upon, and he narrowly escaped strangling; but he resolutely held out to the last second.

At the moment the rushing waters seemed to roar through his brain, his crown cleft the surface, and he drew a deep inspiration of the blessed air; but, even in that trying moment, he kept his self-possession, and the breath was taken so softly that no ear beside his own knew it.

He had emerged close to shore and directly under some overhanging brush, which was not so dense as he could wish, since he was able to see the warriors standing on the land and looking for him. It followed, therefore, that if they should scrutinize the bank very closely they would discover him; but the boy's hope lay in their lack of suspicion that such an artifice was in his mind.

Several circumstances united to help the youth; the water was roiled, as has already been said, while the friction of the swift current against the shore made a noise which overcame the slight ripple caused by his own movements. Only his nose and eyes were kept above the surface, and the shrubbery which inclosed them made a tolerable screen, though less effective than he desired.

Jack had landed, as may be said, a dozen yards below the log from which he had been thrown and on the side from which he set out, consequently he was opposite the five Indians who stood on the shore. He was led to do this from a natural desire to get as far away as he could from his captors, but it was a mistake on his part, for had he crawled under the other bank he would have been hidden altogether from the sight of the Indians.

Holding to a wire-like root with his left hand, he swung around so as to face up stream, and, through the slight spaces in the shrubbery kept his eyes fixed intently on the brawny red men.



A NARROW ESCAPE.

Very soon the warriors looked at each other, and talked rapidly and with growing excitement. There could be no doubt they were discussing the unexpected shape matters had taken; the joke played on their captive had proven a very serious matter to him. It must have been that the pale-faced youth was unable to swim and was drowned. The white warrior was a pappoose.

"By and by they will make search for me," was the thought of Jack Carleton, still retaining his hold, "and then will come the tug of war. It won't be the live boy they'll expect to find, but his dead body, bobbing up and down and back and forth, and yet I don't see why they will care to hunt me up."

Whatever might be the issue, Jack was warranted in feeling hopeful, for he was sure the incident had taken a turn entirely unexpected to the warriors.

"If I had only floated a little further down stream," he thought more than once, noticing a sharp bend made by the current, "I would have been in a good deal better situation than this, for I would have been out of their sight altogether."

Several times he was on the point of letting go and dropping further down, but he dreaded some mistake which would draw attention to the spot. If he should try to swim under the surface, he might be forced to come up too soon, or might strike some obstruction in the stream that would fling him over as though he was a porpoise. It was the fear of a catastrophe of this nature which held him where he was, while he peered through the shrubbery like some wild animal glaring out from his covert upon his enemies.

The face of every Indian was in sight, and he studied the expression of each broad, coppery countenance. He knew they were talking by the movements of the thin lips, and, despite the noise of the rushing stream, he heard one of them grunt several times. This particular warrior was shorter and more solidly built than the rest, and appeared to be some

kind of a leader, for he had the most to say, and the boy noticed, while on the march, that he directed the actions of the rest.

This Indian, as he stood, held his rifle in his right hand, while the thumb of his left was hooked over the belt at his waist, which supported his knife and tomahawk. His stomach protruded somewhat, and, when he spoke in his sententious manner, the belt would rise and sink in a spasmodic fashion which kept time with his words.

Jack kept close watch of the black eyes, which, like those of professional hunters and scouts, were never at rest. They flitted hither and thither, up and down stream and even to the rear, as though danger were apprehended from that direction.

What the boy was expecting and dreading was a search on the part of the Indians. None could know better than they how brief a time is required for a person to drown, and they were not long in arriving at the conclusion that the boy either was dead, or had left the stream at a point below. Three savages walked hastily over the creek on the log and began moving along shore, their serpent-like eyes scanning every foot of land and water that came in their field of vision. At the same time, the other two did the same from the opposite shore, and Jack Carleton knew that the crisis had come.

He felt quite secure against being seen by the two who were traveling together, for he was able to dispose of the undergrowth so as to increase its usefulness. While one hand held fast to the tough root, he softly drew down the bush with the other, so that it interposed between him and the couple who were held in such dread. If the others should step to the edge of the stream and part the bushes, it would be all up with the frightened lad.

The necessities of the case forced Jack to raise his head until both ears were above the surface, and thus, while he employed his eyes to follow the movements of the couple, he sought to use his ears to discover the approach of the trio, though the rushing torrent forbade full success in that respect.

The two warriors were in plain sight as they slowly picked their way downward. Jack saw the upper parts of their bodies, and his heart throbbed faster when they faced about and came down to the edge of the water. However, they were still several yards above him, so that he was quite certain they did not suspect his hiding-place. When they halted and leaned over the stream, the fugitive gave no thought to those who were undoubtedly much closer, but sank until only forehead, eyes and nose were in the air, while the scanty bush was drawn still closer to his face.

All at once, Jack's heart seemed to stand still; he saw that one of the Indians was looking straight at the spot where he was in hiding. The black orbs were centered upon him with such an inquiring expression, that he was sure he had been discovered. All hope was gone, until a moment after he observed that the savage was peering at the undergrowth below him, as though suspicious of everything which could afford any sort of a hiding-place.

"He didn't see me after all," was the conclusion of the delighted boy, "and now if the others let me alone, I shall have a chance to give them the slip."

Again the waists and shoulders of the two were observed moving slowly among the trees and undergrowth, until they passed out of sight, a considerable distance below the crouching fugitive. The relief of the latter was unspeakable, though he could not forget that other foes were also to be avoided.

But minute after minute passed, and still Jack saw and heard nothing of the red men. With each passing minute his hopes rose, until at the end of half an hour, he felt that his safety was well nigh secured.

"They have concluded I was drowned and my body is not likely to come to the surface for some time--anyway not until it is a long way from this spot. If they don't return, I'm safe."

But a thrill of alarm passed through him more than once, when he recalled that the strategy he had employed was of such a simple nature that it ought to suggest itself to the red men. If such was the case they would be certain to return to the fallen tree, renew their search, and prosecute it with greater care.

It was the dread of the latter which led Jack to creep carefully out of the stream, after he had been in hiding perhaps half an hour. Of course his clothing was saturated, and he had become chilled from his long submersion, so that his teeth rattled, and he trembled in every limb. Extended flat on the ground, he crawled with the utmost care until a couple of rods from the water. Then he stopped and listened. He was so far from the stream that its noise did not prevent him detecting any slight noise which might have been made by some other cause, but he heard nothing at all.

There was still considerable undergrowth around him, so that he felt screened from the observation of any other Indians wandering in the vicinity.

"They thought they were very cunning," muttered Jack, with a chuckle, "when they tumbled me into the water, but I

played a trick on them worth two of their kind. I only wish there was some way of letting them know how completely I have outwitted them----"

A cold shiver passed down the spine of Jack Carleton, when he distinctly heard a guttural, grunting laugh behind him. Turning like a flash, he saw the five Indian warriors from whom, up to that moment, he had believed he was free, standing within a rod, and all grinning to an extent that seemed to take the corners of their mouths around to their ears.

The truth broke upon Jack: the red men had never lost sight of him, except for the moment he was under the water. They knew where he was when he supposed himself invisible, and they had been amusing themselves at his expense.



CHAPTER VII.

TWO VISITORS.

On the evening succeeding the departure of Jack Carleton and Otto Relstaub from the little settlement of Martinsville, the widowed mother of Jack was seated by her fireside engaged in knitting. The night was cold, and the huge sticks of wood were roaring and crackling in the broad fireplace, and throwing a cheerful glow and warmth through the room. The tallow candle on the mantel had not been lit, for there was no need of it, and, despite the loneliness and poverty of the sad-faced woman, there was an air of neatness and comfort about her home which would have tempted any one who could look through the narrow window into the homely, old-fashioned apartment.

The deft fingers flew back and forth as regularly as the most delicate machinery, until all at once the lady stopped and allowed her hands to rest in her lap. At the same moment a sigh escaped her, and she looked into the glowing embers.

It was not hard to guess where her thoughts were; they were with that only child who had gone forth in the woods to help the German lad look for the missing horse. Mrs. Carleton smiled as she reflected upon a certain absurdity which marked the whole business, for, look at it as she chose, there was something grotesque in the project of two youths setting out to hunt for a horse that had been wandering for days in a limitless wood. But the smile quickly gave way to the serious expression which not often left the face of the mother since that awful night when her husband was stricken down by the fierce red men of Kentucky.

"I trust God will not forget my boy," were the almost inaudible words that came to her lips. "He has wonderfully preserved him through many perils, and my heart misgives me now that I allowed him to go from under my roof."

Just then the latch-string was spitefully pulled, the door was pushed inward, and Jacob Relstaub entered. The angry man was short of stature, clumsily dressed, and the only weapon he carried was a heavy, knotted cane, if that may be termed such, which was his companion when moving about the sparse settlement. It has already been said that he was parsimonious, cross-grained, and cruel-hearted, and he had been in specially ill-temper since the return of his boy without the horse upon which so much value was set.

The door swung to of itself, and the German, stopping short in the middle of the room, banged his cane upon the floor, and, looking savagely at the quiet lady who had nodded and bidden him good evening, demanded:

"Vere is mine poy, Otto?"

"Don't you know?" asked the widow in return, with a tone of surprise.

"No, I does not; he says he goes off mit your poy, but dey both lies--don't it?"

"My boy never tells a falsehood," was the quiet response of Mrs. Carleton, whose pale cheek slightly flushed. "Your Otto told the truth as you well know. Not only that, but he only obeyed you when he went out in the woods to run into all kinds of danger in search of an animal which I do not believe can possibly be found."

"All poy is bad," said the visitor with an impatient sniff, as he took off his cap and slouched to a chair on the opposite side of the fire. "Your poy ish badder dan any oder poy; mine Otto is lazy, and if he doesn't pring pack dot horse I vill pounds him till he don't live."

"He may *never* come back," said the lady in a low, impressive voice which would have moved anyone else, but it was lost on the boorish visitor.

"Hoof! No fear of dot; he always comes back ven ve doesn't vant him to come back."

"Well," said Mrs. Carleton with a sigh, "I am sorry I let Jack go, for if he had insisted on staying home your boy would have done the same, though if I was in Otto's place I would consider the woods, with all their dangers and sufferings, preferable to living with a parent who is as unfeeling as you."

Jacob Relstaub had both of his horny hands folded over the top of his heavy cane, which rested on the floor between his large shoes, while his cap, somewhat resembling the peaked head-gear of his boy, lay beside him. His broad, ill-favored countenance was darkened by a frown, and it was easy for the lady to see that the fellow still doubted her word. His manner of looking about the large room, and a habit of listening intently, as though he expected to bear approaching footsteps, showed that he suspected Otto was hiding somewhere in the cabin. Mrs. Carleton understood his feelings and she was annoyed to anger, for her sensitive nature felt the insult keenly. Beside, she despised the coarse nature of the man who seemed so totally lacking in humanity.

The lady was on the point of reproving him with sharp words, when both were astonished by a gentle knock on the door, such a hail being contrary to all the rules of the frontier, when the latch-string is not drawn in. Both looked quickly toward the entrance, and the lady raised her voice and said:

"The latch-string is out!"

The words were yet on her lips when it was pulled, and the door swung inward.

The firelight fell upon the figure of an Indian warrior, who stopped on the threshold as if he doubted whether he would be welcome when those within saw him. As he stood with the blank darkness behind him and the crimson glow from the burning logs lighting up the front of his body, he formed a most striking picture.

He was the ideal of symmetry and manly beauty--one of those productions of the American race which are very rare, but which, when seen, are the nearest approach to physical and mental perfection that is ever attained in this world. He was about five feet ten inches in height, and with body and limbs in as perfect proportion as the chisel of Phidias ever carved from marble. Even his long, black hair, which hung luxuriantly and loosely about his shoulders, was of softer texture than is the rule with his people. Several stained eagle feathers slanted upward and outward from the crown, and a double row of brilliant beads encircled his neck. A fine gold bracelet clasped his left wrist, and the deer-skin hunting shirt and leggings were clean, and of the finest possible make. They retained their dull, yellow hue, but the girdle which clasped his body at the waist was of a red color, so bright that it seemed likely to attract dangerous attention in the forest. The leggings were fringed, and the delicate moccasins were also ornamented with colored beads. The heavy blanket which he carried during severe weather was lacking, for it would have been only an encumbrance when the climate was mild.

Into the girdle were thrust a tomahawk and hunting knife, while a long bow was carried in his right hand, and a quiver full of arrows rested behind his right shoulder, where they could be snatched forth on the instant. The youthful warrior carried no firearms, for he depended alone on the primitive weapons which his people had used for centuries.

Splendid as were the frame and limbs of the youth, the greatest attraction lay in his countenance. His features were classical in their regularity, excepting the nose, which was just enough aquiline to give character to his face, and take away the femininity which otherwise might cling to it.

When he smiled in his faint, shadowy fashion, his teeth were seen to be small, white, regular, and without the slightest defect, while the lustrous black eyes glowed with light and feeling. Having closed the door behind him, he still hesitated to advance until assured he was welcome.

Although Mrs. Carleton had never seen him before, she was certain of his identity, and, rising from her seat, she asked:

"Are you Deerfoot the Shawanoe?"

He smiled and inclined his head.

"You are the friend of my boy, and of Otto, the son of Mr. Relstaub. There is no one in the world who could be more welcome than you. Come forward and take a seat nearer the fire."

The dusky countenance flushed with pleasure, for the words were warmer than he was accustomed to hear.

Deerfoot advanced a couple of steps, and, reaching over, drew the rude stool to him. His diffidence would not allow him to go very near the blaze.

When Jacob Relstaub heard the name pronounced, he uttered an angry sniff and banged his cane upon the floor. He said nothing; but he detested the handsome Indian youth, whom he had driven from his door when he asked for shelter, and he knew he had been the companion of his boy on the stirring journey from Kentucky to Louisiana. It mattered not that the masterful woodcraft of the dusky friend had saved the life of Otto Relstaub; all that the German remembered was that the valuable horse was lost, and he blamed this Indian for it, as he censured Jack Carleton for the same misfortune. The man, however, said nothing for a few minutes.

It was manifest from the manner of Deerfoot that he was disappointed because he did not meet Jack Carleton. He cast but a single glance around the apartment, which showed him his young friend was not present; then, as he gently seated himself, he looked into the pale face of the widow and said:

"Deerfoot sees not his brother."

"No; Jack and Otto set out on a long hunt this morning. They may be back in a few days and perhaps not for a fortnight."

"Have they gone to look for the horse that was lost?"

"Yes," answered the lady, with a smile; "I am ashamed to say they have; but I ask your pardon; have you had supper? Will you not permit me to give you to eat?"

She was about to rise when Deerfoot, who was resting his bow on the floor, while he grasped the center as though it was a cane, motioned with his left hand for her to retain her seat.

"The mother of my friend is good and kind, but Deerfoot cannot eat."

He appeared to be on the point of saying something more, but restrained himself. The mother was quick to perceive it, and a pang of dread stirred her heart.

"What were you about to say?" she asked, in her abrupt fashion, suspending the knitting which she was in the very act of resuming.

Deerfoot was too truthful to deceive her outright; but it is fair to presume he did not say all that was in his thoughts.

"Deerfoot is sorry his brothers have gone to look for the horse."

"Why?" quickly asked the mother.

"They cannot find him."

"Why don't they find him?" asked Jacob Relstaub, banging his cane again and glaring fiercely at the youth, as though ready to spring upon him.

Deerfoot looked calmly in the forbidding countenance, and asked, more directly than was his custom:

"Are you the father of my brother, Otto?"

"Yaw; of course I ish. He is one pad poy, as you ish de wust Injin dot effer vasn't."

Without the least visible excitement, and in the same deliberate monotone, Deerfoot still looking him straight in the face:

"The father of Otto is a dog; he has no heart. The Great Spirit hides his face with shame when he looks upon him."

"VAT!" roared Jacob, half rising to his chair and grasping his knobby cane with both hands, while he trembled with rage. "You don't speak dot vays to me and I breaks your head."

He suddenly straightened up, and all aglow with fury advanced upon Deerfoot, who placed his left hand on his knife, quietly arose and faced him, without speaking.



CHAPTER VIII.

A SURPRISE.

Jacob Relstaub was so accustomed to the undisturbed abuse of his son that he was struck almost speechless by the calm defiance of the Indian youth. When he saw the latter place his hand on the knife at his girdle, the German could not fail to know its meaning. He stopped short with his cane half raised and glared savagely at Deerfoot.

"You means to kills me, eh, don't it? Yaw,--I sees,--I sees!"

And shaking his head very fast, and muttering some vigorous words in his own language, he stamped towards the door, swung it open and passed out in the darkness. Deerfoot stood motionless, looking in the direction whence he had vanished, and then, without a word, sat down on the rude chair and looked toward Mrs. Carleton, seated as she was near the fire.

The good lady was terrified, but the incident was so brief that it was over before she fairly understood its full meaning and the ill-natured caller was gone.

"He is such a bad-tempered man that I'm afraid he will hurt you for this," said she, stepping hastily to the door, where she drew in the latch-string, thus locking the humble cabin against intruders. When she sat down, with her scared look and her words of misgiving on her lips, Deerfoot looked from the crackling fire into her countenance. As the yellow glow lit up his handsome features, they showed the faintest possible smile, which vanished the same moment it appeared. The matchless redskin must have appreciated the grim humor involved in the thought of his feeling any fear of the curmudgeon who had just gone.

Previous to that the young Shawanoe had glanced around the cabin, and like another Houdin, impressed every point in his memory. He noted the narrow windows through which a hostile shot could be fired from the outside. He did not believe the late visitor would proceed to that length, but he shifted his seat to a point several feet away, where, if Relstaub relied on his previous knowledge for his aim, no possible harm could be done.

Deerfoot made his change in such a quiet fashion, that his hostess had not the slightest suspicion of its meaning. She saw that he had simply moved closer to the fire. The space between her own chair and that of the visitor was such that there was no call for her to change her location: had there been the slightest, Deerfoot would not have permitted her to wait.

"My brother will hurt no one," said he in his quiet fashion: "he is a bad man; he has a good boy, Otto; Deerfoot calls him his brother, and will do much for him; but Deerfoot does not like his father."

"I was *so* afraid he would strike you with his cane," said the lady, still trembling over the remembrance, "and then you would have used your knife."

The smile was more pronounced than before, but the words were scarcely audible.

"He could not hurt Deerfoot and Deerfoot would not hurt him."

The lady fully understood his meaning, and it lifted a great fear from her heart that Jacob Relstaub would return, demand admittance, and attack her guest. True, he might do so, but she saw that in such an event the results would be farcical rather than tragical.

Deerfoot did not care to give any further thought to the despicable man. He had come to the settlement to visit Jack Carleton and Otto Relstaub, and found they were absent on a singular hunt for the horse that had been missing fully a week. His interest lay in them, and especially in Jack. He had heard most of the facts from the mother, but he now questioned her further in his gentle way until not a particle of information was left for her to give.

The substance of that information has already been told the reader,--it being nothing more than the statement of their departure early that morning. The startling events which followed could not be suspected by the parent, who sat so quietly knitting and talking with the remarkable Indian youth on the other side of her hearthstone, as ignorant as she of the alarming situation in which both were placed.

But while so quiet in his demeanor, the wonderful brain of the youth was always busy during his waking hours. He could not feel that there was cause for fear on account of his friends, for, as has already been shown, that portion of the enormous territory of Louisiana was peopled by Indians much less vicious in their hatred than were those who made Kentucky their hunting-ground. A fierce party of Shawanoes had followed the little party across the Mississippi

the previous week, and they kept matters moving in a very lively manner, as the reader learned long ago; but it was not to be supposed that any of those daring and skillful warriors were in the neighborhood, for it was not conceivable that a cause existed for their presence.

But a singular distrust took possession of Deerfoot. He could not account for it, except as he accounted for all inexplicable things, as being the direct prompting of the Great Spirit. Many a time the instinctive belief had come over him, and he had never failed to follow its guidance; the result in each instance proved that he did right, and he resolved to do the same in the present case, though it will be seen that he could take no real step forward until the coming of daylight.

"You will stay here until morning," said Mrs. Carleton, looking into the face of her visitor and speaking as though the matter was not at all in the nature of a question.

"Deerfoot may stay awhile, though he would rather sleep in the woods, where he can breathe the cool, pure air, and look at the stars, and listen to the whispers of the Great Spirit who watches over him when he is asleep or awake."

"You can sleep on Jack's bed, and he will be pleased, when he comes home, to learn that you did so, though he will be sorry that he was not here to make you welcome."

The Indian shook his head. He had no wish to lie on any such couch, and he had not done so since he was wounded and a prisoner in the hands of the white people.

"Deerfoot will sit here and read until he becomes weary; then he will lie on the floor; and when he awakes he will seek his brothers who are hunting for the horse that has long been lost."

Mrs. Carleton had been told by Jack how skillfully Deerfoot could read and write, and she now ventured the hope that he would use the Bible which lay on the table at the side of the cabin. She was on the point of rising to get it for him, when he motioned her to keep her seat.

"Deerfoot has his Bible with him."

And then he drew the tiny volume with its wooden covers from the interior pocket of his hunting-shirt, and shifted his position so that his back was turned toward the fire, whose glow passed over his shoulders and fell upon the printed page. This gave him all the light he needed, and, after rustling the leaves for a moment, he began, in his low, sweet monotone.

As may be supposed, he selected one of the chapters from Revelation, overflowing as it does with the most impressive grandeur and awe-inspiring glimpse of the mysterious life from whose portals no human being has ever turned back to whisper to the vast procession waiting to follow in his footsteps.

Mrs. Carleton saw that Deerfoot did not like her words of compliment and she therefore refrained. When he had finished, he closed the book and laid it away where he always carried it, and then the conversation went on in the same vein as before.

But the hour was later than that to which the good lady was accustomed, and, despite the singular interest of the interview, she began to feel a slight drowsiness. When she placed her hand over her mouth and yawned, Deerfoot asked that she should retire. She consented, and bade him good-night and withdrew.

He sat motionless until he was alone, when he once more drew out his Bible and resumed reading. The fire having smoldered, he stirred the sticks, turning the unburned ends among the coals, so that in a few moments the small room was filled with a brighter illumination than before. Leaning backward with the book in front of his face and his shapely legs extended in front, he studied with an interest more absorbing than was ever felt by the most devout novel reader. He seemed to lose all consciousness of time and place, and pored over the volume which to him was more precious than any treasure it is possible for the mind to conceive.

By-and-by the fire burned low again and the light grew dim. Though the youth might have continued the perusal much longer, he finally ceased and put the book away for the night. Then, folding his arms, he looked into the smoldering embers before him. Every one knows how such a scene feeds the fancy and how imagination will run riot, while sitting alone late at night, with the wind moaning outside, while he watches the curious, grotesque, and endless procession of figures which take shape and action before him. No one but Deerfoot himself could tell what thoughts took shape in his brain, but they must have been of a melancholy, serious nature, for he drew a deep sigh, muttered a few words in prayer, and then deliberately lay down in the middle of the floor. He lay on his side, with his arm doubled under his head for a pillow, but had nothing but the hard planking beneath and nothing except his own clothing above.

Deerfoot required little sleep, and within less than two hours after he had lain down, he opened his eyes and assumed

the sitting position. The fire had burned so low that only a slight glow filled a part of the room, and he looked like some odd shadow, when he stepped silently forward and stirred the embers until they once more lit up the apartment. It was not yet morning, but he had concluded to wait no longer. He therefore picked up his bow and then, without making the least noise, opened and closed the door behind him.

The young Shawanoe stood for a moment when he found himself in the clear air on the outside. It was a bright starlit night, and, when he glanced reverently upward at the thousands of blazing orbs, he saw that it still lacked two hours of daylight. The rude cabins were dimly outlined, as they faced each other in two irregular rows, those only which were the furthest away being invisible. All were dark and silent excepting one. He noticed the gleam of light from the window, and thought it likely that some one was watching by the bed of sickness; but the thought had hardly come to him when he recalled that it was the cabin of the German Relstaub, who had left him in such a rage.

Deerfoot was still in front of the house of his friend, when the door of the cabin opened and the short, sturdy figure of Jacob Relstaub was outlined against the blazing fire and candle-light behind him. The truth was, he was so angered he could not sleep; he had tossed about until his rage became ungovernable, when he told his frau that he was going over to the widow Carleton's to chastise the rascally redskin that had dared to insult him to his face. The wife sought to dissuade him, but he was too angered to listen to reason; and, ordering her to stay in bed, he dressed, caught up his heavy cane, and plunged from the door of his home.

Deerfoot drew back until sure he could not be seen, when he calmly awaited the approach of the irate man. The latter stamped forward, banging his heavy cane on the ground and muttering to himself:

"Yaw, I preaks mine cane his head ofer--he talks to me--he calls me a rascal und eferydings vot I vas. I shows him----"

Just then, when he was close to the cabin, a figure emerged from the darkness, moving as silently as if it was a section of the gloom itself, and advancing straight toward him. It was the execrated young Indian, grasping his long bow in his right hand, and holding his tomahawk in his left, with his body bent and his head thrust forward.

"Oh, mine gracious!" gasped Jacob Relstaub, his knees shaking and his staff dropping from his trembling hand, "it ish him!"

He managed to twist his body around, so as to face the other way, and then he broke into a lumbering run for his cabin. He heard the sound of the swift moccasins behind him, and he ran as never before. His hat flew off, and odd quirps and pains developed themselves here and there in his frame, because of the unusual and violent exercise to which he subjected himself; but he kept forward, believing it was his only hope. Fortunately the run was brief, but when he reached the threshold he was in the last stage of exhaustion. He could not lift his foot high enough, and went sprawling headlong into the room, with a crash that startled his wife almost out of her senses.

Deerfoot paused a moment surveying the wreck and ruin he had caused, and then quietly shoved his tomahawk back in place. He had accomplished all he wished, and was satisfied. His old shadowy smile lingered on his face as he turned aside, and, making his way between the settlers' cabins, disappeared in the woods.

CHAPTER IX.

BY THE CAMP-FIRE.

Jack Carleton cried in the bitterness of vexation and disappointment. After his daring attempt to get away, and when hope was a-flutter within him, he awoke to the fact that his captors were trifling with him. He surveyed the array of gleaming visages, and was sure that the leader indulged in a distinct wink and grotesque grimace, as expressive of his views of the situation. Inasmuch as not one of the red men could utter a syllable of English, perhaps it was as well that they should have recourse to the sign language. Jack himself was humiliated beyond expression. Finding he was discovered, he had risen to his feet and faced his captors with the best grace he could, and that, it need not be said, was scant indeed.

The Indians grinned and grimaced while they walked around the lad, as if desirous of surveying him from different points. Jack dashed the tears from his eyes, and, compressing his lips, braved it out. He expected some indignity would be offered him, but there was none. This curious scene lasted only a few minutes, when the Indians gave the youth to understand that the journey westward was to be resumed. He was motioned to go forward, and was glad enough to obey, for his saturated clothes and his highly nervous condition set his teeth chattering and his body shaking as if with the ague.

The afternoon was well along, and no great distance could be passed over before night. Jack dreaded their arrival at the Indian village before another halt. He was hopeful that in the stillness and darkness of night he would gain a chance to steal away from his captors, while the chance of doing so when with the tribe itself would be much more difficult.

In one respect the wish of the youth was gratified. The party tramped along in Indian file, without the slightest pause, until the darkness began stealing among the trees. There was but the single warrior in front, the others following the lad. Suddenly the leader stooped down and paused. He was so close to Jack that evidently he meant to fling him over his shoulders, and the boy barely escaped such discomfiture. The others grinned again, and then the party appeared to fall apart and take different positions. Two vanished in the wood, while the others began hastily gathering dead limbs and decayed leaves. It seemed to Jack that less than three minutes had gone by when he saw the dim outlines of one of the warriors on his knees, striking the flint and steel, such as the pioneers, and, indeed, all persons, used in those days. The little lines of sparks shot back and forth, as they do upon the swiftly revolving emery wheel when the metal is pressed against it, and in a twinkling a tiny blaze was creeping among the little pile of leaves toward the top. The twist of flame darted in and out like the crimson tongue of some serpent, until it reached the air above, and in a very few minutes a roaring camp fire was under full headway.

Jack saw that it had been kindled against the shaggy bark of an oak tree, which swept upward like a sealed chimney until lost in the gloom above. The gleam of water a short distance off made known what he had not suspected; a stream—only a few inches in depth and breadth—wound by the spot, without giving forth the slightest ripple. Water, it may be said, is indispensable to such an encampment, and a party of aborigines scarcely ever halts at night without being near it.

As the glow of the fire spread, it fell upon the figures of the warriors, who looked grim and uncanny. Jack folded his arms and stood in the full glow, as though seeking a bath in the firelight. But for his recent experience, he might have been tempted to make a dash for liberty; but his clothing was still wet from that furious essay, and he was clearly of the opinion that the only thing for him to do was to make his captors believe (if it was possible) that he had given over all hope of getting away. Could he lull their suspicion, it would be a most important point accomplished; but the youth might well feel misgivings on that point, for it presupposed a stupidity on the part of the Indians contrary to what he knew concerning them.

It must not be thought that the boy believed he could make the warriors think he was content to remain their prisoner; that would have been the height of absurdity; but he did seek to convince them by his manner that he had given up the intention of running away, because he knew the attempt must be hopeless. Having failed so completely, he was not foolish enough to repeat the essay, when he was likely to anger the Indians to that point that they would punish him for it.

It will be understood, therefore, why Jack Carleton remained standing with folded arms, while his captors were busying themselves around him. He looked at the flames as they crept up against the bark and scorched the rough coat of the massive oak, and he noted more than one furtive glance cast toward him. He pretended to see them not, but stood gloomy, sorrowful, and despairing.

Suddenly the dull crack of a rifle rang out, and Jack started. His first impression was that a party of white men or

Indians had attacked them, but when he noticed the indifference of those around, he saw his mistake. They did not so much as look to the right or left, nor make any remark to each other. Evidently they expected something of the kind.

Within the space of five minutes, the two warriors who had left a short time before, reappeared. The foremost carried his rifle at a trail and had no game, but his companion, directly behind him, held by the feet a large wild gobbler, shot but a short time previous.

Jack Carleton could not but wonder how it was this dusky hunter was able to secure the bird on such short notice. The turkeys, at the time he started to look for them, must have all gone to roost among the trees. The gloom was such that it was almost impossible for the keenest eye to distinguish them. They may have given some evidence of their presence, but Jack was surprised over the success of the red men in obtaining supper before, as may be said, the fire could be made ready to roast it.

"Otto and I have hunted for hours in Kentucky where the game is as abundant as it is here, and we were not able to gain the first shot at any sort of game. There must be some secret about this performance which I don't understand, though Deerfoot, with his bow and arrow, never failed to meet with the same success."

The American Indian is by no means fastidious in his tastes, and the manner in which they handled the game would hardly have satisfied a party of modern hunters. Sometimes the red man half cooks his bird without bothering himself with plucking out the feathers, and again he doesn't take the trouble even to scorch his food. In the present instance, they ripped off the principal part of the feathers, removed the interior, and cutting the framework into several sections, laid them directly on the coals that were spread out to receive them.

They began the broiling or scorching operation at once, and the smell of the burning meat was of the most appetizing nature. Jack caught a sniff and it literally made his "mouth water," for despite his unpleasant situation, his appetite was such as every person in vigorous health is certain to feel at regular intervals.

"I wonder whether they mean to slight me," he suddenly asked himself with a feeling of dismay; "if they do, I don't know what will become of me, for I'm sure I never was so a-hungered in all my life."

But I hasten to say that the disaster which the prisoner feared did not come to him. Although the bird was unusually large, two or three of the warriors could have devoured it with ease. As it was, therefore, it afforded rather scant rations to the company, but Jack Carleton was remembered and received a juicy slice of the game, which could not have tasted better had it been hung up in the cold for a week and then cooked by his mother. Ah, what art shall ever furnish a sauce like that of hunger itself! The meal finished, the party disposed of themselves for the night. Their red clay pipes, with the long reeds for stems, were produced, filled with tobacco and lit from the fire in front of them. The blankets--which were anything but clean--were spread out on the ground and their owners assumed all sorts of lazy attitudes, puffed their pipes, and occasionally grunted a few words to each other.

As Jack had no blanket of his own he reclined on the leaves, which were comfortable as he could wish. He took pains to place himself as near the camp fire as he could bear, so as to show his captors he did not mean to attempt to get away.

Several times during the march and while at supper, Jack heard the leader addressed, as he believed, by name. He could not catch the precise word, but it sounded, as nearly as he could tell, like "Ogallah," which of itself resembles the name of a tribe of western Indians.

Jack waited till he had heard it again, and then, from the manner in which it was spoken, he was convinced it was the real name of the leader of the party,--that is as near as he could pronounce it.

By and by there came a lull in the disjointed conversation; the indolent red men were lolling on their blankets, and the leader was sitting cross-legged like a Turk, sending rings of smoke upward and watching them as they curled inward upon themselves and climbed out of sight. The dimensions of his mouth were that ample that he could have done the same on either side of the stem without removing it from between his teeth.

Jack Carleton looked straight at him for a few seconds, and then, imitating the guttural style of those around as best he could, pronounced in a distinct voice the single word--

"Ogallah!"

At that moment the chin of the chief was in the air and a procession of rings were tumbling over each other as they hastened from between his lips. He dropped his head as abruptly as if some one had struck him in the throat, and with his mouth still in circular shape allowed the rings to go to ruin, while he stared in amazement at the boy who had pronounced his name. The others showed as much wonder as did the chieftain. They also stared at the lad and then

gave expressions to their feelings in their guttural, grunting fashion.

It was quite embarrassing to Jack Carleton, who blushed, looked confused, and then tried hard to appear as though he did not feel specially proud over his performance. The leader addressed some words to him, as if suspecting he understood his language after all, but Jack could only smile and shake his head to signify that he had already exhibited his full proficiency in the tongue of his captors.

CHAPTER X.

WAITING AND HOPING.

It would be hard to measure the effect of the little achievement of Jack Carleton upon the Indians who held him captive. He had pronounced the name of the chieftain with such clearness that every one recognized it. After all it was no great exploit, and it may have been the red men feigned a goodly portion of the astonishment they seemed to feel.

Jack did not make any more essays in that direction, and a few minutes later the vagabonds gave their principal attention to their pipes. One of them gathered an armful of brush and flung it on the fire; and another, rising to his feet, turned his back toward the blaze with his hands together behind him, as though the warmth was very pleasant. While he stood thus, he held the stem of his pipe in his mouth and looked absently at the boy, who could not see the face of the red man with much distinctness, as it was in shadow.

The fuel just thrown on the flames increased the warmth to such a degree that those who were the nearest shifted their position. The warrior who was on his feet stepped forward a single pace, and was still standing in his idle fashion with his hands half folded behind him, when a spark flew outward with a snap, and dropped down the neck of the unsuspecting red man. When he felt the burn, like the thrust of a big needle, he sprang several feet in the air, and began frantically clutching at the tormenting substance. The second or third attempt secured the spark, which clung to his hand, burning his fingers to that extent that he emitted a rasping exclamation, bounded upward, and by a particularly vigorous flirt of his hand freed it of the spark, which then expired of itself.

As I have said, no man has less humor in his composition than the North American Indian, and yet it is not by any means lacking in him. It assumes odd forms at times, and too often seems based on the physical suffering of some person or animal; but in the instance of which I am speaking, every one of the spectators was filled with mirth. The laughter shook them from head to foot, though with all its vigor it could not have been heard fifty feet away.

Jack Carleton had been so long depressed that something like a reaction came over him. He threw his head back and the woods rang with his hearty mirth as they never rang before. If there was any one else within half a mile, he must have wondered what all the uproar meant.

The cause of this amusement conducted himself very much like a civilized being. When he had rubbed the blistered spot on the back of his neck with the scorched hand, he glared angrily at the others, as if he saw no adequate cause for the unusual mirth; then when it broke out afresh, he made a weak attempt to join in, but failing to do so, he sullenly seated himself on the ground and looked as glum as a man meditating some wicked deed.

All at once, he turned toward Jack Carleton with such a fierce scowl that the boy was sobered. He believed with reason that the Indian was ready to leap upon him with his knife, punishing him in that dreadful manner for the provocation he felt toward the rest.

"I guess I have laughed enough," was the prudent thought of the boy, who straightway tried to look as if he sympathized with the red man for his slight misfortune.

Jack could not tell how well he succeeded in imparting a pitying expression to his countenance, but all disposition to laugh at the warrior's mishap had departed, and it is not improbable that the youth owed his life to the fact.

Although the overflowing mirth soon ended, there were a number of smiles on the faces of the warriors for a long time afterward, doubtless caused by the remembrance of the laughable performance earlier in the evening.

As the halt was for the night, the boy could hardly suppress his curiosity to see what shape matters would take. His strong hope was that he would be allowed to lie where he then sat, and that none of the warriors would arrange it so he could not change his position without awaking him.

It looked as if the prayer of Jack was to be granted. More wood was thrown on the fire, and the Indians took but a brief time to dispose themselves for slumber. The pipes were laid away, their guns examined, and each placed his weapon alongside of him, as though it was his intimate friend, from whose body he expected to obtain the warmth to keep him comfortable through the night. The savage who held Jack's gun was the only silent and reserved member of the party. The boy had heard him utter less than half a dozen words since the journey began. He was shorter and more squatty than the others, and his whole aim in life appeared to be a desire to please Ogallah, their chief. During the hilarity that reigned a short time before, he had grinned at his companion, but his mirth was less hearty than that of the rest.

The blankets were spread out on the leaves to their fullest extent, and then the warriors lay down, with their backs

against each other and their moccasins pointing toward the fire. Then the covering was gathered up in front of each and flung over behind, where the folds interlapped, all that remained visible being a part of the black hair and the feathers in the crowns of the warriors, who seemed to find not the least difficulty in breathing with their heads swathed and bandaged up like a wounded limb.

Two couples were thus formed, who were separated by the space of six or eight feet, while a rod beyond burned the camp-fire against the shaggy trunk of the oak. The intervening area and some distance away was lighted by the flames which had eaten into the bark, until the solid wood beneath was charred and blackened by the heat. Ogallah, the chief, strode to a point midway between the fire and the couples, flung his blanket on the ground, and, pointing down to it, motioned to Jack Carleton to come forward and use it for his couch.

This was not the most agreeable order to receive, but it might have been much worse, and he obeyed with a readiness that looked genuine, though it could not have been entirely so. Jack nodded to the chief, as he took his seat and gathered the heavy folds around him, lay down on his right side, with his face toward the fire. Ogallah looked at the lad, whose knees almost touched his chin, and muttering to himself, walked back to the oak and sat with his back against it, his feet close to his body and his arms folded in front.

The chief was about one-fourth of the way around the oak from the camp-fire, so that the light revealed his entire left side, and his not very attractive profile, the whole being thrown against the blank darkness beyond, which shut the rest of his body from view. This proceeding indicated that Ogallah meant to act the part of sentinel while his warriors slept. He did not require the blanket, as would have been the case had he lain down to slumber, and he was magnanimous enough, therefore, to turn it over the captive, who would have been as well pleased never to touch it.

It cannot be supposed that the sachem and his warriors were in any fear of disturbance during the darkness, for they were in a country with which they were familiar, and they knew no dangerous enemies were within many miles of them. Had they met a party belonging to another tribe, more than likely the two, as a matter of principle, would have fallen upon each other like so many tigers; but none of their own race was hunting for them, and the white settlers were altogether out of the question. But the possibility of peril--remote though it might be--always hangs over the hunter, as indeed it does over us all, and the red men had no thought of trusting themselves to slumber without one of their number standing guard over the rest.

Sleep is so insidious in its approach that the sentry, as a usual thing, can only fight it off by incessant action. So long as he paces back and forth, his senses stay with him, but when he sits down a minute or so to rest, unconsciousness is sure to come. But Ogallah would not have assumed the easy position had he not felt sure of his self-control. It will be perceived that he had so placed himself that he had a perfect view of the camp, while he could see all that was possible of the surrounding gloom. If required, he could use the oak as a shield, and only a slight signal was needed on his part to rouse the sleeping warriors to instant wakefulness.

"Now, if he keeps awake," thought Jack Carleton, peeping through the folds of his blanket with his half-closed eyes, "it don't look as though there will be much chance for me, but if he drops into a doze I may slip off, and I won't need much of a start to get away from him."

The most natural query would be as to which was more likely to fall asleep--the Indian or the boy. Ordinarily a youngster like Jack would have been no match for the warrior, who had been trained to privation, suffering, hardship, self-denial and watchfulness from his earliest infancy; but it need not be said that the state of one's mind has everything to do with his ability to slumber and secure rest therefrom. Ogallah was mentally quiet; he had gone through a severe tramp, but no more so than had been the case hundreds of times, and he was accustomed to sleep at that hour. Such was the case also with Jack Carleton, but he was in a fever of hope and nervousness, which made it hard for him to hold his eyes partly closed in his effort to counterfeit unconsciousness. It was accepted as a matter of course that the four warriors who were lying down would speedily glide into the land of dreams, since such was their wish. Slight as is the noise which is sufficient to rouse a sleeping Indian, young Carleton would have felt no misgiving respecting those so near him; it was Ogallah, the sentinel chieftain, whom he feared.

"If he suspects that I mean to try something of the kind," was the conclusion of Jack, "he will not close his eyes any longer than to wink. But I'll watch him."

This task which the boy set himself was of the most trying nature. Had his mind been composed he would have fallen asleep within five minutes, but he was never more wide awake in all his life than he was two hours after he had lain down with the Indian blanket wrapped about him, and his face toward the camp-fire.

During that period, so far as he was able to see, the Indian had not moved so much as a muscle, and Jack himself had done very little more. Lying on his right side, with his arm doubled under him for a pillow, the cumbrous blanket enclosing him from head to foot, an irregular opening in front of his face allowed him to peer through the folds at the

camp-fire, the oak, and the chieftain. The last still sat leaning slightly backward, with his shoulders against the trunk, his arms folded over his knees, while he seemed to be gazing off into vacancy. The heels of his moccasins remained close against the thighs, so that the form of the Indian bore quite a resemblance to the letter N.

The flickering light from the camp-fire disclosed as it did at first, the side and profile of the chieftain. Gradually the flames sank lower and there came moments when the sentinel was scarcely visible. Then, all at once, the fire would flare up for a few seconds and the figure would be in brighter relief than before. Again the eyes of Jack would rebel against the extreme tension to which they were subjected. The Indian, instead of remaining with his back against the oak, would seem to be hitching forward and upward in the most grotesque fashion. After bumping about in the air for a time, he would sink, still bumping, to the ground, where he would hitch backward to his place by the tree. Then the latter, instead of standing as motionless as a rock, showed signs of restlessness. It would begin by swaying back and forth until it too was waltzing in an unearthly fashion around the camp-fire. Again the surrounding gloom became studded with blinking stars, ogres and the most grotesque figures, which performed in an indescribable fashion. Darkness and light alternated, until the boy feared he was losing the power of vision altogether; but it will be understood that this was the natural protest of the eye against the painful and long continued strain to which it was subjected.



CHAPTER XI.

THROUGH THE FOREST.

Jack Carleton occasionally gave his eyes fitful rest by holding them closed for a few moments, but the tantalizing visions did not leave him even then. His arm became so painfully cramped under his head that he was compelled to shift his position; and he seized the occasion to readjust his limbs, which were also becoming wearied because of the long time he had held them motionless. He was prudent enough, however, to give the whole movement the seeming of a natural action done in sleep. He flung himself about for a few seconds, and then rolled back almost in the same posture, apparently resuming his heavy slumber.

But through the half closed eyelids, on which the dull glow of the camp-fire fell, he was peering at the faint outlines of the figure against the oak. He was sure Ogallah would start and rise to his feet, ready to check any steps on the part of the captive looking toward flight.

But not the slightest stir was made, and the astonished lad, with a painful throb of his heart, said to himself:

"He is asleep! Now is my chance!"

It seemed to be too good to be true, and yet it certainly had that appearance. For some time past, Jack had known from the regular breathing of the figures near him that the couples wrapped up in their blankets were unconscious. Certainly there could be no doubt about the one who had been burned by the spark of fire, for he snored amain, like the "seven sleepers."

It is at such times that one's senses are wonderfully acute, and Jack Carleton not only saw but heard with unusual keenness. With his ear close to, but not touching the ground, he distinctly caught a rippling sound in the streamlet which flowed so near. The fact that he heard it was proof that it was caused by some "foreign interference," since it was entirely different from the slight rippling noise along the banks.

The first thought of Jack was that it was Deerfoot come to his rescue, and he could not but think how completely he would be master of the situation, should he suddenly rise to his feet in front of Ogallah and give him to understand he was not to move or speak; but a second thought destroyed the hope. It was exceedingly improbable that the young Shawanoe was within a score of miles, but while it was possible that he might be hunting somewhere in the forest, it was incredible that he would have betrayed his presence near camp in the manner named.

Jack had barely reached this correct conclusion, when, peering at the figure of Ogallah, as it was faintly shown, he caught the gleam of the eyes of a wild beast just beyond, and in a direct line with the chief. The eyes were large, round and quite close together, with that phosphorescent, flickering glow often shown by animals when the light is faint.

"*That* will settle the question whether Ogallah is asleep or not," said the boy, watching with an intensity of interest which cannot be described.

Whatever the nature of the animal, he was evidently on a reconnaissance, and had no purpose of venturing closer until satisfied the path was clear to do so. It must have been that he cared very little one way or the other, for while the two orbs were glaring upon Jack, they vanished with a suddenness that suggested that some one had seized his tail and flung him back into the gloom from which he first emerged.

It was incredible, too, that the chief should have sat quiet and motionless with a wild beast so near him, unless he was asleep, but the possibility of being mistaken after all, kept Jack from stirring for fully a half hour longer.

The time seemed much later than it really was, when the boy rose on his elbow and hesitated, while he looked intently around and listened for the slightest sound. He glanced right and left at the figures shrouded in the blankets, but they might have been so many dead men. He could barely discern their outlines in the gloom, for the fire was slowly, but steadily, sinking. Several times he had asked himself whether it would not be wise to wait until it died out altogether, but he was too strongly convinced that the night was nearly gone, and he would need every minute in which to widen the distance between him and his pursuers.

"No," he murmured, "it won't do to wait another second."

He was on one knee, with his hand pressing the ground, when the largest stick on the fire burned in two in the middle, and the larger portion rolled back and in front of the chief. The disturbance caused it to flare up for the moment with a glare which revealed the figure of Ogallah more distinctly than at any time since he had taken his position.

Jack Carleton paused in his painful movement and became like a figure cut in marble, staring straight at the warrior brought into such unexpected prominence. As he did so, he saw that Ogallah was not only wide awake, but had turned his head, and was looking straight at him. The cunning fellow had not slept a wink from the moment he took his singular position. He had noted the wolf which ventured close enough to take a peep into camp, but, well aware that there was no danger, and convinced also that his captive was awaiting the chance to steal away, he held himself as rigid as iron until such an attempt should be made.

Poor Jack almost fainted in a collapse of despair. He saw that his captors had trifled with him from the beginning, and with a sigh of utter wretchedness, he dropped back on the ground, feeling that it was worse than useless for him to expect or hope to outwit those cunning children of the forest.

Reaction followed, and the lad speedily sank into a deep slumber which lasted until the sun had risen and the party had broken camp and were ready to resume their journey. Even then it was necessary for Ogallah to thrust his moccasin against him before he opened his eyes and stared confusedly around. The sight of the warriors who stood ready to move, recalled Jack to his hapless situation. He rubbed his eyes, and sprang to his feet, and walking to the streamlet lay down, took a draught of the cool, refreshing water in which he bathed his face, wiping it off with his handkerchief, and then turned about to signify that he awaited orders.

He wondered that no signs of breakfast were to be seen, and at first suspected that his captors had partaken while he slept, but afterward concluded that like all their people they were anything but regular in their meals, especially when on the tramp.

Without any ceremony, the journey was taken up, Ogallah again walking at the head, with the other four at the rear of the boy. They adopted their favorite custom of walking in Indian file, each warrior stepping in the tracks of the one in front. Jack was wise enough to adhere to the practice, so that had any one sought to follow the party, he would have noted but the single trail, though a skilled red or white man would have been quick to discover the precise number of the company.

"We have traveled a good many miles since yesterday noon," thought Jack, "and it must be that we are not far from the Indian village. If that is so, it won't do for me to make any other attempt to run away. Ogallah knows I am anxious to go, for he saw me try it twice, and he will take good care that I don't try it again."

Still, while taking this sensible view of the matter, Jack Carleton compressed his lips with the resolution that he would not throw away a single chance. If it should prove that many miles still lay before them and that several nights were to be spent on the road, he meant to do his utmost to give his captors the slip.

The journey assumed the most monotonous character. It was simply tramp, tramp, without the least rest or variation. Jack was sure he had never seen such sameness in the forest, lasting mile after mile. There were the towering trees, their leafy branches interlocked overhead, the same array of shaggy columns of bark, spreading limbs and sparse undergrowth. Sometimes Ogallah would step so rapidly that a branch which he brushed from his path would swing back and switch the lad in the face, and once or twice a running vine would be uprooted by a vigorous fling or kick of the foot.

But all this time the squat figure of the chief advanced like a machine. Jack noticed the swing of the muscular arms, the play of the legs and the occasional slight turning or ducking of the head. The straggling black hair, with the painted eagle feathers drooping like the plume of a lady's hat, the blanket slung loosely over the shoulders, the fringed hunting shirt and leggings, the faded moccasins, so soft that they spread out of all manner of shape when the weight of the body rested on them--all these and much more were impressed upon the mind of the boy with a distinctness that he was certain would last him all through life.

"My gracious!" thought he, "they have come from a long distance; what could have taken them down near Martinsville and so near the Mississippi? I wonder whether it is possible the tribes who live on this side the river ever cross over to look at the country on the other shore. It would not be strange if they did so, but it don't seem like an Indian to do that sort of thing. Can it be these warriors have their hunting grounds away out toward the Rocky Mountains? If so, I shall have a fine time in finding my way back home."

The youth did not allow himself to consider the possibility that he would never have the chance to attempt the journey. The shuddering fear which first took hold of him was gone. Closely as the captors guarded him, he was persuaded they meant to inflict no personal harm--at least while on their way through the woods.

It was a serious question indeed as to what would be his treatment after reaching the Indian settlement. The American race is cruel, treacherous, and revengeful, and though the red men frequently hold prisoners for months and years, they more frequently subject them to torture and death. It will be understood, therefore, why Jack Carleton was so

anxious to make his escape from the party before they could arrive home.

Present discomforts often drive away future horrors, and, by the time the sun was overhead, Jack gave his principal thought to one thing--the question of food. He was a-hungered, and viewed with a mental groan the prospect of keeping on the march until sunset, before securing anything to eat.

"I have gone a full day many a time without food," he said, as he tramped along, "but it seems to me I never was as ravenous as now. I believe I could eat a pair of boiled moccasins, that is, if they had never been in use."

He was ashamed of his weakness, and resolutely refrained from giving any evidence of his suffering, but when he detected the pale green foliage of the fragrant birch, he ventured to step out of the trail, break off a branch and chew the bark, thus securing temporary relief from the gnawing discomfort.

High noon came, but no halt had been made. The lad had left the trail several times, and the warriors themselves were more careless about their own footsteps, but seemed to have no desire to partake of food.

The first shock of surprise came when the party suddenly emerged from the woods and paused on the bank of a deep, swift stream, fully a hundred yards wide. The current, like the smaller one, was yellow and roiled, and the boy looked upon it with a feeling akin to dismay. Recalling the indignity to which he had been subjected earlier in the day, he dreaded trusting himself in the water again.

"*This* time they may take it into their heads to drown me," was his thought.

But his nerves were not subjected to the trial. Nothing showed more clearly the wonderful woodcraft of the Indians than the fact that, after journeying many long leagues through the wilderness, without the slightest trail to guide them, they struck the stream within a hundred yards of the point at which they aimed from the first.

This was proven by the action of the warriors themselves. After talking together for a few minutes, two of them walked a short distance up the bank and drew a large canoe from under the shore, where they had left it when journeying in the other direction.

CHAPTER XII.

THE SIGNAL FIRES.

The canoe was made of bark, with the ends turned up in the usual fashion. Two long paddles belonging to it lay within, and were taken by the warriors, who paddled it down to where the party were in waiting. All stepped carefully inside, and the same Indians who brought it from its hiding place turned the prow toward the other shore and began swinging the paddles with the freedom and vigor peculiar to their people. Jack was the last to seat himself, and he held fast as best he could, dreading some of the rude jokes of his captors.

When all were in position, and the craft began moving, great care was necessary, for it sank to the gunwales, and a slight disturbance would be enough to overturn the frail boat. Although Jack feared such an occurrence, yet the Indians themselves were no more desirous it should take place than was he.

He naturally fixed his eyes on the line of warriors seated in front of him. All faced the shore they were approaching, and the couple using the paddles dipped first one end on the right and the other end on the left of the canoe. They put forth little exertion. Had they chosen to do so, they could have tripled the speed, though most likely an upset would have been the consequence.

The middle of the stream was not reached, when a small fish leaped out of the water in front and fell back again. Ogallah uttered an exclamation, and, reaching his hand over the side of the boat, held it several inches under the surface. The two Indians not using the paddles did the same, just as a party of young people will do when taking a pleasure sail over some calm lake.

Suddenly Ogallah gave a quick flirt of the submerged hand, flinging the sparkling water over all. Something flashed in the sunlight, and a plump fish, weighing fully a pound, dropped into the canoe. Almost immediately the other two warriors did the same, one of them securing a prize weighing as much as both the others. The fact was, the boat was passing through something like a school of fish, and the red men found no difficulty in capturing a number.

"That looks like dinner," thought Jack with a chuckle, as he also dipped his hand to grope for the finny delicacies. He had less than a minute to wait when something cold and smooth touched his fingers. He made a desperate clutch, sinking his arm to his elbow, but the fish was too quick, and darted beyond his reach, just as Ogallah landed another tempting one.

Several more were taken, but Jack could not succeed in closing his fingers quickly enough to keep the fish from slipping away. By the time the other side of the stream was reached, a good supply had been secured, and the boy forgot his sorrow in the pleasure of anticipating that his hunger would be fully satisfied.

Happily he was not disappointed in this respect, for, while the oarsmen were drawing the boat out of the water, the others were preparing the fire with which to cook the fish, that were speedily dressed. They were the "white" species common in the west, and when browned to a juicy crisp, formed as luscious a meal as any epicure could ask. Best of all, there was an abundance, and Jack Carleton ate until he wanted no more.

Having tramped so many miles since the rising of the sun, Ogallah and his warriors were disposed to enjoy a good rest.

Their pipes were relighted and they lolled about in the same lazy fashion, paying no special heed to Jack, who knew the unwisdom of making any effort to get away.

All this convinced the boy that the party had still a considerable distance to travel. Had they been in the neighborhood of their village, they would have pushed on without stopping. At any rate, they would not have paused to kindle the camp-fire and to cook a meal at mid-day.

"It must be," Jack said to himself, with several nods of his head, "that we are to spend another night on the road: if that is so, I'll make a break if I have to suffer for it."

These were vaunting words, but he was in earnest. Except for the hope thus renewed within him, the youth would have given way to the drowsiness which became quite common with the rest, but a line of speculation was started which kept his mind occupied during the full hour the party dawdled about the camp-fire.

At the end of the time named, the ashes were knocked from the pipes, several stretched their limbs and yawned, and the sullen-faced warrior who had been taking care of Jack's rifle, passed it back to him with some surly word, which most likely meant that thereafter the captive should bear his own burdens. The boy was glad enough to regain his weapon, but he smiled when he observed that it had no charge in it. His captors were determined not to put temptation

in his way.

It took the company a considerable time to "shake themselves together." They straggled and kept irregular step, and finally, when they began ascending a slope, where the ground was much broken and covered with stones, they gave it up altogether. The ascent continued until they found themselves on an elevation several hundred feet high, and so devoid of vegetation that a view was gained which covered an area of hundreds of square miles in every direction.

Standing on this lookout, as it may be called, the Indians devoted a number of minutes to such survey. No employment just then could be more entertaining, and Jack Carleton adopted it.

The scene was too similar to those with which the reader of these pages has become familiar to need any lengthened reference in this place. It was green, billowy forest in every direction. Here and there a stream wound like a silver ribbon through the emerald wilderness, sometimes gleaming in the sunlight, and then disappearing among the vegetation, to reappear miles away, and finally to vanish from sight altogether as it wound its way toward the Gulf. At remote points the trained eye could detect the thin, wavy column of vapor motionless against the sky, a mute witness that beings other than those on the hill were stealing through the vast solitude in their quest for game or prey.

Inasmuch as Jack Carleton readily detected these "signs," as the hunter terms them, it followed they must have been noted by the Indians themselves; but they gave no evidence of any excitement on that account. It was natural that such evidences of the presence of other persons in the immense territory should present themselves.

But the youth failed to find that for which he specially looked. Observing the chieftain gazing earnestly toward the west, he did the same, expecting to catch sight of the Indian village where Ogallah and his warriors made their home. He descried a wooded ridge stretching across his field of vision, but not the first resemblance to village or wigwam could be discovered.

"He is not looking for *that*," thought Jack, "but is expecting some signal which will appear on the ridge."

One of the other Indians was peering with equal intentness at the same point, but the minutes passed and nothing presented itself. Jack joined in the scrutiny, but he could not succeed where they failed.

All at once the sachem seemed to lose patience. He said some vigorous things, accompanied by equally vigorous gestures, and then the whole party began hastily gathering wood. In a short while this was kindled and burning strongly. When the flames were fairly going, one of the warriors who had collected several handfuls of damp leaves by digging under the dry ones, dropped them carefully on the blaze. It looked at first as if the fire would be put out, but it struggled upward, and by-and-by a column of dense black smoke stained the sky like the smutty finger of some giant tracing a wavy line across it.



THE SIGNAL

Then Ogallah and one of his men held his blanket spread out so as almost to force the thick smoke to the ground, but

such was not their purpose. The blanket was abruptly lifted, then swayed in a peculiar fashion, the two moving in perfect unison, without speaking, and repeating their pantomime with the regularity of machinery, for the space of fully ten minutes.

The results were singular. The inky column of vapor was broken into a number of sections, as may be said, so that when viewed from a distance the figure was that of a black broad band of enormous height, separated by belts of colorless air into a dozen pieces or divisions, the upper ones gradually melting into nothingness. Besides this, so deftly had the red men manipulated the fire and blanket, that these divisions showed a peculiar wavy appearance, which would have excited wondering remark, no matter by whom seen.

"It is a signal to some one on the ridge yonder," was the conclusion of Jack, who watched the proceeding with much interest.

Having finished, Ogallah and the warrior threw the blanket on the ground, and the whole five gazed at the ridge miles away. For a time perfect silence reigned, and then one of the dusky watchers uttered an exclamation, to which the chief responded with a grunt.

While scanning the distant ridge, Jack detected a black brush of vapor climbing slowly above the trees. It broke clean off, and as it went on upward, was inclosed by clear air on all sides. But it was not long before a second, third, fourth, and fifth appeared. Parties were answering the signal of the chief in precisely the same manner that he made it. The only difference was in the number, of which there were only the five. Those, however, were sufficient, as the parties making it were well aware.

This aboriginal system of telegraphy, which has been in use from time immemorial, is still a favorite means of communication among the Indians of the West. More than once the news of the signing of some important treaty, or the war movement of tribes, has been flashed by means of signal fires from mountain top to mountain top over a distance of hundreds of miles.

The information given by the answering signal fire was satisfactory to the chief Ogallah, who resumed the journey at a leisurely pace, making no effort to walk in the close Indian file that he and his warriors did when further away from home.

"If we reach the village before going into camp," concluded Jack, "we must keep moving until after dark. The sun is setting and the ridge is still a good ways off."

It soon became manifest that the red men had no purpose of tiring themselves by walking. They were at the base of the ridge when they came upon a small stream which dashed down the mountain side with a musical plash, forming currents, eddies, and cascades, while in the depths of some pebbly pool it was as silent and clear as liquid mountain air.

The afternoon was more sultry than the early portion of the day, and every member of the company quaffed his fill from the refreshing element. Jack's heart gave a great bound of hope when he saw that Ogallah meant to spend the night there. He was strongly convinced that he would gain an opportunity to steal away during the darkness, which promised to be denser than on the previous night. Although the day had been clear and beautiful, yet the clouds gathered after the sun went down, and there were signs of a storm. Low mutterings of distant thunder and the fitful flashes of lightning showed the interchange of electricity between the earth and sky, though it might not develop to any great extent for many hours to come.

No hunt was made for game, and after the abundant meal earlier in the day, Jack could not complain if compelled to fast until morning. A fire was kindled precisely as before, a sturdy oak forming the background, while the others lolled around it and smoked their long-stemmed pipes.

When Jack Carleton was invited to retire to his couch by the sullen warrior, he obeyed as though pleased with the prospect of a full night's rest. Ogallah stretched out with one of his men, while the ill-tempered member sat down with his back against the tree, as though desirous of imitating his leader in every respect.



CHAPTER XIII.

THE INDIAN VILLAGE.

"There's one thing certain," said Jack Carleton to himself, as he gathered the Indian blanket around his shoulders, like one lying down to pleasant dreams, "I can keep awake a good deal more easily than I did last night. I'm pretty tired, but I slept so much toward morning that it will be no trouble to go twenty-four hours without any more."

The temperature was milder than at that time, so that the lad found the thick blanket uncomfortably warm when wrapped closely around him. He flung out his feet and arms as a child often does with its bed coverings, and adjusted his body so as to keep his eye on the sentinel, without (as the captive believed) any suspicion of his intention.

The other couples sank into refreshing slumber within a few minutes after lying down, and it certainly was singular that the warrior who sat half revealed, with his back against the tree, should have continued as motionless as did the chief Ogallah the evening before. It was impossible that two scenes should resemble each other more closely than those named.

"I don't believe he can keep it up as long as the old fellow did. If he tries it, he will be dreaming, and when he and the rest awake, they will find I am miles off and going with might and main for home. My gracious! but I shall have a long distance to travel, and it will be hard work to keep out of their way."

Fixing his eyes on the form as it was shown by the flickering camp-fire, Jack prepared to watch with more patience than he showed in the former instance. The sound of the splashing brook and the soft stirring of the night wind were soothing to the tired boy. By-and-by his eyelids drooped, then closed, and his senses passed from him. Never was he sunk in sounder sleep.

Nothing occurred to disturb him, and he slept hour after hour, never opening his eyes until it was broad daylight and Ogallah and his warriors were astir.

Jack was chagrined beyond expression when he found what he had done, or, rather, what he had failed to do. The opportunity for which he had sighed so long had slipped irrevocably from his grasp. So convinced was he of this fact that he gave over all thought of escape while on the journey.

"The Indian village can't be far off, and I must now go ahead and take my chances. But this is getting tiresome."

The last remark referred to the absence of any preparations for breakfast. He had made no complaint the evening before, but it was a hardship to continue his fast. Inasmuch, however, as there was no help for it, he submitted without a murmur.

There was now no pretence of treading in each other's footsteps, but the party straggled up the ridge like a lot of weary pedestrians. No one seemed to pay any attention to the single captive, most likely because there was no call to do so. He might desire to make a break for liberty, but he could not go further than they were willing to permit.

The top of the ridge was marked by a bare spot, where some charred sticks showed a fire had been recently kindled. There could be no doubt that it was there the answering signal had been made to the call of Ogallah.

But looking down the western slope of the ridge, Jack Carleton's eyes rested on a scene more interesting than any that had met his gaze since leaving home. Less than a mile off, close to the shore of a winding stream and in the middle of a partially cleared space, stood the Indian village toward which his footsteps had been tending for nearly two days, and where he was likely to spend an indefinite captivity.

The stream was perhaps a hundred feet in width. It shone brightly in the morning sun, and the current was clearer than that of the river crossed the day before. It wound its way westward as far as the eye could follow it, flowing into a tributary of the Osage, thence to the Missouri, and so on to the Gulf of Mexico.

The Indian village numbered between twenty and thirty lodges, wigwams or dwellings as they may be called. Some of them were made of bison and deer skins, and were of irregular, conical shape; others were mere huts, covered with grass, leaves, limbs and dirt, while one or two were mainly composed of stones piled in the form of rude walls and roofed in the rude fashion described.

These primitive structures were scattered irregularly over a space of half an acre, which might be called a clearing, inasmuch as only a few stumps and broken trees were to be seen. But nothing in the way of corn or vegetables was growing, and the air of dilapidation, untidiness and squalor pervading the whole scene, was characteristic of the race,

and was that which robs it of the romance which in the minds of many attaches to the name of the American Indian.

Viewed from the ridge, Jack could see figures moving to and fro in the aimless manner natural to such indolent people. There were children running and playing among the stumps and dwellings--half naked little knots of humanity, who in a few years would become the repulsive squaws or terrible warriors of the tribe. Three of the youngsters were having a high time with a canoe lying against the shore. They were splashing the water over each other, plunging into the stream and scrambling out again without regard to the wear or tear of their clothing, and playing all sorts of tricks on each other, while a half dozen playmates were standing on the bank laughing so heartily that a spectator would have found it hard to understand why the American race is so often described as of a melancholy temperament.

Now and then some squaw could be seen trudging along under a load of sticks, while more than likely her lazy husband was asleep within the wigwam. A half dozen warriors strolled off toward the woods, rifles in hand, and most likely with the intention of going upon a hunt. Just before leaving the clearing, one of them caught sight of the group on the top of the ridge. Immediately they swung their arms and sent several ringing whoops across as a salutation to their friends.

Ogallah answered, and he and his party moved down the slope toward their homes. Having saluted each other in this fashion, the warriors of the village speedily vanished in the wood. They must have known that the returning company had a prisoner with them, but it will be seen they felt no particular interest in the matter.

But if such was the fact respecting the hunters, it was far different with those who were left behind. The moment the five warriors emerged from the wood, with the captive walking among them, the whole village was thrown in a turmoil of excitement. Squaws and children rushed forward, men came to the entrances of their wigwams, and some strolled out to make a closer investigation of the matter.

It was a trying moment to Jack Carleton, for it may be said that he had discounted it during the preceding day. He forced himself to smile, and when the chattering, grunting, shouting crowd gathered around him so closely that he was forced to stop walking, he shook, so far as he could, most of the scores of hands that were pushed against him.

All this was well enough, but it was not long before their attention took an unpleasant form. Some of the half grown bucks either feigned or really were angered because Jack could not give them heed, and struck him with the flat of their hands about the chest and shoulders. The boy turned when the first blow was delivered, and the Indian indulged in a taunting grimace. Jack clenched his fist and was on the point of striking him in the face when his good sense restrained him. He needed no one to tell him the consequences of such rashness.

The attentions soon became so boisterous that Ogallah interfered. He flung the crowd right and left, commanding them to disperse, and then beckoned the youth to follow him toward a lodge near the center of the village. Jack was glad enough to do so, and was speedily relieved of annoyance.

The sachem conducted the boy to his own dwelling where none of the curious dare follow him, though the crowd gathered on the outside and peeped within, like so many persons seeking a free survey of a circus.

Suspecting that this was likely to be his new home for an indefinite time, Jack Carleton was quick to acquaint himself with the interior. The structure, as I have said, stood near the middle of the village, and was the largest of the collection. It is rare that an aboriginal building bears such resemblance to those made by the white men of the border, for the American race has never shown any aptitude in architecture.

Ogallah's house was a log cabin, perhaps twenty feet long by half as many wide. The logs were roughly dovetailed at the corners, but none of the numerous crevices were stopped by mortar or clay, and daylight could be discerned through many a rent, which in cold weather admitted the keen cutting wind.

A single opening served as a door. Aboriginal ingenuity could not pass beyond this rude contrivance, so having opened the way for ingress and egress, the builder was content to hang a bison skin as a curtain. This could be readily pulled aside by any one, and the door locked by fastening the corners. Windows are a sinful extravagance to the American Indian, and there was not one in the village to which Jack Carleton was taken. When the open door, the burning fire, the hole which answered for a chimney, and the numerous crevices did not give enough light for the interior, the occupants went outside to obtain it.

Having put up the four walls of logs and roofed them with branches, covered with leaves, dirt and grass, Ogallah was content to lean back, fold his arms and smoke his pipe in placid triumph. The floor was the earth, worn hard and smooth by the feet of the family, and the fire was kindled on the ground at the further end, where the vapor found its way through the irregular opening made for the purpose. There was nothing in the nature of a chair or bench in the place. Bison and deer robes formed the couches, and the pegs driven in the logs held blankets, bows, and furs of animals

(most of the last, however, lying on the ground), leggings and other articles worn by the chieftain and his wife.

These two were the only occupants of the place previous to the coming of Jack Carleton. Ogallah was in middle life, and had been the father of but a single son, who died while yet a papoose. His wife was tall and muscular, evidently a woman with a strong will, and well worthy to be the consort of an Indian chief. She did not rush to her husband and embrace him the moment she caught sight of him. Indeed, she had not ventured outside the lodge, though she could not have failed to hear the unusual turmoil.

She would not have been human had she not shown some curiosity respecting her husband's companion. Jack doffed his hat and bowed to her with elaborate courtesy, after which he leaned his rifle against the side of the wigwam and folded his arms. The squaw surveyed him for a full minute, during which he stood as if awaiting her commands, and then, turning to her husband, the two held a short but vigorous conversation.

The wife must have been expecting him, for she was engaged in cooking some venison in the usual aboriginal fashion, and, to the great relief of the boy, the two were not kept waiting for their meal. Seating themselves cross-legged on the ground, the half-cooked meat was taken in their hands, and, with no other utensils than his hunting knife, each made his morning meal.

And so at last Jack Carleton was a captive among a tribe of Indians whose totem was unknown to him. Whether he was to remain with them until manhood, or whether he was to be put to death long before that period, were questions whose answers he did not dare try to conjecture.

His situation was a most extraordinary one, as every reader will admit. He knew of more than one instance where children who were captured when quite small, had become so attached to the rude ways and wild life of the red men, that they refused to go back to their own people when the offer presented itself, but it was too late in the day for such an experience to befall him.

And now, for a time, we must leave Jack Carleton to himself, while we give attention to other incidents which are destined to have a bearing on his fate.



CHAPTER XIV.

ON THE MOUNTAIN CREST.

The reader has not forgotten the encounter between Jacob Relstaub and Deerfoot, the Shawanoe, when the former plunged headlong through his own door in mortal fear that the tomahawk of the youthful warrior would be sent crashing through his brain; but, much as Deerfoot despised the German, he had no thought of visiting injury upon him. Shoving back the weapon to its place in his girdle, he therefore strode off in the forest, never pausing in his walk until the sun appeared above the horizon. He was then many miles from Martinsville, his face turned toward the southwest.

Throwing himself on his face, he quaffed his fill from a small, clear stream, whose current was only moderately cool, and then, assuming an easy posture on the ground, gave himself over to deep thought.

The question which he was seeking to answer was as to his duty. He had gone to the settlement to see his young friends, and learned that they had started some hours before on a hunting expedition. Such a proceeding was so natural, and, withal, so common, that any one expressing wonder thereat was likely to be laughed at for his words. The boys of the frontier learn to handle the rifle when much younger than either Otto Relstaub or Jack Carleton, and they were sometimes absent for days at a time without causing any misgiving on the part of their parents.

Why, then, should Deerfoot be perplexed over the matter, when even the mother of Jack expressed no fear concerning him?

Why, indeed? That was the query which puzzled the young warrior. It has already been said it was the custom of Deerfoot to follow a certain inexplicable intuition which often came to his help in his moments of doubt. In the present instance, something seemed to whisper that it was his duty to look after the boys, but the whisper was so low--as may be said--that he hesitated to obey it, led to do so by a doubt as to whether, after all, it was that instinctive prompting which hitherto had guided him so infallibly in many of his daring enterprises and undertakings.

It was characteristic of the warrior that, after spending a long time in such anxious thought, he should draw his Bible from the inner pocket of his hunting shirt, and begin looking through its pages for guidance. There were certain portions that were favorites of his, and, without searching, the volume opened to one after another of these places; but seek as much as he chose, he could find nothing that bore on the problem he wished to solve.

"The Great Spirit wills that Deerfoot shall settle the question for himself," was his conclusion, as he returned the treasure to its place.

It may as well be admitted that the principal cause of Deerfoot's hesitation cannot be given at this time. There was an urgent reason why he should make haste to the southwest, and he longed to break into his easy, loping trot, which he was able to maintain without fatigue from rise of morn till set of sun. But the same strange impulse which sent him into the settlement to inquire concerning his friends, still kept them in his thoughts.

But he was not the youth to torment himself in this manner, hour after hour, and he finally compressed his thin lips and muttered:

"Deerfoot will return in a few days, and then, if his brothers are still gone, he will hunt for them."

This was not a satisfactory conclusion, but he followed it with his usual promptness. He was in the very act of rising from the ground, when his quick ear caught a faint footfall. Like a flash he raised his head, and observed a noble buck approaching the water with the purpose of drinking from it. It was not to be expected that the animal had any fear of hunters in such a solitary place, and he came forward with a proud step, as though master of the wilderness.

The Shawanoe waited until he was within fifty feet, when the buck stopped short, and threw up his head as though he scented danger in the air. At that instant Deerfoot bounded to his feet as if thrown upward by a spring-board, and with a slight whoop, dashed straight at the animal, swinging his arms and jumping from side to side in the most grotesque fashion.

Few animals of the forest are more timid than the deer, which, like the bear, is found in almost every portion of the American continent. The buck with one swift whirl on his hoofs, faced the other way, and was off like an arrow, shooting between the trees, through the undergrowth, and bounding over obstructions as though they were not worth his notice. The ordinary hunter might have found time to fire one shot, when the game would have vanished like a bird on the wing, before he could reload; but the occasion was a good one for Deerfoot to display his wonderful fleetness, and he was in the mood to do so. He had made his gestures and uttered his cries for the very purpose of terrifying the

animal into doing his utmost, and he did it.

With his head thrown back, so that his antlers almost rested on his back, he plunged forward with amazing swiftness; but when he had gone two hundred yards, he saw the same light, willowy figure almost on his haunch. He even flung up his arms and shouted again, as if urging him to a higher rate of speed. And such was the truth; Deerfoot was running as fast as the game, and he was able to run still faster.

The buck bounded up a steep slope, and with one tremendous leap cleared a craggy rock in his path. He had barely done so, when the young Shawanoe was after him, going over with a lightness and grace that showed no special effort. The pursuer was on his haunches, and the animal, with glaring eyeballs and a horrified sniff, seemed to bound off with the speed of the wind. But of what avail? The warrior was not to be shaken off. With a speed which none of his race could equal, it was only play for him to outrun the deer. Years before (as I have told in another place), Deerfoot, for mere sport, pursued one of the fleetest of horses, and kept it up hour after hour, until he ran down the steed. He was doing the same to the buck. There was not a moment from the first when he could not have launched an arrow that would have brought the game to the ground; he was near enough to drive his tomahawk into the neck, but he did nothing of that nature. Inasmuch as he was running the race, he meant it should be a fair one, and neither should take any advantage over the other.

What terrifying imaginings took possession of the buck when he awoke to the fact that it was impossible to escape the dreadful being clinging to his hips, cannot be understood by any of us, but that which followed, incredible as it may seem, is an indisputable fact.

The singular race was kept up for slightly more than a mile, during every fraction of which the fugitive put forth his highest possible effort. Such a terrific strain cannot fail to tell upon the most highly trained animal, and so, despite all he could do, the buck found himself unable to keep up his prodigious tension. He was losing ground, and he could not fail to know that escape was out of the question: he was as much doomed as if surrounded and driven at bay by a dozen hunters and their hounds. He was still running at his highest bent, when he suddenly deviated to the right, and, with shocking violence, plunged squarely against the trunk of a beech, and, falling over on his side, gave a few convulsive struggles and died. Beyond question, the buck, when awake to the fact that there was no hope for him, deliberately committed suicide by breaking his neck.

The young Shawanoe paused, and looked down upon the quivering form with feelings of pity.

"Why did he do that? Deerfoot felt too much sorrow to harm him; he only sought to show him he could run the faster; but he will run no more, and Deerfoot will eat."

The spot was suitable, and, within less time than would be supposed, the warrior was seated on the ground, deliberately masticating a liberal slice of broiled venison. Doubtless it would have been improved could he have hung it in a cellar or tree for several days, but it wasn't convenient to do so, and Deerfoot therefore ate it as he could obtain it, and was satisfied therewith.

No water was within reach, the Indian following the healthful practice of the wild animals themselves, of not partaking of drink while eating food.

The meal finished, Deerfoot did not conduct himself like one who was still in doubt as to the course he ought to follow. He had solved the question earlier in the day, and, though the conclusion he reached was not fully satisfactory, he resolutely forced aside all further thought respecting it, and gave his attention simply to that which was before him. His dinner required only a short time, when he resumed his journey, if such it may be termed. He walked with his usual noiseless gait, in which could be detected not the slightest weakness or exhaustion resulting from his terrific run.

The young Shawanoe was advancing toward the mountainous portion of the present State of Missouri. The Ozark range, or its spurs, cover one-half of that large State, and their recesses afford hunting grounds and retreats such as are surpassed by no other portion of the continent.

Deerfoot turned his footsteps toward a high promontory some miles distant. It was the most elevated among many others, and formed a landmark visible over a very extensive area. The youthful warrior did not hasten his footsteps, for there was no call to do so, but he steadily approached the mountain, up which he tramped in his leisurely fashion, until he paused on the very highest point.

The journey was long, and when he came to a halt the sun was far down the western horizon. The summit of the mountain was covered with rocks and boulders, with here and there a few scrubby pines. Nothing could be more unattractive than the broken, stony soil, but the view which was spread out before him who climbed to the top was enough to kindle the eye of a stoic, and make the heart overflow with love and awe toward the great Being who made it

all.

But the eye can become accustomed to the grandest scenes, and, although Deerfoot leaned on the rock beside him, and allowed his keen vision to wander over the magnificent panorama, it did not cause an additional pulse-beat. When he had glanced at the mountains, the valleys between, the broken country, the forests, the diversified scenery in every direction, his gaze rested on another promontory similar to the one he had climbed.

It was several miles distant, in a directly southern course, and was nearly or quite two hundred feet higher than the one on which he stood. The latter, like those to which reference has been made, was of the nature of a ridge, while the one on which his eyes were fixed was a diminutive Teneriffe as to its form.

While the manner of Deerfoot indicated very plainly that he expected to see something out of the usual order of things, yet it looked very much as if he would have been pleased over his failure to do so. No painter could limn a more striking picture than that which was formed by Deerfoot, at the close of that beautiful spring day, when, as the sun was setting, he stood on the elevation and gazed across the intervening country.

His right elbow rested on the top of the rock, and his right leg supported the weight of his body. The lower half of the left leg was slung across the other, the toe of the moccasin touching the earth. The right hand dropped over the side of the rock, and lightly held the long bow which leaned against the same support. The posture was that of elegant ease, and the best calculated to bring out in clear relief the Apollo-like splendor of his figure. The luxuriant black hair streaming over the shoulders, the gaudy eagle feathers thrust in at the crown, the lustrous black eyes, the slightly Roman nose, the rows of colored beads around the neck, the dull yellow of the hunting shirt, the quiver of arrows behind the right shoulder, the red sash, holding knife and tomahawk, the gold bracelet on the left wrist, the fringed border of his hunting shirt about the knees, the brilliant fringes to the leggings, the pretty moccasins, and the shapeliness of form, limb and feature--all these made up the poetical Indian, which, sad to say, is almost as rare among his race as the black diamond is in nature.

But such was Deerfoot the Shawanoe.

CHAPTER XV.

THE RETURN AND DEPARTURE.

Easy and negligent as was the posture assumed by Deerfoot the Shawanoe, his eyes were never at rest. Resting for a moment on the promontory, they darted to the right and left down the valley, and even took in the shifting clouds in the sky above. But it was the peak which riveted his attention, and which was scrutinized with minute closeness until the gathering gloom shut it from sight.

It was not fairly dark when he kindled a fire on the very highest point, and then placing himself so far from it that the glare could not interfere with his sight, he looked out in the night. The darkness was such that nothing could be seen beyond his immediate surroundings, but he knew where to look for that which he expected and yet did not want to see. For fully an hour the Shawanoe held his motionless attitude, gazing as fixedly to the southward as ever an eagle stared at the sun. Then that for which he was waiting appeared.

From the very crest of the distant mountain peak, a flaming arrow suddenly began climbing toward the stars. Up, up it went, as does the rocket on a summer night, going slower and slower, like an old man plodding up hill, until, wearied out, it paused, and, for one instant remained stationary in the air, as if doubtful whether to push on or to fall back. The flaming point swung over until it pointed toward the ground, when it shot downward with ever increasing swiftness until it vanished. It must have struck within a yard of the spot from which it had been driven upward.

It was very rarely that Deerfoot showed excitement. He had drawn his knife and challenged the great Tecumseh to mortal conflict, and he had faced death a score of times in the most dreadful shapes, but very rarely, if ever, was his heart stirred as by the sight of the burning arrow on the distant mountain peak.

He straightened up with a quick inspiration, and his eyes followed the course of the fiery missile from the moment of its appearance until it vanished.

"They have called for Deerfoot!"

These were the remarkable words which fell from his lips, as he plunged down the mountain side like one who knew a question of life and death was before him. Although Deerfoot had formed a friendship for Jack Carleton and Otto Relstaub similar to that which he had felt for Ned Preston and Wildblossom Brown, yet it must be admitted that they were not the only ones to whom he was strongly attached, and in whose fate he felt as deep an interest as in that of any human being--all of which shall be made clear in another place and at another time.

It was just one week later that Deerfoot made his appearance near the settlement, and, pausing at a point which commanded a view of the collection of cabins, he spent several minutes in surveying them and the pioneers. He had traveled many miles, and been through some singularly stirring scenes since he last looked upon Martinsville, but the gracious Being that had protected him all his life, did not desert him in his extremity, and the frame was as supple and free from weakness or injury as when he faced the other way.

When the burning arrow summoned Deerfoot down the mountain side, he was glad indeed that he had decided the question whether or not he should hunt for the boys as he did, for, had he done otherwise, the opportunity that has been described could not have come to him; but, when his duty was ended, the old doubt came back, until he had been driven to return in order that he might settle the question forever.

Looking down on the little settlement of Martinsville, he studied the curious scene, for he was so close that he could identify every person whom he knew. The settlement, as the reader has been told, consisted of two rows of log cabins, facing each other. They numbered about a score, and the street was fifty feet wide. Besides that, each cabin had the same space between itself and its neighbor, so that, few as were the structures, they were scattered over considerable ground.

This ground, as well as much of it beyond, had been well cleared, and the earth cultivated. There were horses and oxen to draw plows and help bear the burdens. Besides the hunters' cabins, there were storehouses, barns, and structures made for convenience or necessity. From most of the soil that had been overturned were sprouting corn, potatoes, and other vegetables. The time was not distant when the wilderness should blossom as the rose.

A block-house near the middle of the settlement had been half completed, when, so far as could be seen, the work was abandoned. The rule with the frontier settlements was to put up a building in which all could take refuge, should danger threaten; but often the fort was so hastily and poorly made that it became a matter of weakness rather than of strength. Colonel Martin and his brother pioneers reached the conclusion that they were showing altogether too much

haste in rearing the structure, and they deferred its completion to a more convenient season. Their duty to their families, as they saw it, justified them in taking such a step, especially in view of the fact that the Indians of the surrounding country were not likely ever to cause them trouble.

The cleared land, as it was called, was still disfigured by numerous unsightly stumps, around which the rude plow was pulled; but here and there men were working to remove them, and ultimately all would be uprooted and destroyed.

On the edge of the clearing, three woodsmen were swinging their axes and burying their keen edges in the hearts of the monarchs of the wood. Deerfoot looked at them several minutes, noticing as he had done before, with childish wonder, how long it took the sound caused by the blows to reach him. When one of the choppers stopped to breathe and leaned on his axe, the sound of two blows came to the listener, and when he resumed work, the youth saw him in the act of striking the third time before the sound was heard.

The scene was one of activity and industry. Even the children seemed to have work instead of play to occupy them. The women, as a matter of course, were among the busiest, and rarely did one of them appear at the door of her cabin. When she did so, it was only for a very brief while.

Deerfoot was looking fixedly at one of the houses near the middle of the settlement, when a squatty figure, with a conical hat, a heavy cane, and smoking a pipe, came out and walked slowly toward a cabin only a short distance off. The Indian smiled in his momentary, shadowy fashion when he recognized Jacob Relstaub, whom he had frightened almost out of his wits a week before. No doubt the German had told the incident many times afterward, and would always insist he escaped by a veritable hair's breadth.

But Deerfoot was troubled in mind, for among all whom he saw he recognized neither Jack Carleton nor Otto Relstaub. It was not likely that, if they had returned from their hunt, both would continue invisible very long; but when minute after minute passed without showing either, his heart sank.

The Shawanoe knew a scene would be probable if Jacob Relstaub caught sight of him, so he avoided the wrathful German. The appearance of the handsome warrior moving among the cabins, naturally awakened some interest. Men and children looked at him as he went by, and several of the latter followed him. Deerfoot saluted all whose eyes met his, calling out: "Good day; how is my brother?" in as excellent English as any of them could have employed.

The Indian, it may be supposed, was known to nearly every one by reputation. Most of the settlers had heard of his exploits when they and he lived in Kentucky; they knew he guided Otto Relstaub and Jack Carleton on their perilous journey from the Dark and Bloody Ground into Louisiana; they were aware, too, that he could read and write, and was one of the most sagacious and valuable friends the settlers ever had or could have. The story which Jacob Relstaub told was therefore received with much doubt, and no one who listened felt any distrust of the loyalty of the young Shawanoe. More than one declared on general principles that Relstaub would have been served right had the warrior handled him roughly, as it was well known he could have done had he been so minded.

Deerfoot walked quietly along the primitive street until opposite the door of Widow Carleton's cabin. Without hesitation, he pulled the latch string and stepped within. There was no start or change of expression when he glanced about the apartment, but that single glance told him the story.

Mrs. Carleton was standing at the table on the other side of the room, occupied with the dishes that had served at the morning meal. Her back was toward the visitor, but she turned like a flash when she heard the door open. The scared, expectant, disappointed, and apprehensive expression that flitted over her countenance, like the passing of a cloud across a summer landscape, made known the truth to the sagacious Shawanoe.

"Deerfoot's brother has not come back from his long hunt," he said, in his usual voice, as he bowed and advanced to the middle of the apartment.

"O Deerfoot!" moaned the mother, as, with tremulous lip, she sank into the nearest chair and looked pleadingly toward him, holding her apron ready to raise to her eyes; "tell me where is my Jack!"

"My friend told Deerfoot that his brother had gone to hunt the horse that has wandered off."

"But that was more than a week ago; he ought to have come back a good while since. O Deerfoot----"

"But the horse has wandered many miles, and it will take my brother a long time to find him," interrupted the visitor, who dreaded the scene which he saw was sure to come.

"Do you think they are still hunting for him?" she asked with a sudden, yearning eagerness that went to the heart of the Indian. He could not speak an untruth, nor could he admit the great fear that almost stopped the beating of his heart.

"Deerfoot cannot answer his friend; but he hopes soon to take the hand of his brother."

"Oh, that will never be--it can never be. My poor Jack!"

Her grief could be restrained no longer. The apron was abruptly raised to the eyes, and as the white hands were pressed against the face her whole frame shook with emotion. Deerfoot looked steadily at the pitiful scene, but he knew not what to say or do. It was a vivid illustration of this strange nature of ours that the youth, who absolutely knew not what fear was, and who had seen the glittering tomahawk crash its way into the brain without a throb of pity, now found his utmost self-command hardly able to save him from breaking down as utterly as did the parent before him. He hastily swallowed the lump that kept rising in his throat, blinked his eyes very rapidly, coughed, fidgeted on the bench whereon he sat, and, finally, looked away and upward at the rude rafters, so as to avoid the sight of the sobbing woman.

"Deerfoot is a pappoose," he muttered angrily, "that he weeps when he knows not what for; he is a dog that whines before his master strikes him."

A brief but resolute struggle gave him the mastery over his emotions, though for a few seconds he dared not look towards his hostess. When he timidly ventured to do so, she was rubbing her eyes with the corner of her apron. The tempest of grief had passed, and she was regaining mastery of herself, thereby rendering great help to the valiant warrior.

"I know that it may be possible that Jack and Otto have gone on a longer hunt than before, but they did not expect to be away more than three or four days, and Jack would not willingly bring sorrow to his mother."

"My brother may have gone so far that he has lost his way, and is slow in finding it again."

"Do you think so, Deerfoot?"

The Indian fidgeted, but he could not avoid an answer.

"Deerfoot does not know; he cannot think right; he is in sore trouble for his brothers."

"No one can help them like you. O Deerfoot, won't you find my Jack and bring him home to me?"

The youthful warrior rose to his feet, and looking her in the face, spoke the words, "*I will!*" Then he turned and strode out of the door.



CHAPTER XVI.

A PERPLEXING QUESTION.

Deerfoot, the Shawanoe, had entered upon the most difficult task of his life. He had undertaken to follow up and befriend the youths who had disappeared more than a week previous, and who had left not the slightest clue as to where they had gone, nor what direction they had taken.

In these days, when a friend sets out to trace a person who is seeking to hide himself, he is always able to pick up some knowledge that will give valuable help in his search. The habits of the individual, some intentions, or rather wishes, to which he may have given utterance a long time before, his little peculiarities of manner, which are sure to betray themselves, no matter how complete the disguise--these, and other points, are certain to afford the help the hunter through the cities and towns and country requires.

But my reader will observe the vast difference between a case such as occurs every day, and that which confronted the young Indian. Two boys had gone into the woods more than a week before, on a long hunt, and were now missing; it was his task to find them. Could it be done?

Had Deerfoot taken up the pursuit shortly after the departure of the boys, he could have sped over their trail like a bloodhound. There could have been no escaping him; but since they left home, rain had fallen, and even that marvel of canine sagacity could not have trailed them through the wilderness. It was idle, therefore, for Deerfoot to seek for that which did not exist; no trail was to be found; at least, none in that neighborhood. In all his calculations, he did not build the slightest hope on that foundation. Had he done so, he would have sought to take up the shadowy footprints from where the boys left the settlement; but the utmost he did was to learn the general direction taken by them, when they entered upon one of the wildest expeditions that can be imagined.

Hundreds and thousands of square miles of mountain and forest were spread out before him. The vast territory of Louisiana, as it was then called, stretched away to the Gulf of Mexico, and spread toward the setting sun until stopped by the walls of the Rocky Mountains. The youth could spend his life in wandering over that prodigious area, without coming upon or gaining the slightest traces of a thousand people whom he might wish to find. The conclusion was inevitable that he must pursue some intelligent course, or he never could succeed.

It should be said that Deerfoot had not the slightest doubt of a grave misfortune having befallen his friends. Jack Carleton never would willingly remain from home for so long a period; he was too affectionate a son to grieve his mother by such a course. He and Otto Relstaub, therefore, were either prisoners in the hands of Indians, or they had been put to death.

Just the faintest possible fear troubled the young Shawanoe. He recalled the incidents which had marked the journey of himself and the boys from Kentucky, only a short time before. The Shawanoes, the fiercest and most cunning of all the Indian tribes, had not only pursued them to the river's edge, but had followed them across the Mississippi, coming within a hair's breadth of destroying the two boys who were making such haste toward Martinsville. Had any of those Shawanoes pushed the pursuit still further? Had they lingered near the settlement, awaiting just such an opportunity as was given by Jack and Otto when they went off on their hunt?

This was the phase of the question which for a long time tortured Deerfoot. He felt that it was improbable that danger existed in that shape. The Shawanoes had no special cause for enmity against the boys. If they should venture into Louisiana to revenge themselves upon any one, it would be upon Deerfoot. Nothing was more certain than that he had not been molested by any of his old enemies, for a good many days previously, nor had they been anywhere near him during that period.

But the cunning Indian, like his shrewd white brother, may do the very thing least expected. Might they not capture and make off with the boys, for the very purpose of leading Deerfoot on a long pursuit, in which the advantage would be wholly against him?

But the field of conjecture thus opened was limitless. Deerfoot might have spent hours in theorizing and speculating, and still have been as far from the truth as at the beginning; he might have formed schemes, perfect in every detail, only to find, on investigation, that they were wrong in every particular. The elaborate structures which the detective rears are often builded on sand, and tumble to fragments on the slightest touch.

Deerfoot was convinced that the boys either were captives in the hands of Indians, or they were dead. Had they been slain by red men--and it was not conceivable that both could have met death in any other way--it was useless to hunt for their remains, since only fortunate chance could end a search that might last a century.

But if the boys had been carried off, there was hope of gaining trace of them, though that might involve endless wanderings to and fro, through the mountains and wilderness. Such a hunt, prosecuted on a systematic plan for a certain time, without any results, would satisfy Deerfoot that the boys, like many older ones, had met their death in the lonely depths of the wilderness, where no human eye would ever look upon them again.

My reader, who has been let into the secret of the boys' disappearance, will perceive that Deerfoot was hovering around the truth, though he was still barred by difficulties almost insurmountable.

Suppose he should make up his mind that Jack and Otto were at that moment with the red men, in what manner--except by an almost interminable search--could he learn what tribe held them prisoners?

In the autumn of 1778, Frances Slocum, a little girl five years old, was stolen from her home in Wyoming Valley, and carried away by Delaware Indians. For a period of fifty-nine years the search for her was prosecuted with more or less earnestness. Thousands of dollars were spent, scores of persons were engaged at the same time in the hunt, journeys were made among the Western tribes, friendly Indians themselves were enlisted in the work, and yet, although the searchers were often within a few miles of her, they never picked up the first clue. After the lapse of more than half a century, when all hope had been abandoned by the surviving friends, the whereabouts of the woman became known, through an occurrence that was as purely an accident as was anything that ever took place in this world.

Admitting the unapproachable woodcraft and skill of the young Shawanoe, yet he could not do the impossible. Could he be spared a hundred years, possibly he might make the grand round of his people on the American continent, but in the meantime, what of his friends for whom he would be making this extended tour?

If so it should be that the boys were in the power of the Shawanoes, or Miamis, or Delawares, they were far to the east of the Mississippi; if with the Wyandots, they were also east of the Father of Waters, and probably in the vicinity of Lake Erie; if with the Ojibwas, to the northward along Lake Huron; if with the Ottawas, they were the same distance north, but on the shores of Lake Michigan; if with the Pottawatomies, further south on the same lake; if in the villages of the Kickapoos, or Winnebagoes, or Menomonies, it was on the southern and western shores of the same body of water; if with the Ottigamies, or Sacs, or Foxes, or in the land of the Assinoboine, the hunt must be of the most prolonged character.

Still further, the vast bulk of the western continent stretched westward toward the Pacific. When Deerfoot faced the setting sun, he knew he was looking over the rim of one of the grandest countries of the globe. He had fair ideas of the vast prairies, enormous streams, prodigious mountains and almost illimitable area, which awaited the development of the coming centuries.

One other suggestive fact was known to Deerfoot: representatives of the Indian tribes among the foothills of the Rocky Mountains had exchanged shots with the white explorers on the banks of the Mississippi. It is an error to suppose that the American savage confines his wanderings to a limited space. The majority do so, but, as I have said, the race produces in its way its quota of venturesome explorers, who now and then are encountered many hundreds of miles from home.

Within the preceding few weeks, Deerfoot had met two warriors among the Ozark mountains, who, he saw at a glance, came from a long distance and probably had never before been in that section. Neither they nor Deerfoot could speak a word the other could understand, but the sign language is universal among the North American Indians, and they were soon conversing like a party of trained mutes.

To the amazement of the young Shawanoe, he learned they were on their way to the Mississippi. They either would not or could not make clear their errand, but Deerfoot suspected it was that of gaining a glimpse of the civilization which as yet had not appeared in the West. Though the strangers were somewhat shy and suspicious, they offered no harm to the young Shawanoe, who, of course, showed only friendship toward them. From them he gained not a little rude information of the marvelous region which has since become familiar to the world.

The fear, therefore, of Deerfoot was that some wandering band from the extreme West had captured the boys, and were at that very hour pushing toward the Pacific with them. It would require a long, long time to learn the truth, which, in all probability, would prove a bitter disappointment.

From what has been said in this fragmentary manner, the reader may gain an idea of the almost infinite difficulties by which Deerfoot was confronted. Like a trained detective, however, he saw that much valuable time had been lost and a start must be made without further delay; and, furthermore, that the first step must be based on something tangible, or it would come to naught. The element of chance plays a leading part in such problems, and it may be questioned whether luck is not often a more powerful helper than skill.

After leaving the settlement, Deerfoot naturally climbed to the nearest elevation which gave a view of the surrounding country, and it was while he was looking over the scene that his thoughts took the turn indicated by the preceding part of this chapter.

It may be said that that for which he was searching was a starting point. "Where shall I begin?" was the question which remained unanswered until the sun was half way to meridian.

The principal view of the young warrior was to the south and west, for the conviction was strong that thither he must look for the shadowy clue which he prayed might lead him to success. Several miles southward a camp-fire was burning, as was shown by the bluish vapor that seemed to stand still against the clear sky; the same distance to the southeast was a slighter evidence of another camp-fire, while to the southwest was still another, the vapor so thin and faint that the experienced eye of the Shawanoe told him the party spending the previous night there had gone early in the morning, leaving the fire to burn itself slowly out.

Evidently the thing for Deerfoot to do was to visit one or all of the camps in quest of the clue which the chances were a thousand to one he would never find. Which should he first seek?

The bravest of men has a tinge of superstition in his nature, and with all of Deerfoot's daring and profoundly devout nature, he was as superstitious in some respects as a child. He could not decide by means of his Bible the precise course to follow, for one of his principles was that he alone must determine his precise course of action, the Great Spirit holding him accountable only for the manner in which he did, or sought to do, that which he clearly saw was his duty.

The hunting knife was whipped from his girdle, and, holding the point between his thumb and finger, he flung it a rod above his head. It turned over and over in going up and descending, and, when it struck the ground, landed on the hilt. Deerfoot looked down on the implement and saw that the point was turned toward the camp-fire which was furthest west.



CHAPTER XVII.

TWO ACQUAINTANCES AND FRIENDS.

The question was settled. Nothing short of positive knowledge could have led Deerfoot to change his mind as to the right course to pursue.

Stooping over, he picked up his hunting knife, thrust it in his girdle, and strode down the slope in the direction of the camp, which he knew was deserted early that morning. It was a long way to travel, but it was nothing to the lissome warrior, who would have broken into a run could he have felt any assurance of gaining any benefit by doing so.

Climbing around the boulders and rocks, leaping over chasms, pushing through matted undergrowth, and turning aside only when forced to do so, Deerfoot pressed to the southwest until three-fourths of the distance was passed. Most of that time the shadowy vapor had been beyond sight, for he did not take the trouble to look for it when the intervening vegetation interfered. He could not make any mistake as to the right course, and it was therefore unnecessary for him to take his bearings; but now, when he knew he could not be far from his destination, he came to the surface, as it may be said of a diver in an emerald sea, and indulged in a deliberate survey of his surroundings.

The first glance at the camp caused his eyes to sparkle, for it conveyed an interesting fact: instead of the smoke being so thin that it was scarcely visible, it was much denser and more plenteous. That simply showed that the camp was no longer a deserted one. Whoever had gone away in the morning had returned, and was at that moment on the ground. More than likely there were several of them, and, as the day was half gone, they were preparing their noontide meal.

At any rate the Shawanoe was sure to find some one there, and he hastened his footsteps, though he could feel but slight hope that whatever he saw or learned would have a bearing on the business in which his whole soul was engaged.

Deerfoot approached the camp with his usual caution, his supposition being that a company of Indians were resting there for a brief time. If they were Osages, or, indeed, any other tribe, except Hurons or Wyandots, he would not hesitate to go forward and greet them, for there ought to be no danger incurred in doing so. The same would be the case with the whites, though some care might be necessary to convince them no treachery was intended.

The first glimpse showed the Indian that only a single white man was present. He was preparing dinner, the preliminary step being a stirring of the smoldering camp-fire, which gave forth the tell-tale smoke. He was a striking individual, though a stranger to Deerfoot.

The fire itself was small, and was burning in an open space where the whole neighborhood served as a chimney. Several feet off was a half-decayed log, on which the man was sitting, his elbows on his knees, and a long stick held loosely in his hands. This he used as a poker, and it served his purpose well. A close approach to the fire was apt to be unpleasant on account of the heat, so he sat a short distance off, and managed things in a comfortable fashion. Now and then he poked the embers until the end of the vegetable poker broke into a blaze, when he withdrew it and whipped it on the ground till the flame was put out. His rifle leaned against an adjoining tree within easy distance, and the short clay pipe in his mouth, from which he sent out an occasional puff, added to his apparently peaceful frame of mind.

The striking point about the hunter was his magnificent physical manhood. He was more than six feet high, with immense shoulders and chest, an enormous beard of a coal black color, which grew almost to his keen black eyes, and descended over his chest in a silken, wavy mass. He was attired in the ordinary hunting costume of the border, and looked as if he might be one of those men who had spent their lives in the Louisiana wilderness, hunting and trapping animals for their peltries, which were sold at some of the advanced posts of civilization.

Deerfoot suspected the man was the owner of a horse which must be in the vicinity, for it was hardly likely that he would wander aimlessly around in the mountains and woods for the mere sake of doing so, but no animal could be seen, and without speculating long over the matter, the young Shawanoe walked forward to the camp.

While doing so, the stranger was giving his full attention to the fire and his culinary duties. The wood had burned until there were enough coals, when he arose and raked them apart, so as to afford a surface of glowing embers. Then he turned back and took up a huge slice of meat, which had been skewered on the prongs of a long stick. Balancing this very cleverly, he held the meat down until it was almost against the crimson coals. He could have done the same with the blaze, but he preferred this method.

Almost instantly the meat began to crisp and scorch and shrink, and to give off an odor which would have tortured a hungry man. The cook quickly exposed the other side to the heat, reversing several times, when the venison was

cooked in as appetizing a form as could be wished.

The man gave such close attention to his task that he never turned his head to observe the figure of an Indian warrior standing only a rod or two away. Having finished his work, he carefully spread the meat on some green oak leaves, arranged on the log. Its size was such that it suggested a door mat burned somewhat out of shape.

"There," said the hunter, with a contented expression, seating himself as if to guard the prize against disturbance; "the boys can't growl over that--hello, where'd *you* come from?"

He had caught sight of Deerfoot, advancing noiselessly toward him, and the man was startled (though he strove to conceal it) by the fact that the other was nearer to his rifle than was the owner.

The Indian saluted him in his courteous fashion, and with a view of removing his fears, walked on until the relative position of him and the man were changed, and the latter was nearer his gun.

Then he paused, retaining his standing position, and with a slight smile, said:

"Deerfoot is glad that his brother is not ill."

Undoubtedly that brother was relieved to find in case of dispute he could reach his gun before the dusky youth, but he could hardly believe the warrior voluntarily gave up the enormous advantage thus held for a moment or two. Throwing his shoulders back, he looked straight in the eyes of Deerfoot, and then rising to his feet, extended his hand. As if conscious of his superior height, he towered aloft and looked down on the graceful youth who met his gaze with a confiding expression that would have won the heart of any one.

The abundant beard hid the mouth of the white man, but the movement of the cheeks, the gathering wrinkles under the eyes, and the gleam of his white teeth through the black meshes, showed he was smiling. Instead of saluting in the usual fashion, he brought his hand down with a flourish, and grasping the palm of the youth pressed it with a vigor which made him wince.

"So you're Deerfoot, are you? I mean the young Shawanoe that used to hunt through Kentucky and Missouri."

The Indian nodded his head to signify that he was the individual whom the other had in mind.

"I'm Burt Hawkins--you remember me?" asked he, still pumping the arm of Deerfoot, who was compelled to admit he had never before heard the name, nor could he remember ever having looked upon his face.

"Well, you have done so, whether you remember it or not: three years ago, which, I reckon, was about the time you began tramping through the woods for the benefit of the white man, I was on a scout with Kenton and some of the boys, over in Kentucky. We got caught in a blinding snow storm, and all came near going under with a rush. Things got so bad that Kenton said we would have to give up, for, tough as he was, he was weakening. The snow was driving so hard you couldn't see six feet in front of you. Cold! Well, the wind was of that kind that it went right through your bones as though it was a knife. Night was coming on, and we were in the middle of the woods, twenty miles from everywhere. The only thing we could do was to let out a yell once in a while, and fire off our guns. I don't think there was one among the five that had the first grain of hope. Kenton was leading and I was at his heels; all I could see was his tall figure, covered from head to foot with snow, as he plodded along with the grit he always showed.

"The first thing I knowed some one j'ined us--a young, likely looking Injin, which his name was Deerfoot. He had heard our guns and dropped down from somewhere. You're grinning, old chap, so I guess there ain't much use of telling the rest, 'cause you know it. I'll never forget how you led us into that cave, where you had fixed up the logs and bark so that no snow flakes couldn't get in. There was a fire burning, and some buffalo meat cooking, and we couldn't have been better fixed if we had been lodged with Colonel Preston at Live Oaks or in St. Louis."

"Deerfoot has not forgotten," said the smiling Indian, seating himself beside Hawkins on the log; "but my brother did not look then as he looks now."

Again the head of the trapper was thrown back, his white teeth shone through his immense whiskers, the wrinkles gathered at the corner of his eyes, and his musical laugh rang out from the capillary depths. Burt was proud of his beard, as he well might be. Few people in those days wore such an ornament, and those who did so were sure to attract attention.

"You talk like a level-headed gentleman, Deerfoot, for all this (here he stroked the glossy whiskers) has grown since then. I shouldn't wonder if it *did* change my looks somewhat. You're a blamed smart redskin, Deerfoot," added Burt, who seemed to be in high spirits; "but I don't believe you can beat it."

It was the turn of Deerfoot to laugh, and he did so with much heartiness, though without any noise.

"No; the hair of Deerfoot grows on his head; he would be sad if it covered his face."

"So would I, for it would make a confounded queer looking creatur' of you. I would like to see an Injin got up in that style; just think of Tecumseh with a big mustache and whiskers! Beavers!"

The conceit was equally enjoyed by Deerfoot, who fairly shook with mirth. He recalled the time when he confronted the mighty chieftain, with drawn knife and compressed lips, and the picture of that terrible being, with his face covered by whiskers, was a drop from the sublime to the ridiculous, which would have brought a laugh to any one.

Burt Hawkins evidently held his visitor in esteem, for, reaching out his horny hand, he gently passed his fingers over the cheek nearest him, and then drew it across the chin.

"No; there's no beard there. It's as smooth as the cheeks of my little five-year old Peggy at home. It always struck me as qu'ar that Injins don't have beards, but I s'pose it's because the old fellows, several thousand years ago, began plucking out the hairs that came on the face, and their children have kept it up so long that it has discouraged the industry in them regions. See?"

To assist Deerfoot to catch the force of his illustration, Burt gave him several digs in the ribs. This familiarity would have been annoying under most circumstances, but it was manifest from the manner of the warrior that he rather enjoyed the effusiveness of the magnificent fellow.

"Why is my brother in the woods alone?" he asked, when matters calmed down.

"I can't say I'm exactly alone, Deerfoot, for Kit Kellogg and Tom Crumpet ain't fur off, and that meat thar is gettin' cold waiting for them to come and gobble it; if they ain't here in a few minutes you and me will insert our teeth. We've been trappin' all winter down to the south'rd and have got a good pile of peltries; we've got 'em gathered, and loaded, too, and are on our way to St. Louis with 'em; warm weather is comin', and the furs are beginnin' to get poor, so we shall hang our harps on the willers till cold weather begins agin."

"My brothers are coming," said Deerfoot, quietly, referring to two other hunters who at that moment put in an appearance.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE TRAPPERS.

The new arrivals resembled Burt Hawkins in their dress and accoutrements. They wore coon-skin caps, hunting dress, leggings, coarse shoes, etc., and each carried a long rifle and hunting knife as his weapons. They were rugged, powerful fellows, whose long experience in the wilderness had given them a knowledge of its ways and mysteries, beyond that of ordinary men. They were hardy and active, with the faculties of hearing, seeing and smelling cultivated to a point almost incredible. They contrasted with Hawkins in one respect; both wore their faces smooth. Although far removed from civilization, they kept themselves provided with the means of shaving their cheeks. Perhaps through indifference, their beards were sometimes allowed to grow for weeks, but they made sure they were in presentable shape when they rode into the trading post of St. Louis, with their peltries, and, receiving pay therefor, joined their families in that frontier town.

The three men had been hunters and trappers for many years. Sometimes they pursued their work alone, and sometimes in the company of others. They trapped principally for beavers and otters, though they generally bagged a few foxes and other fur-bearing animals. A hundred years ago, there were numerous beaver runs in the central portions of our country, and for a long time many men were employed in gathering their valuable furs, hundred and thousands of which were brought from the mountain streams and solitudes of the West to St. Louis, whence they were sent eastward and distributed.

The trapper's pursuit has always been a severe one, for, aside from the fierce storms, sudden changes, and violent weather, the men as a rule were exposed to the rifles of lurking Indians, who resented the intrusion of any one into their territory. And yet there was an attraction about the solitary life, far beyond the confines of civilization, which took men from their families and buried them in the wilderness, frequently for years at a time. It is not difficult to understand the fascination which kept Daniel Boone wandering for months through the woods and cane-brakes of Kentucky, without a single companion and with the Indians almost continually at his heels.

When Burt Hawkins and his two friends left St. Louis, late in summer or early in the fall, each rode a mule or horse, besides having two pack animals to carry their supplies and peltries. They followed some faintly marked trail, made perhaps by the hoofs of their own animals, and did not reach their destination for several weeks. When they halted, it was among the tributaries of the Missouri, which have their rise in the Ozark range in the present State of Missouri.

The traps and implements which from time to time were taken westward, were not, as a matter of course, brought back, for that would have encumbered their animals to no purpose. When warm weather approached and the fur bearers began shedding their hair, the traps were gathered and stowed away until needed again in the autumn. Then the skins that had been taken from time to time through the winter, were brought forth and strapped on the backs of the animals, and the journey homeward was begun. There was no trouble for the trappers to "float their sticks," as the expression went; for the Northwest Fur Company and other wealthy corporations had their agents in St. Louis and at other points, where they were glad to buy at liberal prices all the peltries within reach.

No trapper was likely to accumulate wealth by the method named, but it cost him little to live, and frequently during the summer he found some other employment that brought return for his labor.

Hawkins, Kellogg and Crummet were on their way home, having started a little later than their custom, and they had reached the point referred to on the preceding night, when they halted and went into camp. In the morning, when they began to reload their animals, it was found that a rifle belonging to Kit Kellogg was missing. It had been strapped on the package which one of the mules carried, but had worked loose and fallen unnoticed to the ground. It was too valuable to be abandoned, and Kit and Crummet started back to hunt for it. They went on foot, leaving the animals cropping some succulent grass a short distance away.

The quadrupeds underwent a hard time during the winter, when grass was scanty, so that such halts were appreciated by them. The spot where they were grazing was far enough removed to screen them from the sight of Deerfoot, when he was reconnoitering the camp. While two of the company were hunting for the weapon, the third remained behind, smoking his pipe, and, when the time came, prepared dinner against the return of the other ones. The meat was good, but not so delicate as the beaver tails on which they frequently feasted during the cold season.

It has been said more than once that the Indians along the western bank of the Mississippi were less aggressive than those who so often crimsoned the soil of Kentucky and Ohio with the blood of the pioneers. Such was the truth, but those who were found on the very outermost fringe of civilization, from far up toward the headwaters of the Yellowstone down to the Gulf, were anything but harmless creatures. As the more warlike tribes in the East were

pushed over into that region, they carried their vindictive natures with them, and the reader knows too well the history of the great West to require anything further to be said in that direction.

When Hawkins went to the beaver-runs with his friends in the autumn preceding his meeting with Deerfoot, he had as his companions, besides the two named, a third--Albert Rushton, who, like the others, was a veteran trapper. One snowy day in mid-winter, when the weather was unusually severe, he started on his round of his division of the traps and never came back. His prolonged absence led to a search, and his dead body was found beside one of the demolished traps. The bullet hole through his forehead and the missing scalp that had been torn from his crown, told plainly the manner of his death.

This was a shocking occurrence, but the fate of Rushton was that to which every one of his friends was liable, and they did not sit down and repine over what could not be helped. The saddest thought connected with the matter was that one of the three must break the news to the invalid wife, who lived with her two children in one of the frontier settlements through which they passed on the way to St. Louis.

When Deerfoot told Hawkins the others were returning, the trapper turned his head and saw that Kellogg had found the missing rifle. The couple looked sharply at the warrior as they advanced, and evidently were surprised to see him in camp. Kellogg and Crumpet were men in middle life, strong limbed, sinewy and vigilant.

Deerfoot rose from the log whereon he was sitting, and extended his hand to each in turn, as Hawkins pronounced his name. Kit Kellogg scrutinized him and shook his hand with considerable warmth. Crumpet did the same, though with less cordiality in his manner. It was plain (and plainer to none than Deerfoot) that he was one of that numerous class of frontiersmen who regard the American Indian as an unmitigated nuisance, which, so far as possible, every white man should do his utmost to abate. He had been engaged in more than one desperate encounter with them and his hatred was of the most ferocious nature. It was not to be expected, however, that his detestation would show itself without regard to time and place. Kellogg and Hawkins watched him with some curiosity, as he extended his horny hand and shook that of the handsome Indian youth.

"You've heard of Deerfoot," added Burt, as he proceeded to divide the enormous piece of meat into quarters; "he is the youngster that helped Colonel Preston and his friends from the Wyandots at the time the block-house was burned."

"How should we hear of it," asked Crumpet with a growl, "when we was on this side of the Mississippi?"

"Wasn't I over in Kentucky about three years ago? I rather think I was, and would have been froze to death with Simon Kenton and a few of the other boys if it hadn't been for this copper-colored rascal--ain't that so, Deerfoot?"

And that the young warrior might not err as to the one who was expected to impart light on the subject, Burt gave him a resounding whack on the shoulder that almost knocked him off the log. The youth was in the act of conveying some of the meat to his mouth when saluted in that fashion, and it came like the shock of an earthquake.

"Why can't you talk with a fellow," asked Kellogg, "without breaking his neck?"

"Whose neck is broke?"

"Why that fellow's is pretty well jarred."

"Well, as long as *he* don't object I don't see what it is to *you*," was the good-natured response of Hawkins, who resumed chewing the juicy meat.

"Some of these days, somebody will give you a whack in return when you ain't expecting it, and it will be a whack too that will cure you of that sort of business. I believe, Deerfoot, that you are a Shawanoe, ain't you?"

"Deerfoot is a Shawanoe," was the answer, his jaws at work on the food just furnished him.

"I've heard tell of you; you're the chap that always uses a bow and arrow instead of a gun?"

The youth answered the query by a nod of the head. As he did so, Tom Crumpet, who sat further away, vigorously working his jaws, uttered a contemptuous grunt. Kit turned his head and looked inquiringly at him.

"Maybe you think he can't use the bow and arrow. I s'pose, Deerfoot, that's the bow you fired the arrow through the window of the block-house that was nigh a hundred yards off, with a letter tied around it, and fired it agin out on the flatboat with another piece of paper twisted around it--isn't that so?"

Despite his loose-jointed sentences, Deerfoot caught his meaning well enough to nod his head in the affirmative.

"Did you see it done?" asked Crumpet, with a grin at Hawkins.

"How could I see it when I wasn't there?"

"I guess no one else was there," growled Tom; "I've noticed whenever that sort of business is going on it's always a good ways off, and the people as sees it are the kind that don't amount to much in the way of telling the truth."

These were irritating words, made more so by the contemptuous manner in which they were spoken. Deerfoot clearly understood their meaning, but he showed no offence because of them. He was not vain of his wonderful skill in woodcraft, and, though he had a fiery temper, which sometimes flashed to the surface, he could not be disturbed by any slurs upon his attainments.

Kit Kellogg was impatient with his companion, but he knew him so well that he did not discuss the matter. Had not the beard of Burt Hawkins hidden his countenance, the others would have perceived the flush which overspread it. He was angered, and said, hotly:

"It might do for some folks to say that other folks didn't tell the truth, but I don't think *you're* the one to say it."

Crumpet champed his meat in silence, using his hunting knife for fork and knife, and drinking water from the tin cup which he had filled a short distance away, and from which the others, excepting Deerfoot, also drank. Instead of answering the slur of Hawkins, he acted as though he did not fully catch his meaning, and did not care to learn. What he had said, however, rankled in the heart of Burt, who, holding his peace until all were through eating, addressed the surly fellow:

"If you doubt the skill of Deerfoot, I'll make you a wager that he can outshoot you, you using your gun and he his bow and arrow, or you can both use a gun."

"He might do all that," said Kellogg, with a twinkle of the eye, "and it wouldn't prove that Tom was any sort of a marksman."

Crumpet was able to catch the meaning of that remark, and it goaded him almost to the striking point.

CHAPTER XIX.

DEERFOOT'S WOODCRAFT.

Neither Deerfoot nor the trapper wished to engage in the trial of skill suggested by Burt Hawkins. Crumpet feared that if such a test took place he would be worsted, in which event he would never hear the last of it from his friends. He might well shrink, therefore, from such a contest.

The Shawanoe knew he could surpass the trapper if he exerted himself, as he most certainly would do. Crumpet's ill-nature would be embittered, and matters were likely to take an unpleasant shape. When Hawkins turned toward him, therefore, expecting him to bound to his feet and invite the challenge, he shook his head:

"Deerfoot's arrows are few, and he saves them for game or his enemies."

"And therein is wise," added Kellogg, shrewd enough to see the situation in all its bearings.

Crumpet said nothing, but was greatly relieved, while Hawkins gave a sniff of disgust.

"Some folks are very free with their tongues, but when you come down to business they ain't there; howsumever, let that go; we've got our extra rifle, and I s'pose we might as well keep up the tramp toward St. Louis. Deerfoot, can't you go with us?"

He shook his head, and said:

"Deerfoot is hunting for two friends who are lost; he must not sleep nor tarry on the way."

"How is that?" asked Burt, while the others listened with interest. The young Shawanoe told, in his characteristic manner, the story which is already well known to the reader. While doing so he watched each countenance closely, hoping (though he could give no reason for such hope) to catch some sign of a shadowy knowledge of that for which he was seeking, but he was disappointed.

"One thing is sartin," remarked Burt Hawkins, when the story was fully told, "them boys ain't dead."

"I agree with you," said Kellogg, with an emphatic nod of the head, in which even the surly Crumpet joined. Deerfoot was surprised at this unanimity, and inquired of Hawkins his reason for his belief.

"Cause it's agin common sense; when two young men go out in the woods to hunt game, both of 'em ain't going to get killed: that isn't the fashion now-a-days. One of 'em might be hurt, but if that was so, and the other couldn't get away, the Injins would take him off and keep him. More than likely the varmints carried away both, and if you make a good hunt for three or four thousand miles around, you'll get track of 'em."

"I think I know a better plan than that," said Kellogg, and, as the others looked inquiringly toward him, he said, "both of them chaps have been took by Injins who'll keep them awhile. One of these days the boys will find a chance to give 'em the slip, and they'll leave on some dark night and strike for home."

"It isn't likely both 'll have a show to do that at the same time," said Crumpet, speaking with more courtesy than he had yet shown, and manifesting much interest in the matter.

"No; one will have to leave a good while before the other, and then the one that is left will be watched that much sharper, but all he's got to do is to bide his time."

"When one of my brothers comes through the woods to his home, the other will come with him," said Deerfoot, confident as he was that neither Jack Carleton nor Otto Relstaub would desert the other, when placed in any kind of danger.

Deerfoot was confirmed in his theory of the disappearance of his young friends, for it agreed with what he had formed after leaving the settlement that morning. But, admitting it was the correct theory, the vast difficulty of locating the boys still confronted him. They might be journeying far southward in the land of the Creeks and Chickasaws, or to the homes of the Dacotah in the frozen north, or westward toward the Rocky Mountains.

Kellogg and Crumpet now fell into an earnest discussion of the question, for, though agreeing in the main, they differed on minor points, in which each was persistent in his views. Deerfoot listened to every word, for, like a wise man, he was anxious to gain all the knowledge he could from others.

But he noticed that for several minutes Burt Hawkins took no part in the conversation. He had sat down again on the

log, thrown one leg over another, and was slowly stroking his handsome beard, while his gaze was fixed on the ground in front. He was evidently in deep thought.

Such was the fact, and just as the lull came, he reached his conclusion. Deliberately rising to his full height, he walked over to where Deerfoot stood, and with another slap on his shoulder, said:

"See here, young man!"

The warrior faced him, earnest, attentive, and interested. Burt shifted the weight of his body, so that it rested on his right leg; he looked down in the eyes of Deerfoot, his brow wrinkled as in the case when a man is about to deliver himself of the most important and original thoughts of his life. Then he began wabbling the index finger of his right hand in the face of the warrior, as a man with the important and original thought is inclined to do. He commenced to wobble quite slowly, gradually increasing the amplitude of the vibrations, and passing his finger so close to the countenance of the Shawanoe that it seemed almost to graze the end of his nose. He spoke slowly, pointing his words with his swaying finger:

"Deerfoot, I've got the question answered; listen to me: them boys have been taken away by Injins; I know it; now where have the Injins gone? You ought to know as much about your race as me, but you don't; do what I tell you; go to the south till you come to some Injin village; make your inquiries there; if they haven't got the boys, they'll know whether the tribe that took 'em passed through their country, 'cause they couldn't very well do so without some of their warriors finding it out. If none of them don't know nothing about no such party, you can make up your mind you're barking up the wrong tree; then take an excursion west and do the same thing; then, if you don't learn anything, try toward the north; there ain't any use in going eastward, for common sense will teach you they haint been taken that way; a chap with your good sense will pick up some clue that'll show you the way through."

"My brother speaks the words of wisdom," said Deerfoot, who was much impressed by the utterances of the trapper: "Deerfoot will not forget what he has said; he will carry his words with him and they shall be his guide; Deerfoot says good-bye."

And with a courteous salute to the three, the young warrior walked a few steps, broke into a light run, and was out of sight before his intention was fairly understood. The trappers looked in each others' faces, laughed, made some characteristic remarks, and then turned to their own business.

Deerfoot the Shawanoe had determined to follow the advice given by Burt Hawkins the trapper. It certainly was singular that such an extraordinary woodman as the Indian should profit by the counsel of a white man, even though he was a veteran; but Deerfoot had studied the problem so long that his brain was confused, and, having fixed his own line of conduct, he only needed the endorsement of some sturdy character like the hunter. He had received that endorsement, and now he could not use too much haste.

His intention was to journey rapidly southward, in the direction of the present State of Arkansas, until he should reach some of the Indian villages that were there a hundred years ago. He would push his inquiries among them, just as Burt Hawkins had suggested, pressing the search in other directions, until able to pick up some clue. After that, it would be an easy matter to determine the line of policy that would lead to success.

Any one engaged in such a task as that on which the young Shawanoe had entered, needs to take all the observations he can, for the knowledge thus gained is sure to be of great help. The Indian scanned the country opening to the southward, and, as was his custom, turned his face toward the first elevation which would give him the view he was so desirous of obtaining.

The elevation was similar to those with which the reader became familiar long ago, and the sun had not yet reached the horizon when the lithe warrior had climbed to the crest of the ridge, and was scanning the wilderness which opened to the south and west. He was in a region where he was warranted in looking for Indian villages, and his penetrating eyes traveled over the area with a minuteness of search hardly imaginable by the reader. The country was so broken by mountain, hill, and wood, that the survey was much less extended than would be supposed. He was disappointed in one respect, however: he could detect no Indian village in the whole range of vision.

But, besides the dim smoke from the camp he had left a short time before, he observed another to the westward, and a third to the south; he concluded to make his way to the last, though he half suspected it was the camp of another party of trappers, from whom he could not gather the first morsel of information.

Deerfoot pushed toward the valley, less than a mile distant, from which the tell-tale vapor ascended, and was quite close to the camp, when he became aware that an altogether unexpected state of affairs existed. Despite his usual caution, his approach was detected, and the Shawanoe found himself in no little peril.

It is difficult, if not impossible, to make clear how it was Deerfoot discovered this singular state of affairs; but he was more than a hundred yards from the camp, which was screened by a dense undergrowth and rocks, when he stopped abruptly, warned to do so by that subtle instinct which is like a sixth sense.

He did not leap behind a tree, nor fall on his face and creep to the rear of the large boulder on his right, but he stood erect, using the faculties of hearing and sight with a delicate power and unerring skill which were marvelous in the highest degree.

The black eyes glanced around, as he slowly turned his head from side to side, and he saw everything in front, rear, at his right, left, and above, among the limbs and on the ground. He heard the silken rustling of several leaves in the top of a beach overhead, and he knew it was caused by one of those slight puffs of wind which make themselves known in that manner.

The inhalation through his nostrils brought the faint odor of the elm, the oak, the hickory, the chestnut, the sycamore, and the resinous pine. He identified them, I say, as well as the peculiar and indescribable odor given off by the decaying leaves, the mossy rocks, and even the rotting twigs and branches; but among them all he detected nothing of a foreign nature.

But it was his hearing upon which he mainly depended, though his eyes were forced to their highest skill. When the pinnated leaf of a hickory was shaken loose by the wind puff it had hardly floated from its stem before he caught sight of it, and followed it in its downward course until it fluttered slowly to the ground.

It may be said that the danger which threatened Deerfoot was "in the air," if it be conceivable that there is anything in the expression. He was as certain of it as he was of his own existence, and yet he stood motionless, displaying an incredible confidence in his ability to discover the nature of the peril before it could take effective shape.

Had he leaped lightly behind a tree, he might have placed himself on the side which would have left him exposed to the stealthy shot; had he dropped to the ground and crept to one side of the moss-covered boulder, the same fatal mistake was likely to be made. Therefore he stood as rigid as iron, until he could learn the direction from which he was threatened.

A rustling no louder than that made by the oscillation of a falling leaf came from a point some distance ahead and on his right. So soft indeed was the sound that it cannot be explained how the human ear could be trained to the point of hearing it.

But it was that for which Deerfoot the Shawanoe was waiting, and it gave him the knowledge he sought.

CHAPTER XX.

SAUK AND SHAWANOE.

At the instant the almost inaudible rustling struck the ear of Deerfoot the Shawanoe, he caught sight of a rifle barrel as it was thrust among the undergrowth and aimed at him. It was the faintest possible sound, caused by the pushing aside of the leaves which he heard, and which he was expecting for a full minute to hear. The lightning-like glance cast toward the point showed him the dark barrel, and the ferocious gleam of the face of an Indian, crouching on one knee just beyond.

The warrior who aimed the weapon meant to send the bullet through the chest of the youth, whose approach, stealthy as it was, he had detected. The distance was so slight that the briefest possible time was required to make his aim certain; but while in the very act of doing so, the sinewy youth vanished like a puff of vapor.

The savage was dumfounded, for nothing of the kind had ever occurred, so far as his experience went, and it was unexplainable to him. He had used the proverbial caution of his people, and he knew from the expectant position of the youth that his suspicions were excited, but he could not comprehend by what means he had passed so suddenly from sight. The red man was in the very act of pressing the trigger when he discovered he was not aiming at any target.

If the Indian tongue contained an execration, it may well be imagined that a most vigorous one escaped the lips of the baffled redskin, who was shut out from his prize at the moment of closing his fingers upon it.

The warrior was a brawny, full-grown Indian, almost in middle life, who had sunk on one knee and brought his gun to his shoulder, after briefly studying the form which had approached his lurking place. He had never seen the stranger until that moment, and he only knew that he belonged to some totem unknown to him. It was probable that his home was on the eastern shore of the Mississippi, and he resented the intrusion upon his hunting grounds as he did that of a white man: consequently he was as quick to take the life of one as of the other.

Finding that his intended victim had disappeared beyond all question, the next step of the fierce assassin was to solve the meaning of the unaccountable occurrence. He noiselessly straightened up, and craning his head forward peeped through the undergrowth. All that he saw was the huge boulder or rock, within a few feet of where the youth had been standing. It followed, therefore that he had flung himself behind it, and was hiding there at that moment.

The painted visage glowed with a baleful light, for he was assured his triumph was postponed only for a few moments. The boulder might serve as a shelter while the relative positions of the two were the same, but it was in the power of the savage to change that by putting forth only moderate skill.

Taking care not to reveal himself, he began a guarded movement to the right, his course being the same as if starting to describe a circle about the hiding place. It will be seen that if he could accomplish this without exposing himself to the fire of the other, he would not need to go far before gaining a view of the opposite side of the boulder, and necessarily of him who was seeking to screen himself from discovery. To do this, however, the victim must remain where he was, for manifestly, if he shifted his position correspondingly, he would continue invisible, but he counted himself fortunate that he had noticed the peculiar configuration of the boulder, which rendered such a man[oe]uvre beyond the power of an ordinary warrior. As for himself, he had no personal fear, for the trees were so numerous that he could use them to shield his body while leaping from one to the other, while in many places he could steal along the ground without the possibility of detection.

If the fool had but known the woodcraft of the youth against whom he was so eager to pit himself, he would have turned and fled from the spot as from a plague; but he had never heard the name of Deerfoot, and little dreamed of the skill of the extraordinary youth.

The warrior stooped, crept, leaped, and stole through the wood with a celerity that was astonishing. Within a very short time after beginning the movement, he had described one-fourth of the circle and gained the view he wished. It must be remembered, too, that he had kept the boulder under such close surveillance as to be morally certain the youth could not shift his position without being observed.

But to his amazement he saw nothing of his victim. The flat slope and the leafy ground were free from anything resembling a human being. He stood peering from behind the tree, and at his wit's end to know what it meant. He held his rifle so that the hammer could be raised the moment the necessity came, and he must have felt that the wiser course was for him to leave the spot without further search.

Probably such would have been his course had he not heard a most alarming sound directly behind him. It was the

faint cough of a person seeking to clear his throat. The Indian turned like a flash, and saw the dusky youth a rod distant, holding his bow loosely in his right hand, while his terrible left was drawn back over his shoulder, the fingers clenching the handle of his tomahawk. His position was precisely that of one who was on the very point of launching the deadly missile which would have cloven the skull, as though made of card-board. He had taken the posture, and then uttered the slight cough with a view of "calling the attention" of the party of the first part to the fact, and he succeeded. The elder was in the position of the hunter who while seeking the tiger awoke to the fact that the tiger was seeking him.

The warrior, whose face was daubed with red, black and yellow paint, was literally struck dumb. He had been engaged in many an encounter with strange Indians, but never had the affray been introduced in a more favorable manner to himself, and never had he been more utterly overwhelmed.

He saw that the youth was merely holding his tomahawk; the very second it was needed, he could drive it into his chest or brain. He was too proud to ask for mercy, for he had no thought it would be granted. He could only face his master and await his doom.

Deerfoot was not the one to prolong the wretchedness of another, no matter if his most deadly enemy. He stood with his left foot slightly advanced and his muscles gathered, so that he did not require the slightest preparation, and, having held the pose just long enough to make sure it had produced its full effect, he slowly lowered the tomahawk, keeping his eyes fixed on his enemy. When the weapon was at his side, he said:

"The Sauk is a wolf; he steals behind the hunter that he may leap on his shoulders when he sleeps; but the hunter heard the sound of his claws on the leaves and turned upon him."

These words were uttered in the mongrel tongue of the Sauk, for Deerfoot, after a careful inspection of the painted warrior, was quite sure he belonged to that restless and warlike tribe. He had encountered the people before, though at rare intervals, and he had hunted with a pioneer who was familiar with the tongue. The youth detected so many resemblances to other aboriginal languages with which he was familiar that he quickly mastered it and could speak it like a native.

The warrior, as has been said, was a brawny savage, well on toward middle life. He was attired in the usual fashion among the Indians, his dress looking slouchy and untidy. His straggling black hair, instead of being ornamented with eagle feathers, was gathered in a knot, so as to form what is often called a scalp-lock, and to proclaim the fact that the wearer of the same challenged any one to take it if he could. Besides his long rifle, he carried his knife and tomahawk, after the manner of his people. He would have proved a dangerous foe in a hand-to-hand struggle, but he was deprived of whatever advantage he might have possessed by being taken at such overwhelming disadvantage.

He caught every word uttered by Deerfoot, who had not mistaken his totem. He had no thought that the youth intended to show him mercy, but believed he was indulging in a little preliminary sermonizing--so to speak--before claiming his scalp for the ridge-pole of his wigwam.

The words of Deerfoot served to awaken the Sauk from his paralysis, and, throwing his head back, he said:

"The Sauk is no wolf; the Shawanoe is the fox that steals upon the hunting grounds of the Sauks."

"The lands that stretch to the rising and setting sun belong not to the Shawanoe nor Sauk nor Huron, but the Great Spirit, who loves his children to chase the buffalo and hunt the deer and bear where they can be found; but why should the Sauk and the Shawanoe be enemies?"

And to give point to the question, Deerfoot advanced and offered his hand. The Sauk concealed his surprise and gave the fingers a warm grasp, but while doing so each looked distrustfully in the face of the other. The frightful stains on the broad face of the elder did not alarm Deerfoot, who had seen much more frightful countenances among his own people. He gazed calmly into the eyes of the warrior, as the two stood close together with their hands clasped. The Indian is an adept in concealing whatever emotions may stir him, but Deerfoot saw the savage was puzzled over his action. He could not but know that the Shawanoes were the most warlike Indians in the Mississippi Valley, and one of the last weaknesses of which they could be accused was that of showing mercy to an enemy.

One point was necessary for Deerfoot to establish. If the Sauk was alone, nothing was to be feared from him; but if he had brother warriors within call, the youth had need to be on his guard.

"Why does the brother of Deerfoot hunt the woods alone?" asked the young Shawanoe, introducing himself in this characteristic fashion.

"Because Hay-uta fears not to go everywhere alone; from the ridge-pole of his wigwam flutter the scalps of the

Shawanoes, the Hurons, the Foxes, the Osages, and the strange red man whom he has met and slain in the forest."

The old nature in Deerfoot prompted him to take this vaunting warrior to task. The answer of the Sauk was indefinite, but the youth could wait a few minutes for the information he sought.

"Hay-uta, the Man-Who-Runs-Without-Falling, has not taken the scalp of Deerfoot, *and cannot do so!*"

The flash of the eye which accompanied these words added to their force. Before they could receive reply the youth added:

"Hay-uta is a brave man when he talks to squaws; less than twenty great suns have passed over the head of Deerfoot, but he is not afraid of the Man-Who-Runs-Without-Falling."

Indian nature is quick to resent such taunts, and beyond a doubt the hot blood flushed the skin beneath the paint. Deerfoot noted the glitter of the eye, and a twitch of the muscles of the arm whose hand rested on the knife, as he made answer:

"The Shawanoe is a dog that crept up behind the Sauk, without giving him warning; the rattlesnake speaks, but the Shawanoe does not."

Deerfoot was angered by these words because they were untrue.

"The Shawanoe was walking through the wood, when the Great Spirit whispered, 'Take care; a snake is crawling through the grass; he is called Hay-uta; he will strike his fangs through the moccasin of Deerfoot, unless he crushes him with his heel; Hay-uta was not brave, because he hid behind a tree, and he pointed his gun through the bushes, meaning to shoot the Shawanoe before he could chant a word of his death-song.'"

This charge was an exasperating one, and instantly raised the anger of the warrior to white heat.

"The dog of a Shawanoe holds his tomahawk and bow; let him lay them aside as Hay-uta does his weapon, and then it shall be shown who is the brave warrior."

It was a curious fact that while this wrathful conversation was going on, the couple had been steadily backing away from each other. The act showed that in spite of the token of comity that had just passed between them, they were mutually so suspicious as to be ready to fly at each other. The last taunt forced the quarrel to the exploding point. Deerfoot slipped the cord which held the quiver of arrows in place over his head, by a motion so quick as scarcely to be perceptible, flung his bow a rod from him, tossed his tomahawk a dozen feet away, and whipping out his hunting-knife, grasped it with his left hand, and defiantly confronted the Sauk, who was scarcely behind him in taking up the gauge of battle.



CHAPTER XXI.

CHRISTIAN AND PAGAN.

The North American Indian is treacherous by nature, and will take any advantage over a foe, no matter what its nature. The Sauk had failed to bring down Deerfoot by the same unscrupulous means he had employed in other instances, but he was on the watch to repeat his tactics.

When uttering the taunt which brought about the personal collision, he flung his gun from him, and seized the handle of his tomahawk, as if with the purpose of throwing that also aside, the manner of his challenge implying that he meant the battle should be fought with the knives alone. Even the sagacious Deerfoot did not suspect him for the moment, when, on the point of grasping his knife, as he did when defying Tecumseh, the Sauk drew back his tomahawk and hurled it with incredible swiftness at the head of Deerfoot. There was a vicious spitefulness in the act which sent the missile as if fired from a gun.

Nothing could have attested the Shawanoe's miraculous activity and quickness of eye so clearly as did the ease with which he dodged the weapon. The flirt of his head was like that of the loon which dives below the path of the bullet after it sees the flash of the gun. The tomahawk struck the ground, went end over end, flinging the dirt and leaves about, and after ricocheting a couple of times, whirled against the trunk of a small sapling and stopped.

The act placed the two on the same footing. Each held only his hunting-knife. The treachery of the Sauk took place without a word being spoken either by himself or his foe. It was unnecessary, for there could be nothing to say.

Having avoided the tomahawk, Deerfoot advanced upon Hay-uta with his knife grasped in his left hand, while the Sauk did precisely the same thing as regarded him.

They were stripped for the fight, and were in deadly earnest. The Sauk had learned of the panther-like agility of the Shawanoe, and he knew no light task was before him. It would not be child's play to wrench the scalp-lock from the crown of the handsome warrior who was not afraid of any man, but Hay-uta was warranted in feeling a strong confidence in his own strength and prowess.

The warriors approached each other with the watchfulness of a couple of gladiators, seeking each others' lives for the sake of giving amusement to a Roman populace. Both slightly crouched, with their heads bent forward, their eyes fixed, while they stepped softly about, seeking an opening into which the keenly-pointed hunting knife might be driven with a furious vigor, that would render a second blow useless.

The situation was one where the slightest forgetfulness or mishap would prove fatal to him who made it. Both realized the fact, and did their utmost to guard against it.

When a couple of yards separated the combatants, they approached no closer, but began slowly circling around each other in the same stealthy fashion. The action of the Sauk convinced Deerfoot that his enemy had no friends in that section, for, if any were within call, he would have summoned them before the quarrel had gone so far. He could have called any one to his help by signal, and neglect to do so was proof that there was none to summon. Had Hay-uta done anything of the kind, Deerfoot would have leaped upon him and ended the battle in a twinkling.

Partly around, and then back again, the two seemed to oscillate, their motions corresponding so closely that it was as if both were moved by the same delicate machinery between them.

Suddenly Deerfoot feinted, like a skillful boxer, with the hand which grasped his knife. The vigilant Sauk was equally quick to parry and counter. He was as spry as a cat, and never once took his burning eyes from the face of the hated youth. Then he feinted in turn, and the Shawanoe, by his action, showed he was prepared for any demonstration, no matter what.

These preliminaries continued several minutes, when Deerfoot, in moving to the left, caught the toe of his moccasin in some obstruction and stumbled. He threw up his arms, as one will instinctively do, and for a single second was off his guard, though he recovered with incredible quickness. Any spectator of the strange combat would have given a gasp of terror, for the instant the stumble took place, the Sauk bounded forward with upraised knife and brought it down with a sweep like that of a panther's paw.

But what seemed an accident on the part of Deerfoot was done with deliberate intent. He wearied of the idle circling, and, confident of his own ability to outwit his antagonist, he dropped his guard for the very purpose of drawing out the other. Hay-uta was so certain of his own triumph that he made the mistake which the skillful fighter never makes; he

drew upon his own strength and self-poise by emitting a shout of exultation; but the downward sweeping arm clove vacancy only, and ere he could recover he was struck in the chest by the head of Deerfoot, who butted him with the force of a Japanese wrestler, sending the warrior several feet over on his back. The shock was so unexpected, as well as tremendous, that the knife flew from his hand, and he nearly fainted from sheer weakness.

Inasmuch as Deerfoot was able to butt him in that style, it will be admitted that it would have been equally easy for him to have buried his knife to the hilt in the body of his enemy, but he chose not to do so. Instead, he quietly picked up the weapon and held one in each hand, while the Sauk was entirely disarmed. The latter had been frightfully jarred. The blow in the stomach fairly lifted him off his feet and drove the wind from his lungs. He lay for a moment, with his lips compressed, his body griped with pain, and with no more ability to defend himself than an infant. He kept his black eyes fixed on the youthful conqueror while writhing, and the latter stood off several paces and calmly confronted him, as though viewing the natural phase of such a contest.

But the Sauk was quick to recover, and his old enmity seemed to blaze up with ten-fold intensity.

"The Shawanoe is a buffalo," said he, from behind his gleaming paint; "he fights like the buffalo when his foe is stronger and braver than he."

Deerfoot flung the knife of the warrior to him.

"The Shawanoe will fight as a buffalo no more; he will now use his knife; let the Sauk do what he can."

A brave warrior could take no exception to this declaration, accompanied as it was by such significant action; but it cannot be conceived that the Sauk was free from misgiving, when knowing, as he did, that he held the position of contestant only through the grace of his youthful antagonist, who a moment before could have pierced his heart with his hunting knife.

Having displayed the character of a battering ram, Deerfoot now assumed another.

"The Sauk is afraid of Deerfoot; he dare not attack him until he stumbles; Deerfoot's heart was oppressed with pity when he saw the fear of Hay-uta, and he stumbled that it might give Hay-uta the courage the Great Spirit did not give him."

These were taunting words, but, convinced they were spoken with the purpose of disturbing his self-possession, the Sauk only compressed his lips the tighter, and held himself ready to seize the first chance that presented itself. His recent experience had taught him a lesson which he could not forget.

Bending his knees until he assumed a crouching posture, the Sank centered his burning gaze on the face of Deerfoot, drew back his lips until his white teeth showed like those of a wild cat, and uttered a tremulous, sibilant sound, as if he were a serpent ready to burst with venom.

If he meant to frighten Deerfoot he failed, for the mishap of the Sauk was too recent to allow such impression to be made. The figure of the crouching warrior was startling in its hideousness, but there was never a moment from the opening of the singular contest, when the young Shawanoe did not feel secure in his mastery of the situation.

The feinting and retreating went on several minutes longer, when all at once Deerfoot caught an expression, which the paint on the face of his antagonist could not hide, that showed he had resolved on forcing the fight to a conclusion. A couple of quick feints followed, and then Hay-uta leaped forward, meaning to force Deerfoot to the earth. Had the Shawanoe remained quiet, such would have been the result, but he was too supple to be entangled in that manner. He withdrew, so that when his enemy landed on the spot, he found himself still confronted by the defiant youth, who had recoiled but the single step necessary to escape the blow. Hay-uta, without a second's pause, bounded toward him again, and brought down his right arm like a flash; but, as before, it cleft the empty air, and the youth confronted him with his shadowy smile and defiant expression.

Then, as if feeling he had retreated far enough, the Shawanoe advanced on his muscular foe, who drew back as if to brace himself for the assault. Deerfoot uttered no sound, but when he bounded lightly from the ground, Hay-uta knew the crisis had come; the trifling had ended.

The Shawanoe, when close enough to strike, made a dozen circular sweeps of his good left hand, as though he had rested it on the rim of a wheel that was spinning with bewildering swiftness. No eye could follow the knife in its circlings. There was one smooth gleam like the polished periphery of the "driver" of a locomotive.

The foes, as is always the case, looked straight in each other's eyes, but every limb and portion of the body, being in the field of vision, was clearly seen. The peculiar act of Deerfoot produced the effect intended. The vision of Hay-uta became confused and dizzy, and before he could rally the Shawanoe struck his blow.

He could have killed the other as easily as he would have slain a bear, but he chose not to do so. Instead, he brought his fist down on the upper part of his right wrist with a quick violence, which, for the second time, knocked the knife from the grasp of the more sinewy warrior. So deftly was the trick done that the weapon of the Sauk flew a dozen feet straight up in the air, turning rapidly end over end and falling between the two.



DEERFOOT'S VICTORY.

If Hay-uta was subject to the will of Deerfoot a minute before, it will be seen that now he was helpless. He had been again disarmed, while the lithe youth still grasped his own weapon with the power to drive it home whenever he so willed.

The last act of Deerfoot accomplished its purpose. Hay-uta at first was self-confident; again, he was hopeful; but the latter time he was disarmed, his confidence vanished. He saw that much as he had despised the youth whose life he sought, he was his inferior in every respect. He was no match for him in a fight, nor could he approach him in his peerless woodcraft. The question of supremacy was settled forever.

Slowly recoiling a couple of steps, he folded his arms, and, with a dignity that was touching, said, in a slow, deliberate voice, with his softened gaze fixed on the countenance of his conqueror:

"Hay-uta is a dog whose teeth have fallen out; he can fight no more; he is ashamed to go back to his people; the son of a pale face who is there, when he learns the truth, will point his finger at him and laugh; Hay-uta cannot go to his lodge; let Deerfoot bury his knife in his heart!"

"Deerfoot seeks not the life of Hay-uta; had he wished it, he could have had it long ago; but Deerfoot is a Christian; he will do Hay-uta no harm."

CHAPTER XXII.

AN ABORIGINAL SERMON.

If Hay-uta the Sauk had been astonished by the action of his youthful conqueror, he was now more astonished by his words; but the former in a measure prepared him for the latter, and he saw why it was the remarkable warrior had refused to take his life when the opportunity had been his, and when too he knew that he whom he was fighting would show him no mercy.

Hay-uta, like many of his people, had listened to the words of the missionaries--those strange people who underwent hunger, thirst, and suffering that they might preach the Word of Life to those who had never heard of that wonderful Being that died to save a lost world, and who taught that forgiveness, kindness, and love were the duty of every one. Hay-uta, I say, had listened to the words of those people, but only to turn away with a scornful smile, for he was sure the creed was one to which the American Indian could never give his faith.

The red man remembered that those priests and missionaries called themselves Christians, and lo! the most skillful warrior upon whom he had ever looked, now stood before him and declared that he too was a Christian. Not only that, but he proved it by his works, for he refused to tear the reeking scalp from the head of his enemy, when that enemy was vanquished!

Once more Deerfoot picked the knife of Hay-uta from the ground and handed it (the point toward himself) to the Sauk. The latter accepted it and pushed it back in place behind the girdle that spanned his waist. Then at a signal from Deerfoot he recovered his rifle and tomahawk, as Deerfoot did his hatchet and bow and quiver. Without a word, the two walked the short distance to camp, Hay-uta slightly in the lead.

The camp was of the simplest character, consisting of a pile of sticks, leaves, and branches which served as a couch, beside furnishing fuel for the fire when he cooked his food. A long, heavy blanket was partly folded and lying on the heap of branches, where it had served as a pillow for the warrior, who was different from most of his people in using that artificial help to slumber.

The water, which is such a necessity for parties halting in the wilderness, was obtained from a tiny stream that trickled down the rocks just beyond, after which it sank out of sight in the mountain to reappear at some point far removed. The wood and undergrowth that surrounded the camp of the Sauk were very close and dense, so that the view in every direction was shut off, unless one should climb the tallest tree and take his survey from that perch.

When Hay-uta halted in front of his camp-fire he turned about and extended his hand to Deerfoot.

"Will Deerfoot tell Hay-uta about the Great Spirit of the white man?"

"He is the Great Spirit of the red man as well as of the white," replied the Shawanoe, seating himself on the ground, where he was opposite the Sauk, who slowly resumed his seat on the pile of sticks and branches. "He loves all his children--him with the face of the night, the Miami, the Huron, the Shawanoe, the Delaware, the Sauk and Fox, the white man, and all those who live far beyond the great water which rolls against the shores of our land. He loves them all, and He hides his face with grief when he sees them quarrel and try to kill each other. If His children will do as He tells them to do, they will be happy in this world and in the hunting grounds where they shall live forever."

Hay-uta remembered that this agreed with what he had heard the missionaries say, but he recalled also that there was something more.

"Where does the Great Spirit that Deerfoot tells me about live?"

The Shawanoe pointed reverently upward.

"Far beyond the clouds, the sun, and the stars; He lives there, and there all shall go who do His will. A long time ago, before the white men came across the great water, He sent His Son from Heaven to earth; the Son went about doing good, and died, to save those He loved from sorrow and death."

"Deerfoot tells me what the Great Spirit says to him; how does he hear the Great Spirit speak?"

Without changing his half-reclining posture, the Shawanoe drew forth his small Bible from the inner pocket of his hunting shirt, the other watching with amazement the action. Opening the sacred volume, he read in his low, musical voice:

"Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.

"Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.

"Blessed are the peace-makers: for they shall be called the children of God.

"Ye have heard that it has been said, thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thine enemy:

"But I say unto you, love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you."

Deerfoot read these extracts from the Sermon on the Mount, with which he was so familiar that he could have repeated it all without looking at the printed page. Then raising his eyes to the wondering face of Hay-uta, he added:

"Let my brother listen, for these are the words of the Great Spirit, which he speaks to all his children; if they will obey, there shall be no unhappiness in the world:

"Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets."

The Sauk warrior was never so stirred in all his life. He had seen white men read from books, and he held a misty idea of how it was done, but he never knew one of his own race who could interpret the meaning of the curious figures made by some incomprehensible means on paper.

It was impossible that he should grasp the height and depth of that sublime utterance, which is of itself the very essence of the Christian religion; but they were as clear as sunlight to Deerfoot, who had pondered them many a time since he sat at the feet of good Mrs. Preston, who presented him with the Word of Life.

Closing the Book and putting it away, he proceeded to preach his sermon to the Sauk warrior. Deerfoot assumed the sitting position, and used both hands in his frequent gestures. Hay-uta reclined on his side, supporting himself on one elbow, while he fixed his eyes on his teacher and drank in every word.

"The Great Spirit made all people--the white, the red, the black man, and him whose face is the color of the breast of Deerfoot's hunting shirt for there are men whose skins are yellow, and others who are brown. He wishes them to live like brothers, but they do not. More of the pale faces are evil than good; they use the red men ill, and the red man loves to fight his enemies, but they grieve the Great Spirit. Let Hay-uta pray to the Great Spirit; let him never lie down or rise without talking to Him; let him stay his hand when it would strike a blow in anger; let him forgive his foes; let him seek to do the will of the Great Spirit, and a sweet peace shall fill his heart, such as he never knew before. Let my brother do that; let him tell the good news to his friends; let him listen to the words of the missionaries and talk to his people.

"The father of Deerfoot was a chief of the Shawanoes, who loved to fight; Deerfoot when a child was a wildcat in his hate of his enemies and of the pale faces; but the Great Spirit whispered in his ear, and he became another being. It was the Great Spirit who told him just now that danger threatened him. Hay-uta knows that Deerfoot could have slain him had he wished to do so; but he never wished him ill; he first showed him he was his master, that Hay-uta might listen to his words; will my brother forget what Deerfoot has said to him?"

Every being, whether groping in the night of barbarism or walled in by the skepticism of an advanced civilization, has felt at one time or another, an irrestrainable longing to draw aside the veil which shuts out the great hereafter, and solve the mystery of the life that is to come. Many a time is the heart stirred to its uttermost depths by the chastening hand of affliction, or when gazing on the glories of the stars and firmament, or when listening to the meanings of the vast deep, the soft sighing of the winds in the forest, or the lisping prayer of infancy. No proof of the immortality of the soul can equal that of its very yearning for immortality, and dim, strange, half-heard whisperings of the Beyond become voices more convincing than all the scientific scoffing and brilliant ridicule of those whose learning carries them beyond the trusting faith of childhood, and stops just short of the grandeur of the light of perfect knowledge.

When Deerfoot addressed his question to the Sauk warrior, the latter did not answer, but continued gazing into his face as though he heard not the words, and his thoughts were far away. The Shawanoe was wise enough to suspect the truth, and refrained from repeating the question. He, too, held his peace, and for several minutes the strange scene lasted. The two Indians looked at each other without speaking.

Meanwhile the afternoon was drawing to a close, and darkness was creeping through the forest. The camp-fire had burned so low that it gave out no light, and the figures of the warriors began to grow indistinct.

Deerfoot felt that he had sowed the seed, and he had only to wait for it to bear fruit. He arose, and stepping closer to the fire, stirred it until it gave forth a flame which lit up the surrounding gloom. Still Hay-uta remained motionless and silent.

Perhaps it has not escaped the notice of the reader that when the Sauk stood with folded arms before his conqueror, and asked him to bury his knife in his heart, he said that the son of the pale face would point the finger of scorn at him. Deerfoot noticed the curious words, and he felt that the moment had come when he should learn their full meaning.

"Where is the village of my brother?" he asked in his gentle way.

The Sauk aroused himself and slowly rose to his feet. Glancing through the firelight at his questioner, he pointed to the west.

"Two suns' journey away is the home of Hay-uta. There are his squaw and pappoose. He left them two suns ago to hunt for the scalps of his enemies; but he will hunt no more; he will go home, and on his way will think of the words that Deerfoot has said to him."

"It is well he should do so; but my brother spoke of the son of the pale face. Why is he in the village of the Sauks?"

"He was brought there in the last moon; the Sauks found two pale faces in the woods."

"Where is the other?"

"Some of the Sauks took him by another path; Hay-uta knows not where he is."

"Was harm done him?"

"Hay-uta cannot answer."

"Tell me of the pale face that is in the village of the Sauks with my brother."

The warrior, assisted by the questions of Deerfoot, who kept down the deep interest he felt, told all he knew. When he had finished, as the reader may well suspect, Deerfoot was sure he had gained most important knowledge. He was satisfied beyond all doubt that the prisoner in the village of the Sauks was Jack Carleton, whom he had set out to find, and for whom he feared he would have to hunt for many moons before learning whether he was alive or dead.

Suddenly the Sauk rose to his feet and stood in the attitude of listening, as though he had caught some signal. Deerfoot knew he was mistaken, for had it been otherwise, he too would have noticed it.

"Hay-uta bids his brother good bye," was the abrupt exclamation of the warrior, who caught up his blanket and, without another word, passed from sight in the wood, leaving the astonished Deerfoot alone.



CHAPTER XXIII.

IN THE LODGE OF OGALLAH.

From what has been told concerning Deerfoot, the reader knows that the tribe which held Jack Carleton prisoner were Sauks, or Sacs, as the name is often spelled. They belonged to the great Algonquin division, and, when first known to Europeans, inhabited the country near Detroit River and Saginaw Bay, but were driven beyond Lake Michigan by the powerful Iroquois. They themselves were of a restless and warlike nature and were the bitter enemies of the Sioux and Iroquois. They were the allies of the famous war-chief Pontiac who besieged Detroit so long, and, during the Revolution fought on the side of the English. They were closely associated with the Foxes, and frequently moved from one section of the country to another, in which respect they resembled the majority of American Indians.

The chief who has been referred to as Ogallah was one of the most fiery-tempered and quarrelsome members of the Sauk tribe. In one of the expeditions against the Sioux, he not only performed wonderful deeds of daring, but tomahawked several of his own warriors, because, in his judgment, they showed a timidity in attacking the common foe. One of the Sauks who fell by the hand of the wrathful sachem was the brother of the leading chief. This precipitated a fierce quarrel between the two, the upshot of which was that Ogallah, and a number of followers, drew off from the main tribe and began "keeping house" for themselves. Migrating southward with the purpose of placing a long stretch of country between them and the parent tribe, they finally erected their lodges on the banks of a stream on the Ozark region, in what is now Southern Missouri and upper Arkansas.

I have already said the Indians gave the white men little trouble in that section during the pioneer days. In that respect, no comparison can be made with Kentucky and Ohio. As early as 1720, the lead deposits in Missouri attracted notice, and its oldest town, Saint Genevieve, was founded in 1755. St. Louis became the depot for the fur trade of the vast region beyond, and at the breaking out of the Revolution, was a town of considerable importance.

The warrior Hay-uta with whom Deerfoot had his remarkable interview was a fair representative of the Sauk nation, and especially of that division which was under the following of Ogallah. Some of the warriors were constantly roaming through the wilderness in quest of scalps. While they were nothing loth to engage in a scrimmage with the hunters and trappers, yet they preferred those of their own race above all others. No Sioux or Iroquois could have approached within hundreds of miles without the certainty of an encounter with the warlike Sauks.

The Sauk party which appeared so close to the settlement of Martinsville had been out for several weeks looking for "game" in the form of Sioux, who lived far to the northward. They had found some of it too, and were returning home in a leisurely manner. They took a careful survey of the settlement, and even discussed the wisdom of making an attack on it; but they saw it could not be destroyed by so small a force, and though they might have shot several of the settlers before they could know their danger, they decided to pass on without making any demonstration at all.

When Jack Carleton and Otto Relstaub walked up to the party, it was no more than natural that they should be made prisoners. No particular reason can be assigned for the separation of the party, one division of which took Jack and the other Otto, except that a survey of the land passed over could be better made by that means. However, this point will be dwelt upon more fully in another place.

Probably no person ever played the part of captive among a tribe of savages without devoting most of his thoughts to the question of escape. It is inevitable that he should do so, for the fate is so painful in every respect that, but for the hope, one would be ready to lie down and die.

Jack had turned the question over and over in his mind, and had done his utmost to give his captors the slip while on the road, but misfortune attended every venture, and at last he found himself in the lodge of the chieftain Ogallah himself, where it looked as if he was likely to remain indefinitely.

"Well, this beats everything," he exclaimed, after finishing the meal and seating himself at the side of the lodge, so as to be out of the way of the housewife, as she moved back and forth and here and there while attending to her duties; "I've come a long distance through the woods, and it'll take some time to find my way back to Martinsville, after I once make a start."

He could not persuade himself that his captivity might last for months and possibly for years. He was confident that no matter how vigilant the watch maintained, he would gain a chance to give the Indians the slip within two or three days at the furthest.

"I did my best to make Ogallah and the others think I wasn't anxious to leave, but the work was all thrown away. These people are not fools, and no matter how well I may act, they know of a surety that the whole prayer of my life is to part

company with them."

The conclusion reached by Jack was common sense, though the story-writers sometimes make it appear that the keen minded American Indian may be duped in that transparent fashion. The utmost that Jack Carleton could hope to do was to show his captors that, while he longed to return to his friends, he saw no means of doing so, and therefore was not likely to make the attempt. Such he resolved would be his course.

The boy was fatigued in mind and body, and, when he bowed his head in prayer (much to the astonishment of Ogallah and his squaw), and lay down on the bison robe, he sank into a refreshing slumber, from which he did not awake until morning, and then, when he did so, he came to his senses with a yell that almost raised the roof.

The Sauks, like all their race, were extremely fond of dogs, and the mongrel curs seemed to be everywhere. Jack had noticed them trotting through the village, playing with the children and basking in the sun. A number sniffed at his heels, as he passed by with Ogallah, but did not offer to disturb him.

The chief was the owner of a mangy cur, which seemed to have been off on some private business of his own, when his master returned, inasmuch as he did not put in an appearance until early the following morning, when he trotted sideways up to the lodge and entered, as he could readily do, inasmuch as the "latch string was always out." The canine was quick to notice the stranger lying on the bison skin with his eyes closed and his mouth open. With an angry growl he trotted in the same sidelong fashion across the space, and pushing his nose under Jack's legs gave him a smart bite, just below the knee, as though he meant to devour him, and concluded that was the best part of his anatomy on which to make a beginning.

The foregoing will explain why Jack Carleton awoke with a yell and stared around him for an explanation of the insult. The vigor of his kicks, and the resonant nature of his cries, filled the dog with a panic, and he skurried out of the lodge with his tail between his legs, and cast affrighted glances behind him.

"Confound the cur," muttered Jack, rubbing the injured limb, "is that the style of these dogs when a stranger calls?"

Ogallah was entering the door of his home just as the canine was going out. Suspecting what mischief he had been committing, he placed his moccasin under the brute and elevated him several feet in the air, with a force which caused him to turn end over end, with an accompaniment of yelps and howls which were kept up until he was out of sight and hearing.

The wife of Ogallah was preparing breakfast, which was of the simplest character, consisting of nothing but meat cooked over the coals as on the evening before. There was nothing in the nature of vegetables, though something of the kind was growing on the cleared land without.

Jack longed for the pure, fresh air of the outside. The smoke of the chieftain's pipe, the smell of burning meat, and the untidiness of the place and people, left a stale odor, which was nauseating to one unaccustomed to it.

He wanted a drink of cold water as it bubbled from the earth, and, rising to his feet, passed outdoors. The squaw merely glanced up, while Ogallah addressed several rapidly spoken words to him. Then recollecting that nothing he said could be understood, he smiled grimly, and turned his back on the lad.

Reaching the outside, Jack stood still for a minute, uncertain what course to take. The warriors, squaws, and children were astir; but no one seemed to observe him when he paused in front of the chieftain's lodge.

"I'll try the river," was his conclusion, as he stepped briskly off, his heart beating rapidly, for he knew from his experience of the previous night, that much curiosity respecting him was felt, and he was certain to attract annoying attention. But he reached the stream, where he stooped and bathed his face and hands, wiping them on the handkerchief he carried, and still heard and saw nothing to cause misgiving.

"I wonder whether they drink from this," he said, rising to his feet, and looking around; "I can't say that I fancy it, for it isn't as clear as it looked to be when I was further off; then the youngsters bathe and play in it--helloa!"

He saw an Indian woman making her way toward one of the wigwams on the edge of the village, carrying a large gourd of water in her arms. It was filled almost to the brim, and slopped over the edge, as it was disturbed by her movement in walking. It was fair to conclude that she had taken it from the spring for which Jack was looking, and he immediately moved toward her. She stopped abruptly when she saw him approach, and stared in such open-mouthed amazement that it was evident that this was the first glance she had obtained of the captive.

Jack made signs of comity, and sheered off so as to reach the path considerably to the rear of the squaw, who, with a grunt, made an equally wide circuit in the opposite direction, so that the two avoided each other by a liberal space of ground.

The boy saw that he was moving over a well-worn path, which he was confident led to the spring he wished to find. Nearly every step was marked by the drippings of water from the gourd of the woman he had just met.

Sure enough, he had gone less than a hundred yards beyond the village when he came upon the spring, which bubbled from under the twisted black roots of an oak, throwing up the sand in a continual fountain-like tumble of melted silver. The lad looked down at it for a moment, and then sinking to his hands and knees, pressed his lips against the cold, crystal-fluid, the most refreshing element in all nature.

Had not his nose and eyes been so close to the water, Jack Carleton would have caught the reflection of another face just behind his own—a face which would have driven all thirst away and caused him to bound to his feet, as though he had heard the whirr of a coiled rattlesnake at his elbow.

But Jack saw and suspected nothing. He had taken three good swallows when some one gave the back of his head such a smart push, that the nose was shoved down among the silver sands, which streamed from his face, as he sprang to his feet, and stared gasping, blinking, and furious.

"Who the deuce did that?" he demanded, forgetting himself in his anger.

His own eyes answered the question. Three Indian boys were standing, laughing as if ready to hurt themselves over his discomfiture. Two of them were very nearly the height and age of Jack, while the third, who had played the trick on him, was older and taller.

The captive was angry enough to assail all three, and it required a smart exercise of the will to restrain himself. But he saw the folly of such a step. The affray would quickly bring others to the spot, and very speedily Jack would find himself attacked by overwhelming numbers, and possibly would be beaten to death. No; he must use ordinary prudence and swallow the insult.

He looked in the grinning faces of the homely youths, and made quite a successful effort to join their laughter (though precious little mirth was there in the essay), and then started back toward the lodge of Ogallah.

The youth tried to walk with a dignified step, but he was sadly thrown out by a dexterous trip from one of the moccasins, which sent him stumbling forward with a very narrow escape from falling on his hands and knees.

It was the tallest of the three who had tripped him, and all laughed like a lot of clowns, as the angered Jack glared at them.

"I wish I had you alone," muttered the boy between his set teeth; "I wouldn't need more than five minutes to give you a lesson you'd remember all your life."



CHAPTER XXIV.

A ROW.

Jack Carleton saw that he was caught in an exceedingly unpleasant dilemma. He had a considerable distance to walk to reach the lodge of Ogallah and was sure to be tormented all the way. He could not feel certain even, that the wigwam of the chieftain would afford him protection, while nothing could be more manifest than that this was but the beginning of a series of numberless persecutions to which he would be subjected.

He was allowed to take six or eight steps in peace, when one of the Indian boys slipped up behind and with his foot struck his heel, just as it left the ground. This threw the toe behind Jack's other leg and caused him to stumble again, though, as he was expecting something of the kind, he recovered himself with more ease.

A few seconds later, Jack was passing among the different lodges, and walking rapidly toward that of the chieftain. His presence became known to the whole village in a very brief time, and the younger portion came flocking around him, as though he was some wonderful curiosity, which, under the circumstances, was the fact.

Ogallah was among those who came to the front of the lodges to learn what caused the uproar. When he caught sight of Jack, he called out something and made excited gestures to him. The boy supposed they were intended to hurry his return, and finding his persecutors closing around him, he broke into a run.

Then the stones and clods began to fly. The whole rabble joined in, and when the poor captive dodged into the wigwam, he was bruised and half frightened to death. He watched the entrance in terror, but his tormentors did not dare follow him into the home of their chief, who would have been quick to resent such an invasion of his dignity and rights.

Jack was panting and frightened, but he had received no serious hurts. What alarmed him, more than everything else, was the foreshadowing thus made of the treatment in store for him.

"I can't stand this," was his thought, after he had partly regained his composure. "I shall have to stay in here altogether or run the gauntlet every time I go out."

But all this time, Ogallah kept talking and making vigorous gestures to him. The chief had followed him to the middle of the lodge, where the two sat on the ground cross-legged and began eating the meat which the squaw had prepared. She did not join them, and the boy had little appetite after his exciting experience. The gestures of Ogallah continued so long that it was evident he was seeking to say something of importance to Jack.

"I wonder what the old fellow means," muttered the lad, ceasing his meal and studying the gyrating arms and spluttering countenance. The chieftain was striking the air as if fighting an imaginary foe, and then, pointing toward Jack he nodded his head vigorously and again pointed to the outside.

Suddenly the meaning of the pantomime broke upon the youth.

"By gracious! if he isn't urging me to sail into those fellows. I say, Ogallah, will you back me up and see that I have fair play?"

Jack raised his voice to a loud key, as though that would help the chieftain understand his words; but it could not be expected that he would grasp their meaning, as they were not punctuated with any gesture and accompanied only by an eager expression of countenance.

But Ogallah probably saw that the youth had caught *his* meaning, for he nodded his head and grinned with delight.

"If he will only keep the crowd off me," said Jack to himself, "I won't ask anything better than a chance to get even with that big fellow and after him the other two, if they want to take a hand in the fun."

The voices and turmoil in front of the lodge showed that the crowd were there waiting for Jack to come forth, that they might continue the amusement which was interrupted by his flight. The lad spent a minute or two in conversing by means of gestures with the chief, whose meaning seemed plainer now that he had caught the gist of his first proposal.

"I am quite sure he promises to see that I have fair play," thought Jack; "but, if I am mistaken I shall get into a pretty scrape. Anything, however, is preferable to this state of affairs, and it must be ended one way or another very soon."

Ogallah showed a childish delight when he saw that the youth had made up his mind to have a bout with the ringleaders who had started out to make life a burden to him. Even the squaw partook of the general excitement and followed the two out doors.

The chieftain cleared the way for the captive, who was greeted with the most uproarious cries as soon as seen by the company, which numbered over a hundred bucks, squaws and children, exclusive of the dogs which added to the unearthly racket by their barking, yelping and howling.

Jack Carleton kept well under the wing of Ogallah until he could see what was to take place. The chief talked for a short time with several of his warriors, who closed around him, the rest holding him in such awe that they refrained from disturbing the prisoner until permission was given.

It was quickly settled: Ogallah and two of his men cleared a space a rod square and then beckoned to Jack, who walked defiantly to the middle of it and folded his arms.

"Something must be done pretty soon," was his thought, as he scanned the scowling, laughing, shouting mob. "They would like to tear me to pieces, and, if they come all at once, they will do it too."

The three Indian youths who had assailed Jack at the spring, leaped about and were as frantically eager as so many bull-dogs to fly at the poor fellow, who was never in sorer need of a powerful friend.

Suddenly one of them received the signal, and, with a whoop of delight, he lowered his head and ran at Jack like a Japanese wrestler or a mad bull. The boy saw he meant to butt him in the stomach, and if he did so he would suffer serious injury. Forewarned was forearmed in his case, and, leaping aside, he tripped the Indian as he shot by, and sent him sprawling on his hands and knees. The uproar was deafening, but the contest, it may be said, had only opened, and the young Sauk bounded to his feet as if made of India Rubber. His coppery face was aglow with passion, and, pausing but an instant, he made a second rush, though this time he kept his head up, and spread out his arms so as to prevent Jack escaping him.

Jack did not want to escape. He seized his assailant at the same moment that the latter grasped him, and in a twinkling they were interlocked and struggling like tigers. But the dusky youth was not only younger and slighter than Jack, but he was not so strong. Furthermore, his skill in wrestling was less than that of the white youth, who, like all the youths of the border, was trained in the rough, athletic exercise so popular with every people.

The contest was as brief as it was fierce. Suddenly a pair of moccasins kicked the air, and the presumptuous young Sauk went to the earth as if flung from the top of a church steeple. The shock was tremendous and caused a momentary hush, for it looked as if he had been killed.

The mother of the overthrown wrestler ran forward from the crowd, and with wild lamentations, bent over him. When she saw him move and found he was not dead, she whirled about, and, with a shriek, made for Jack Carleton, who dreaded just such an attack; but Ogallah seized her arm ere she reached the frightened youth, and flung her back with a violence and a threat which stopped her from repeating the attack.

This incident gave Jack great encouragement, for it confirmed his belief that the sachem meant he should have fair treatment, and would allow no dishonest advantage to be taken of him.

The second dusky youth, who was slighter than Jack, was signalled to advance to the attack, but to the surprise of all, he shook his head in dissent and declined to come forward. The manner in which his companion had been handled was enough to convince him that the most prudent thing for him to do was to play the part of spectator only.

Not so, however, with the larger and older youth, who had arrived almost at man's estate. He was quite an athlete among his people, and could scarcely restrain his eagerness to attack the pale face, who had vanquished an opponent younger and weaker than himself. Ogallah nodded his head, and, amid a noise which may be called applause, the young warrior strode forward and laid his hands on Jack, who, realizing the difficult task before him, was resolute, watchful, and yet confident.

The young Sauk seemed to be left handed, like Deerfoot, the Shawanoe, for he placed himself on the right of Jack, and slid his arm over the boy's neck, while Jack assumed his favorite hold with his right. The Indian was slightly the taller, and was naked to the waist, which was encircled by a girdle, containing no weapons, below which were his breech clout, leggings and moccasins. There was nothing on his arms, his costume being that of a professional Indian wrestler "stripped for the fray."

When he slid his arm over Jack's neck, he bent his head forward so that he could look down at their feet. Jack thus found the black hair, parted in the middle and dangling over the coppery shoulders, directly under his eyes. He noted the large, misshapen nose, the narrow forehead, immensely broad temples, and uncouth lower jaw, and, during the few seconds they were waiting, reflected what an ugly warrior the youth was certain to prove if he lived a few years longer.

He was the ringleader among Jack's persecutors, and the lad determined to conquer him if within the range of the most

desperate effort. The style in which he took hold of the pale face told the latter that he possessed considerable skill, and it would be a mistake to estimate him too lightly.

Jack reached over his left hand to grasp the right of his antagonist, but the latter declined to take it, and the free hands, therefore, were held, as may be said, in reserve to be used as inclination prompted.

Suddenly the Sauk kicked one of Jack's heels forward and made a quick strong effort to fling him backward. It was done with great deftness, and came within a hair of laying Jack flat on his back. He recovered himself by a fierce effort, and the attempt was instantly repeated, but he saved himself in better shape than before.

Again the two crouched side by side, each with an arm over the other, and watching like cats for the chance to seize an advantage. As a feeler, Jack tried the same trick his foe had used, but the Sauk was too watchful and was scarcely disturbed. All at once the pale face slid his arm down until it rested on the girdle at the waist of the Indian. Then joining his two hands and pressing him until he could hardly breathe, Jack raised him like a flash, clear of his feet, and made as if to throw him forward on his face. At the instant the Sauk put forth his frantic efforts to save himself from going in that direction, Jack reversed the enginery, and sent him backward on his head with a shock that made the ground tremble.

The fall was terrific, and looking down at the motionless figure, Jack believed he had broken his neck.

"I hope I have," he muttered in the flush of his excitement, "but that kind are tough--helloa!"

The prostrate youth began to gasp and make spasmodic movements of his limbs--enough to prove he was alive.

While Jack stood surveying him, as if waiting another attack, the mob broke into the most frightful yells and made a rush for him. He had overthrown those that had been matched against him, and now they meant to kill him; but Jack's faith in Ogallah was not misplaced. He and his brother warriors interfered in such a vigorous manner that not a hair of the boy's head was harmed, and, turning around, he walked into the lodge of the chieftain, conscious that he had won a great victory.



CHAPTER XXV.

THE WAR FEAST.

Jack Carleton's triumph over the Indian youth was complete. In a fair wrestling bout he had flung him to the ground with a force that drove the breath from his body, and gave him a more vivid idea of the white man's views of that athletic amusement than he had ever entertained before. But what was to be the outcome of this affair was more than the boy could guess. Physical prowess always commands respect whether the spectators be civilized or savage; but it does not insure against persecution.

"I have made them more revengeful than before," was the thought of the youth, after he hurried back into Ogallah's lodge, and sat panting from his exertion: "they hate me because I am of another race and am in their hands. They are afraid of the chief and, therefore, they will be more careful and I must be the same."

There could be no mistake as to the sentiments of the sachem and his squaw. They were delighted with the ability shown by the pale-faced youth who had evidently overthrown the young champion of the village. Ogallah grinned and chattered with his wife who grinned and chattered in turn. Then the former patted Jack on the back and talked very fast. The boy could not doubt that he was uttering the most high flown compliments and he did a great deal of smiling and bowing in response. The squaw was more demonstrative, for, after bustling about the half-expired fire for awhile, she brought forward a piece of meat which she had taken extra pains in cooking and placed it at his disposal. Jack was not suffering from hunger, but he very gladly ate the food and nodded in acknowledgment.

The crowd around the entrance became so noisy that the chieftain suddenly lost patience, and, springing to his feet, he dashed the bison skin door aside and speedily scattered them.

As Jack sat on the lodge floor, rapidly recovering from his severe exertion, he became conscious of a peculiar feeling which manifested itself at intervals. When he moved, he was slightly dizzy and his heart gave several throbs that were more rapid and spasmodic than usual. He remained quiet, wondering what it could mean, but feeling much inclined to lay it to the exciting scene through which he had just passed. When he began to feel alarmed it passed off.

But if Jack counted on finding all the hours dull and monotonous, from being compelled to stay within the tepee or wigwam of the Sauk chieftain, he was greatly mistaken. Shortly after eating his supplementary breakfast, Ogallah went out, leaving the youth alone with the squaw. This caused Jack some misgiving, for he feared his enemies might take advantage of the warrior's absence to punish him for his victory over the Indian youth. For some minutes he was in much trepidation, and the feeling was not lessened when he caught sight of several coppery faces peeping through the door. However, they ventured on no greater liberties and after a time went away.

All at once a great uproar rose through the village. Shouting, whooping, screeching and all sorts of unimaginable noises rent the air. The sound of hurrying feet was heard, and it was evident that something of an extraordinary character was going on. Jack looked inquiringly at the squaw, but, though she must have known the explanation, she failed for obvious reasons to make it clear to the captive.

Suddenly Ogallah came into the lodge. He uttered a few hurried words to his wife and then beckoned Jack to follow him. The latter had shoved his knife back in place, but did not venture to take his rifle which stood at the other side of the lodge.

"I wonder what's up now," was the natural thought of the lad, as he hastened after him; "have they erected a stake in the middle of the village where I am to be roasted for the amusement of the rest, or am I to be put to a test which I won't be able to stand?"

But fortunately the boy was mistaken in both his theories. The hubbub had no reference to him whatever.

Beginning the night before, a party of bucks and squaws had been employed until long after daylight in cooking the carcass of a bear, that was plump, oily and in the best condition. It was not very large, but where there was so little waste, it can be seen there must have been considerable in the way of food.

The animal was now fairly roasted and the time for feasting had come. Jack understood that much when he ventured outside the lodge and saw the numbers gathering around the "festive board." Naturally he clung close to his protector, but one of the singular features attending his captivity among this offshoot of the Sauk tribe of Indians, was the readiness with which they transferred their attention from one object to another. No one showed any curiosity in him when he appeared on the street--so to speak--but all pushed their way toward the one point of interest.

The shouting and uproar ceased when fourteen warriors marched forth in Indian file, and, arranging themselves around the brown crisp mass of meat, made ready to fall to work, the others watching them. They were all fine looking fellows, their faces painted and their preparations complete for hostilities, with the exception that their rifles were left aside, merely for convenience sake, until the end of the festivities.

Jack Carleton knew he was looking upon a war feast, as they are termed by the Indians, and which were more common among those people at that time than they are to-day. The bear had been carefully cooked expressly for them, and looked grotesquely tempting, as the crisped, browned, and oily carcass dripped over the pile of branches and green leaves to which the cooks had carried it.

The American Indian is ridiculously superstitious, and he has as much terror of an odd number at a war feast, as we have of being one of thirteen at an ordinary dinner party. Under no circumstances would the Sauks have permitted such a defiance of fate itself.

When the fourteen warriors had ranged themselves around the table, they stood for a minute or two, while the others held their breath in expectancy. The tallest Indian, who was the leader of the little company, suddenly whipped out his hunting knife and looked at the others, who imitated him with military promptness. Then he muttered some command, and immediately the whole number sprang upon the waiting carcass, which was carved up in a twinkling. Each cut himself an enormous slice, and, stepping back, began eating with the voracity of a wolf, while the others looked admiringly on. The spectators had held their peace so long that they broke forth again, not so loud as before, but grunting, chattering, and gesticulating like so many children, while Jack Carleton, taking good care to keep close to Ogallah his protector, furtively watched the scene.

The capacity of the red man for fasting and feasting is almost incredible. He will go for days without a mouthful, and then, when an abundance of food is presented, will gorge himself to an extent that would be sure death to an ordinary human being, after which he will smoke, blink, and doze for several days more, just as the famous boa constrictors of Africa are accustomed to do.

Such, however, is his habit only when driven by necessity. The Sauks lived too far south of the frozen regions to suffer such hardships, but one of the requirements of the war-feast was that each one of the party should eat all that he had cut from the carcass. To fail to do so was a sign of weakness sure to subject him to ridicule.

So resolutely did the warriors address themselves to the task, as it may be called, that they succeeded with the exception of a single one. Two or three, however, found it all they could do, and another mouthful of the coarse, oily meat, would have raised a rebellion within their internal economy, which would have caused general wreck and desolation.

The youthful warrior who failed was the one who was the most eager at the first for the feast. He toiled like a hero, and all went well until he reached the last half pound. The others, grinning queerly through their grease and paint, watched him as did the group on the outside of the circle, while he, fully alive to the fact that he was the center of attention, went to work as if resolved to do or die.

It took several vigorous swallows to keep down the installment which had descended, while he held the last piece in his hand and surveyed it with doubtful eye. It finally rested uneasily on the stomach, and he looked more hopefully than ever at the remaining portion, suspended on the point of his hunting knife.

Evidently he was not afraid of that, if what had preceded it would only keep quiet. Finally he made a desperate resolve and quickly crammed his mouth with the oleaginous stuff, upon which he began chewing with savage voracity. Possibly, if he could have got it masticated enough to force down his throat with only a few seconds' delay, all would have been well, but suddenly there was an upward heave of the chest, a sort of general earthquake; the eyes closed, and the mouth opened with a gape so prodigious that it seemed to extend from ear to ear, and threatened to bisect his head. That which followed may be left to the imagination of the reader.

General laughter and taunts greeted the failure, in which Ogallah heartily joined; but the warrior took it in good part, and doubtless felt better than did any of the others participating in the scene of gluttony, inasmuch as his stomach was in its normal condition.

The war feast finished, the fourteen resumed the form of a circle, stood motionless a few minutes, and, all at once, began dancing in the most furious manner. The spectators joined, Ogallah as before being among the most vigorous in the lead, and in a brief while the strange scene was presented of warriors, squaws, and children bounding about, swinging their arms and splitting their throats in the wildest excitement.

"I don't suppose it will do for me to be the only idle one," said Jack Carleton with a laugh and a quick thrill, "so here

goes!"

And with a "loud whoop" he leaped high in air, and began shouting in as discordant tones as those around him. In truth, there was no more enthusiastic member of the company than young Carleton, who jumped, yelled, and conducted himself so much like an irrestrainable lunatic that a spectator would have supposed he was setting the cue for the others.

Ogallah and several of the warriors glanced at the pale face with some curiosity, and probably a few comments were made upon the performance of the youth. Their precise tenor, as a matter of course, can only be conjectured, but Jack was confident they were of a complimentary character, for the heartiness which he showed must have pleased them.

While going about in this hilarious fashion, there were many collisions and overturnings. Once Jack bumped so violently against some one that both turned their heads and glared at each other. The offender was the Indian youth whom Jack had beaten so handsomely in the wrestling bout. For an instant the dusky lad held his hand on the knife in his girdle, and was on the point of rushing at Jack; but the latter meaningly grasped the handle of his weapon, and returned his glare with equal fierceness.

It was enough, and the revelry continued. Had the Sauks been in possession of firewater, the excitement would have intensified, until weapons would have been drawn and a general fight precipitated, accompanied with loss of more than one life. Such is the outcome of most of the similar feasts held among the red men all through the west: but there was not a drop of intoxicating stuff within reach of the village, and thus the murderous wind-up of the festival was averted.

The dance lasted until many dropped from exhaustion. Jack Carleton was compelled to cease from sheer weakness, and staggering to one side, sat down on what he supposed was a log, but which proved to be a very live Indian who was also in quest of rest. Being extended on his face, he threw up his back, much after the manner of a mustang when "bucking," and Jack was sent sprawling.

"It don't make any difference," muttered the boy with a laugh, "for I'm so tired that I can rest in one place as well as another, and I'll wait here till the show is over."

And wait he did for the conclusion, which came very speedily.

CHAPTER XXVI.

AN ALARMING DISCOVERY.

When the war party grew weary of the furious dance, they stopped, formed themselves in Indian file, and with the leader at the head, marched to the tepee, where they had left their rifles. They reappeared a moment later, each bearing his weapon in hand, and quickly reformed as before. Then all uttered several loud whoops, to which the enthusiastic supporters responded with equal vim, and they marched in the same file and with the same steady step toward the forest on the other side the clearing. Right soon they vanished from view among the trees. They had gone in quest of scalps, but in the hunt more than one proud spirited brave was to lose his own natural head-gear, and of those who went forth, the majority never came back again.

Now that the main cause of the hullabaloo was removed, the Sauks gained more time to view their immediate surroundings. When Jack tottered to one side to obtain the needed rest, he separated himself from Ogallah, who showed no signs of wearying of the terrific exercise.

"I guess it will be as well for me to hunt him up," was the decision of the youth, "for he may need my care."

But when the boy rose to his feet and looked around he saw nothing of the sachem, though all the rest of the village appeared to be in the immediate neighborhood. None of them had offered to molest Jack, but he felt great misgiving. Fortunately the lodge of the chieftain was not distant.

While the dance was going on, an experience befell young Carleton which has not been told, but which should be given. In the bright glare of the morning sun, the countenance of every one was distinctly visible, and Jack was impressed by the fact that one heavy, squat redskin was viewing him with peculiar interest. He passed in front of the boy several times, and on each occasion cast a piercing glance at him.

This of itself might not have been so noticeable but for the impression which deepened on Jack that he and the warrior had met at some other time and in some other place.

He was impatient with himself because he could not recall the circumstances. Had it been on the other side of the Mississippi, it would have been no wonder, for, from his earliest boyhood he had been accustomed to seeing red men, and it would be impossible to remember them all; but he was convinced he had met the Indian since he and Otto had immigrated to Louisiana.

Possibly Jack might have answered the question had he been given time to think over it without disturbance; but he had scarcely begun to look around for Ogallah, when he was alarmed by the demonstrations of the crowd around him. They began pushing forward, and the squaws and children showed an unpleasant disposition to lay hands on him.

There was no use of standing on dignity. In a few minutes he would be hemmed in so he could not move, and the lodge of the chieftain was not far away. Shoving a little screeching girl from his path, Jack bounded away like a deer, straight for the shelter. The act was so sudden that it threw him in advance of the rest, but there were plenty of runners as fleet as he, and despite the start he gained, several were at his heels, and one of them came very near tripping him. Jack pressed on, and, within a rod of the entrance to the kingly wigwam, the Indian who made the attempt to trip him appeared at his side, and then threw himself directly in front.

One glance showed the fugitive that it was the youth whom he had overthrown in the wrestling bout.

"Oh, it's you, is it?" exclaimed Jack; "you haven't had enough yet!"

And, quick as a flash, he drove his fist straight into the grinning visage with all the force he could concentrate in his good right arm. The amazed youth described a back somerset, his moccasins up in the air, and his ugly nose flattened to the shape of a crimson turnip. Then leaping over the prostrate figure, Jack made several bounds, and dove into the lodge just in time to avoid colliding with Ogallah, who had approached the door from the inside to learn the cause of the new tumult.

The chief went far enough to obtain a good view of the audacious youth who was in the act of climbing to his feet, and groping for his nose and principal features in a blind way, as though doubtful whether any of them were left. The clamoring rioters were scattered once more, Ogallah adding a few words, probably meant as a warning against their persecuting his ward, for it may as well be stated that from that time forward the demonstrations against Jack were of a much less serious nature.

"I suppose I've got to fight every time I go out of the lodge," said young Carleton, with a dogged shake of the head;

"they mean to kill me whenever they gain the chance, and more than likely I'll have to go, but I'll make it cost them more than they count on. When I can't use my fists I'll use my knife."

The mistress of the establishment, seating herself at the other end of the lodge, lit her pipe with as much indifference as though nothing unusual had taken place. Her mongrel pup came trotting along the space in his sidelong fashion and lay down with his nose against her slouchy moccasins, thereby proving his bravery, so far as any offense against his olfactories was concerned. Ogallah having made his speech and scattered the rabble, turned about and came slowly after the dog, seating himself near the middle of the lodge, where he also lit his long-stemmed pipe.

Just then some one pushed the bison skin aside, and stepped within the residence. Despite his sluggish manner, Ogallah flitted his head like a flash, probably suspecting that one of Jack's tormentors had dared to follow him within his shelter. But the individual was a full-grown warrior, who would not have descended to such business, and the grunt of the sachem was meant as a cordial welcome to him who grunted in return.

Jack Carleton also glanced at him, and was astonished not a little to observe that he was the same warrior who had scrutinized him so closely while the war feast was going on, and whom, the youth was well convinced, he had met elsewhere.

There could be no mistake as to the interest which the visitor felt in the captive, for his black, penetrating eyes were not removed from him during the several minutes which followed his entry into the lodge. Not only that, but halting in front of the lad, he began talking and gesticulating with useless vigor, inasmuch as Jack could not gain an inkling of what was meant. Indeed, had the youth attempted afterward to describe the gestures, he would have referred to them all as pointless, excepting the series which consisted of a violent sweep of both arms to the westward, after pointing his finger at the wondering Jack Carleton. Altogether at a loss as to their significance, it was fortunate (as will appear hereafter), that the lad was able to recall and describe the motions to another, who had a hundred fold more woodcraft and mental acumen than he.

Poor Jack could only shake his head and smile sadly by way of reply to this performance, and, after Ogallah had added something, the warrior ceased, took his seat beside the chief and employed himself in smoking and talking.

"Who *can* he be? He knows me and I--ah! I remember!"

Sure enough, and why had he not thought of it before? He was one of the five Indians who had left the other five and gone off with Otto Relstaub, on the day that he and Jack Carleton were captured by the band so near their own home. More than that, Jack had seen the others that same morning in the village at the war feast, though the recollection of them was so shadowy that it had not caused him the perplexity produced by the appearance of the warrior before him.

With the truth came the startling question--Where was Otto? While his captors were in the village, he certainly was elsewhere. What had become of him?

The question fairly took away the breath of Jack and made him faint at heart.

"He can't be at home, for Otto never could have made his escape from them; *he must be dead!*"

The first declaration of the youth my reader knows was true, for the visit of Deerfoot, several days later to Martinsville, as has been described, proved it. As to the second theory, that will be investigated in due time.

One of the most trying features of this occurrence was the certainty Jack felt that the Indian visitor was trying to tell him something about Otto. Those swinging arms, swaying head and apoplectic grunting carried a message within themselves, which, if translated would be found of great importance; but alas! the interpreter had not come.

While the lad sat on the bison robe, reflecting over the matter, he became aware of the peculiar sensations that alarmed him some time before. His head was dizzy, a curious lightness took possession of his limbs, and he felt that if he should undertake to cross the lodge, he would stagger and fall like a drunken man.

"I'm going to be ill," he said, pressing his hand to his forehead; "something is wrong with me."

The shock which came with the conviction was deepened by the belief that he was about to go through the experience that had befallen poor Otto Relstaub.

"He fell sick while tramping through the woods with the Indians, and they have either tomahawked or left him to die. These people with all their Medicine Men and Women know nothing about curing sick folks, and if I *do* become ill that will be the end of me."

The boy was in anything but a cheerful frame of mind, but he faced the position like a hero. He did not lose heart,

though he was sure that his situation was worse than ever before, and he did not forget any of the incidents of the journey from Kentucky to Louisiana, when many a time there seemed not the slightest ground for hope.

After smoking awhile Ogallah and his visitor got up and went out doors. The chief was gone but a short time when he came back, and, as he resumed his seat, grunted out something to his squaw, who immediately laid down her pipe, tenderly shoved the nose of her dog aside and left the place.

While Jack was wondering what the meaning of these movements could be, the attack of weakness which had alarmed him passed off, like the fleeing shadow of a cloud. It was followed by a natural rebound of spirits, and he too rose to his feet and walked toward the door.

The sachem looked inquiringly at him, but showed no objection to his departure. The boy placed his hand at his waist to make sure his hunting knife was there, and at the entrance paused a moment in doubt.

"I wonder whether they will set on me again," he said to himself; "if they do I will use my weapon--that's certain, and then there will be a bigger rumpus than before."

The knowledge that the chief who had served so many times as friend was near at hand added much to Jack's courage, when he finally let the bison-skin door drop behind him.

The explanation of the squaw's departure was manifest at once. She had a long sharpened stick in her hands, with which she was stirring the earth around some hills of corn growing on a small plot near their lodge. Extending his gaze, Jack saw many other squaws engaged in the same manner, but among them all was not a single man. They were lolling in their wigwams, smoking or dozing, or hunting in the woods for game or scalps.

The younger members of the community seemed to be the happiest of all. A number were playing by the river, and some were plunging into the stream, swimming, diving, and disporting themselves like porpoises; others were deep in some kind of game, on the clearing near the woods, and all were as shouting and demonstrative as so many civilized youngsters engaged in a game of ball.

Anxious to learn whether his last affray with his persecutors was likely to lessen or increase their hostility, Jack Carleton gradually advanced from the lodge until he was close to the group playing on the large cleared space, while those by the river were much nearer his refuge than he.

This was assuming considerable risk, as all must admit, but the boy took it with much caution and with his eyes wide open, meaning to make the most hurried kind of retreat the instant it might become necessary.



CHAPTER XXVII.

"GAH-HAW-GE."

Naturally enough, when Jack Carleton found himself standing close to the frolicking Indian boys on the clearing, he became interested in the game they were playing, which he saw was systematic, and in which all took part.

Like amusements of that sort, it was simple in its character and he quickly caught its drift. The boys divided themselves into two parties equal in numbers, one of which was ranged in line at the right of the clearing near the wood, while the other did the same at the other goal, which was a stump close to the stream. Each boy held a stick with a forked end in his hand, that being the implement with which the game is played.

When all was ready, one of the youthful Sauks walked out from the party near the woods, holding the stick with the crotch of a small branch supported at the point of bifurcation. This crotch was four or five inches in length, and as it was carried aloft, it looked like an inverted V, raised high so that all might see it.

Pausing in the middle of the clearing, the dusky lad with a flirt of the stick, flung the crotch a dozen feet in air and uttered a shout which was echoed by every one of the waiting players. Both sides made a furious rush toward the middle of the playground, where they came together like two mountain torrents, and the fun began. The strife was to get the crotch of wood to one of the goals, and each side fought as strenuously to help it along toward his own, as a side of foot-ball players struggle to do the opposite in a rough and tumble fight for the college championship.

Inasmuch as the only helps to be employed were the long, forked sticks carried in their hands, it will be seen that the game offered a boundless field for the roughest sort of play, mingled with no little dexterity and skill. Some swarthy-hued rascal, while on a dead run, would thrust the point of his stick under the crotch, and lifting it high above his head, start or rather continue with might and main toward his goal. At that time, as, indeed, at every minute, each young American was literally yelling like so many "wild Indians." Desperately as the youth ran, others more fleet of foot speedily overtook him, and one, reaching forward while going like a deer, lifted the crotch from the other stick, and circling gracefully about, sped for his own goal. But some youth at his heels leaped in air and with a sweep of his own stick struck the other and sent the crotch spinning and doubling through the air. A dozen other sticks were plunged after it, but it fell to the ground, and then the fight reached its climax. The parties became one wild, desperate, shouting, yelling, scrambling mob. Legs and arms seemed to be flying everywhere, and the wonder was that a score of limbs and necks were not broken. But it rarely hurts a boy to become hurt, and though bruises were plenty, no one suffered serious harm. After a few minutes' struggle, the crotch would be seen perched on the stick of one of the boys, who, fighting his way through the mob, ran with astonishing speed, with friends and foes converging upon him, and the certainty that he would be tripped and sent flying heels over head, before he could reach safety.

After awhile, when the prize had been gradually worked toward the goal of the stronger party, some youth, by a piece of skill and daring, would make a dash for home and bear down all opposition. It followed, of course, that his side had won, and, after a brief rest, the game was renewed and pressed with the same vigor as before.

This Indian boy's game is still played by many Indian tribes. Among the Senecas it is called "Gah-haw-ge," and I make no doubt that more than one reader of these pages has witnessed the exciting amusement, which so thrilled the blood of Jack Carleton that he could hardly restrain himself from taking part in the fun. But he had no crotched stick, without which he would have been a cypher, and then, as he had never attempted the game, he knew he possessed no skill. The venture would have been rash, for in the excited state of the Indian youths, and armed as they were with sticks, it is almost certain that at some stage of the game they would have turned on the pale face and beaten him to death.

The rough amusement lasted fully two hours, during which Jack Carleton and many of the warriors were interested spectators. At last the youngsters became weary and the sport ended. As the stumpy youths straggled apart, the perspiration on their faces caused them to shine like burnished copper. All at once one of them emitted a whoop and broke into a swift run, the rest instantly falling in behind him, and speeding with the same hilarious jollity.

The heart of Jack Carleton stood still, for the leading Indian was coming straight toward him.

"They're aiming for me," was his conclusion, as he gripped the handle of his knife and half drew it from his girdle.

But the whooping youth swerved a little to the right, and was ten feet away from the terrified captive when he dashed by with unabated speed. He did not so much as glance at Jack, nor did the procession of screeching, bobbing moon-faces, as they streamed past, give him the least attention.

The lad who set off with the lead, kept it up with undiminished speed, until he reached the edge of the river. Then he

made a leap high upward and outward. Jack saw the crouching figure, with the head bent forward, the arms crooked at the elbow, and the legs doubled at the knees, during the single breath that it seemed suspended in the air. Then describing a beautiful parabola, he descended, and striking the water, sent the spray flying in every direction, while the body went to the bottom. The others followed, so fast that the dusky forms dropped like hailstones, tumbled over each other, splashed, dove, frolicked, shouted, and acted with the same abandon as before.

It is by such sports and training that the American Indian acquires his fleetness, high health, and powers of endurance.

But Jack had grown weary of watching the antics of the youngsters, and turned about and walked homeward. He saw from the position of the sun that it was near noon, and he was hungry; but he was more impressed by the change of treatment since his last affray than by anything else. He walked past five separate wigwams before reaching the imperial residence, which for the time being was his own. There were warriors, girls, and squaws lounging near each one. They raised their repellant faces and looked at the captive with no little curiosity, but offered him no harm.

When half way home, the flapping door of one of the conical wigwams was pushed aside, and the stooping figure of a large Indian boy straightened up and walked toward Jack, who, with an odd feeling, recognized him as the youth whom he had overthrown in wrestling, and afterwards knocked off his feet by a blow in the face.

"I wonder whether he means to attack me?" Jack asked himself, in doubt for the moment as to what he should do. At first he thought he would turn aside so as to give the young Sauk plenty of room; but that struck him as impolitic, for it would show cowardice.

"No, I won't give him an inch; he is alone, and if he wants another row, I'm agreeable."

It was hard for Jack to restrain a smile when he looked at the face of the Indian. It was exceptionally repulsive in the first place, but the violent blow on the nose had caused that organ to assume double its original proportion, and there was a puffy, bulbous look about the whole countenance which showed how strongly it "sympathized" with the injured part.

Although the American Indian, as a rule, can go a long time, like the eagle, without winking his eyes, this youth was obliged to keep up a continual blinking, which added to his grotesque appearance, as with shoulders thrown back and a sidelong scowl he strode toward the river. Jack returned the scowl with interest, and it scarcely need be said that the two did not speak as they passed by.

Feeling some fear of treachery, the captive kept his ears open, and watched over his shoulder until he reached his own wigwam, where he stood for a moment and gazed in the direction of the river, which was partly shut out by one of the intervening lodges. He was just in time to see the young Sauk of the battered countenance leap into the river, where, doubtless, he was able to do much toward reducing the inflammation of his organ of smell.

When the captive entered his home as it may be called, he saw the chieftain stretched flat on his back and snoring frightfully. The dog was asleep on the other side the fire, and the squaw, after toiling so long in the "corn field," was preparing the mid-day meal. She was a type of her sex as found among the aborigines, as her husband, even though a monarch, was a type of the lazy vagabond known as the American warrior.

At the side of the queen lay the gourd which usually contained water. Peeping into the round hole of the upper side, she shook the utensil, and the few drops within jingled like silver. She snatched it up, looked toward Jack, and grunted and nodded her head. If the lad could not understand the language of the visitor sometime before, he had no such difficulty in the case of the squaw. With real eagerness he sprang forward and hastened out of the wigwam to procure what was needed.

The one visit which he made the spring in the morning had rendered him familiar with the route, and it took but a minute or two for him to fill the gourd and start on his return. He found that a number of young girls had followed him, and were at his heels all the way back; but, though they talked a good deal about him, and displayed as much curiosity as their brothers, they did not molest him. Once, when they ventured rather too close, Jack whipped out his knife, raised it on high, and made a leap at them, expanding his eyes to their widest extent, and shouting in his most terrifying tone, "Boo!"

It produced the effect desired. The young frights scattered with screams of terror, and hardly ventured to peep out of their homes at the ogre striding by.

When Jack entered the lodge he found Ogallah awake. Evidently he was not in good humor, for his manner showed he was scolding his much better half, who accepted it all without reply or notice. No doubt she received it as part of the inevitable.

The chief, however, refrained from following the civilized custom of beating the wife, and when the meat and a species of boiled greens were laid on the block of wood which answered for a table, his ill-mood seemed to have passed, and he ate with his usual relish and enjoyment.

Jack Carleton crossed his legs like a tailor at his side of the board, but before he could eat a mouthful a violent nausea seized him, his head swam, and he was on the verge of fainting. Ogallah and his squaw noticed his white face and looked wonderingly at him.

"I'm very ill!" gasped Jack, springing to his feet, staggering a few steps, and then lunging forward on the bison skin, where he flung himself down like one without hope.

The violence of the attack quickly subsided, but there remained a faintness which drove away every particle of appetite, and it was well that such was the case, for had he taken any food in his condition the result must have been serious.

Meanwhile the squaw had assumed her place at the table by her liege lord, and both were champing their meal as though time was limited, and there was no call to feel any interest in the poor boy who lay on his rude couch, well assured that his last illness was upon him.

"What do they care for *me*?" muttered Jack, his fright yielding to a feeling of resentment, as the violence of the attack subsided. "I wonder that they spared my life so long. They would have been more merciful had they slain me in the woods as they did Otto, instead of bringing me here to be tormented to death, and as I know they mean to do with me."

Lying on his arm, he glared at the couple with a revengeful feeling that was extraordinary under the circumstances. A morbid conviction fastened itself upon him that Ogallah had taken him to his lodge for the purpose of keeping him until he was in the best physical condition, when he would subject him to a series of torturing and fatal ceremonies for the amusement of the entire village.

In the middle of these remarkable sensations exhausted nature succumbed, and the captive fell asleep.



CHAPTER XXVIII.

A PATIENT OF THE MEDICINE MAN.

When Jack Carleton awoke, it was night and the rain was falling. He was feverish and his brain was so overwrought that it was a full minute before he could call to mind where he was. His slumber had been disturbed toward the latter part by dreams as wild, vague and unimaginable as those which taunt the brain of the opium eater.

When he remembered that he was in the wigwam of Ogallah, the chieftain, he turned upon his side and raised his head on his elbow. The fire at the other end of the apartment that had been burning brightly, had gone down somewhat, but enough remained to light up the interior so that the familiar objects could be seen with considerable distinctness.

He observed the figure of the sachem stretched out in the dilapidated slouchiness peculiar to himself. He did not bother to remove any of his clothing, and, though the place was quite chilly he drew none of the bison robes over him. He had lain down on one, but had managed in some way to kick it half way across the lodge, and his couch, therefore, was the simple earth, which served better than a kingly bed of eider down could have done.

The favorite posture of the queenly consort was not a prone one, but that of crouching in a heap near the coals, where, with a blanket that had never been washed since it was put together years before, gathered about her shoulders, her skinny arms clasping her knees and her head bowed forward, she would sleep for hours at a time. The reflection of the flickering flames against her figure caused it to look grotesque in the fitful light, and the captive gazed at her for a long time, led to do so by an infatuation which was not strange under the circumstances.

There, too, was the dog which, could he have been given his way, would have done nothing all his life but sleep and eat. As was his custom, he was at the feet of his mistress, a position which he seemed to prefer above all others. Then the blankets, deer and bison skins, and rude articles hanging about the room, the two columns in the center supporting the clumsy roof, the craggy logs and sticks at the side, the hanging skin which served as a door and was barely visible, the tumble down appearance of everything, and withal the solemn stillness which brooded within the lodge: all these made the scene weird and impressive in a striking degree.

The fire burned so fitfully that it threw ghostly shadows about the apartment, sometimes flooding it with light, and again falling so low that the other end of the lodge could not be seen at all. Without, the night could not have been more dismal. There was no thunder or lightning, and the rain fell with that steady patter on the leaves, which at ordinary times forms the most soothing accompaniment of sleep, but which to Jack Carleton only added to his dismal dejection of spirits.

The roof of the lodge was so thick and diversified in its composition that the music of the patter on the shingles was lost. At intervals the wind stirred the limbs, and, though none of the trees were very close, the lad could hear the southing among the branches, as the hunter hears it in early autumn when the leaves begin to fall.

Could the melancholy croaking of frogs in the distance have fallen on the ears of the boy, he would have had all the factors that go to bring on the most absolute loneliness of which a human being is capable. Unfortunately Jack did not need that addition to render his misery complete, for it was furnished by his own condition and situation.

"I am many long, long miles from home," he reflected, as a sharp pain gyrated through his brain, and the flickering fire seemed to be bobbing up and down and back and forth in a witches' dance; "and little hope is there of my ever seeing mother again. Ah, if I was only there now!"

He let his head fall back and heaved a deep sigh. He recalled his plain but comfortable bed, which became the most deliciously comfortable the mind can conceive, when his mother shoved the blankets in about him, or "tucked him up," as she never failed to do every evening he was at home; the good-night kiss from those affectionate lips; the magic touch of those fingers which pushed back the hair from his forehead, ere she bent over him with the last salute; the loving, caressing care when he was threatened with the slightest illness, which made the boy long for illness for the sake of such care: these and other blessed memories came back with a power which caused the eyes to overflow with sorrow.

Ah, fortunate is that boy, even though his years carry him to the verge of full manhood, who has his mother to watch over his waking and sleeping hours, and her prayers to follow his footsteps through life.

The pattering rain, the sighing wind, and the ghostly, semi-darkness soothed the sachem and his wife, but Jack Carleton was as wide awake as when pushing across the Mississippi in the half overturned canoe, with the fierce Shawanoes firing at him and his friends. Probably, in the entire Indian village, he was the only one who was awake. Had

a band of Sioux or Iroquois stolen through the woods and descended on the Sauks they would have been found defenceless and unprepared.

Through one of the crevices behind Jack, came a draught of wind which, striking him on his shoulders, caused him to shiver. He moved a little distance away, and drew the bison robe closer about him, for though a raging fever was coursing through his veins, he knew the danger of subjecting himself to such exposure.

He was consumed with thirst, and seeing the clumsy gourd by the side of the sleeping squaw, he crawled forward on his hands and knees in the hope of finding water in it. Fortunately there was an abundance and he took a long, deep draught of the fluid, which was not very fresh nor cold, but which was the most refreshing he had ever swallowed.

Creeping back to his primitive couch, he continued a deep mental discussion of the question whether the best thing he could do was not to steal out of the lodge and make a break for home. There could be little, if any doubt, as to the ease with which such a start could be made. He had only to rise to his feet, pass through the deer-skin door, which was merely tied in position, and he could travel miles before morning and before his absence would be noted. The falling rain would obliterate his trail, so that the keen eyes of the Sauks would be unable to follow it, and he could make assurance doubly sure by taking to the water until a bloodhound would turn up his nose in disgust. Furthermore, he was confident that he would be able to obtain possession of his rifle and enough ammunition with which to provide himself food on the way home.

This was what may be called the rose-colored view of the scheme, which had a much more practical side. While under ordinary circumstances Jack would have been able to take care of himself at a much greater distance from home, and in a hostile country, yet the alarming fact remained, that he was seriously ill and such exposure was almost certain to drive him delirious, with the certainty of death to follow very speedily.

Though he took such a gloomy view of his own position among the Sauks (whose tribal name, of course, he had not yet learned), he was not without a certain degree of hope. He had suffered no harm thus far and it is always the unexpected which happens. While he had declared to himself that Ogallah was simply training him for the torture, as it may be expressed, yet it might be the chieftain being without children, meant to adopt him as a son. If such was his intention, manifestly, the best thing for Jack to do was to lie still and prayerfully await the issue of events. No doubt if you or I were in his sad predicament, that is the course that would have been followed, but Jack could not bring himself to submit to such inactivity when the prospect of liberty was before him. Allowance, too, must be made for the condition of the boy. He was scarcely himself, when, compressing his lips, he muttered,

"I won't stay here! They mean to kill me and I may as well die in the woods! I will take my gun and go out in the night and storm, and trust in God to befriend me as He has always done."

Aye, so He had; and so He will always befriend us, if we but use our opportunities and fly not in His face.

Carefully he rose to his feet, and, gathering the bison robe around his fevered frame, glanced at the two unconscious figures, and then at the form of his rifle leaning against the side of the lodge and dimly revealed in the flickering firelight.

As he stepped forward to recover his gun, everything in the room swam before his eyes, a million bees seemed to be humming in his brain, and, clutching the air in a vague way, he sank back on his couch with a groan, which awakened Ogallah and his squaw. The chief came to the sitting position with a surprising quickness, while the wife opened her eyes and glared through the dim firelight at the figure. The dog slumbered on.

Ogallah seeing that it was only the captive who was probably dying, lay back again on the bare earth and resumed his sleep. The woman watched the lad for several minutes as if she felt some interest in learning whether a pale face passed away in the same manner as one of her own race. Inasmuch as the sick boy was so long in settling the question, she closed her eyes and awaited a more convenient season.

From the moment Jack Carleton succumbed, helpless in the grasp of the fiery fever, he became sick nigh unto death. Those who have been so afflicted need no attempt to tell his experience or feelings. Why he should have fallen so critically ill, cannot be judged with certainty, nor is it a question of importance; the superinducing cause probably lay in the nervous strain to which he was subjected.

He instantly became delirious and remained so through the night. He talked of his mother, of Deerfoot, of Otto, and of others; was fleeing from indescribable dangers, and he frequently cried out in his fright. The chief and his squaw heard him and understood the cause, but never raised their hands to give him help.

Jack became more quiet toward morning and fell into a fitful sleep which lasted until the day was far advanced. Then, when he opened his eyes, his brain still somewhat clouded, he uttered a gasp of dismay and terror.

Crouching in the lodge beside him was the most frightful object on which he had ever looked. It had the form of a man, but was covered with skins like those of a bear and bison, and a long thick horn projected from each corner of the forehead. The face, which glared out from this unsightly dress, was covered with daubs, rings and splashes of red, white and black paint, applied in the most fantastic fashion. The black eyes, encircled by yellow rings, suggested a resemblance to some serpent or reptilian monster. The figure held a kind of rattle made of hollow horn in either hand, and was watching the countenance of the sick boy with close attention. When he saw the eyes open, he made a leap in the air, began a doleful chant, swayed the rattles and leaped about the lodge in the most grotesque dance that can be imagined. Ogallah and his squaw were not present, so Jack had the hideous creature all to himself.

Enough sense remained with the boy for him to know that he was the Medicine Man of the tribe, whom the chieftain had been kind enough to send to his help. Instead of giving the youth the few simple remedies he required, he resorted to incantation and sorcery as has been their custom for hundreds of years. The barbarian fraud continued to chant and rattle and dance back and forth, until Jack's eyes grew weary of following the performance. The mind, too, which was so nigh its own master in the morning, grew weaker, and finally let go its hold. Sometimes the waltzing Medicine Man suddenly lengthened to the height of a dozen yards; sometimes he was bobbing about on his head, and again he was ten times as broad as he was long, and hopping up and down on one short leg. From the other side of the lodge he often made a bound that landed him on the bison skin, which lay over the breast of the sick boy, where he executed a final tattoo that drove the last vestige of consciousness from him.

It was all a torturing jumble of wild and grim fancies, with occasional glimmerings of reason, which led Jack to clutch the air as if he would not let them go; but they whisked away in spite of all he could do, and a black "rayless void" descended upon and gathered round about him, until the mind was lost in its own overturnings and struggles, and all consciousness of being departed.

CHAPTER XXIX.

CONVALESCENCE.

As nearly as can be ascertained, Jack Carleton lay the major part of four days in the Indian lodge, sick nigh unto death, with his brain topsy turvy. During that time he never received a drop of medicine, and scarcely any attention. The chief was gone most of each day, and the squaw spent many hours out doors, looking after her "farm." When the patient became unusually wild, she would give him a drink of water and attend to his wants. A few of the Indians peeped through the door, but as a whole they showed surprising indifference to the fate of the captive. Had he died, it is not likely he would have been given even Indian burial.

Several times the Medicine Man put in an appearance, and danced and hooted and sounded his rattles about the lodge, after which he took himself off and would not be seen again for many hours.

On the fourth day, while Jack was lying motionless on his bison skin and looking up to the composite roof, his full reason returned to him. Indeed, his brain appeared to have been clarified by the scorching ordeal through which it had passed, and he saw things with crystalline clearness. Turning his head, he found he was alone in the lodge, and, as nearly as he could judge, the afternoon was half gone. The fire had died out, but the room was quite warm, showing there had been a rise of temperature since the night of the rain. Peering through the crevices nearest him, he observed the sunlight was shining, and could catch twinkling glimpses of Indians moving hither and thither; but there was no outcry or unusual noise, and business was moving along in its accustomed channel.

With some trepidation and misgiving, Jack rose on his elbow and then carefully assumed the sitting position. Every vestige of dizziness had fled, and his head was as clear as a bell. He was sensible, too, of a faint and increasing desire for food; but he was equally conscious that he was very weak, and it must be days before he could recover his normal strength.

After sitting for a few minutes, he threw the bison skin from him, and rose to his feet. Having held the prone position so long, he felt decidedly queer when he stood erect once more. But he walked back and forth, and knew within himself that the crisis of his illness had passed and he was convalescent.

Of course it was Jack's vigorous constitution and the recuperating power of nature which, under Heaven, brought him round. The medicine man had no more to do with his recovery than have many of our modern medicine men, who, sit beside the gasping patient, feel his pulse, look at his tongue and experiment with the credulous dupe.

Jack Carleton possessed enough sense to appreciate his condition. Very little sickness had he ever known in life, but there had been plenty of it around him, and his mother was one of those nurses, whose knowledge far exceeded that of the ordinary physician, and whose presence in the sick room is of itself a balm and blessing.

The boy knew, therefore, from what he had learned from her, that the time had come when he must be extremely careful what he ate and how he conducted himself. Moving over to the unattractive table, he found some scraps of meat left. They were partly cooked, but likely as good for him as anything could have been. He ate considerable, chewing it finely, and finding his appetite satisfied much sooner than he anticipated.

But that for which Jack longed above everything else was a plunge in the cool water. His underclothing sorely needed changing, and he would have been absolutely happy could he have been in the hands of his tidy mother if only for a brief while.

However, there was no help for him, and he could only wait and hope for better things. After he had resumed his seat on the bison skins, a project took shape in his mind, which was certainly a wise and prudent one, with promises of good results. Knowing he was recovering rapidly, he resolved to keep the fact from his captors. While still gaining strength and vigor, he would feign weakness and illness, on the watch for a chance that was sure to come sooner or later, and which he would thus be able to improve to the utmost.

Convalescence revived with ten-fold force the desire to end his Indian captivity and return home. Uncertain as he was of the time that had passed since starting on his hunt, he knew that it was long enough to awaken the most poignant anguish on the part of his loved mother, who must suffer far more, before, under the most favorable circumstances, he could return.

When it was growing dark, Ogallah and his squaw entered. The latter quickly had the fire going and, as its glow filled the room, both looked inquiringly at the patient on the other side the lodge. He in turn assumed, so far as it was possible, the appearance of a person in the last collapse, and took care that the expression of his countenance should

show no more intelligence and vivacity than that of an idiot.

The couple exchanged a few words, probably referring to Jack, but they seemed to care little for him, and he was glad that he excited so slight interest, since they were less likely to suspect the deception he was practicing upon them. The squaw, after cooking the meat, brought a piece over to Jack, who stared in an absurd fashion before shaking his head, and she turned about and resumed her place by the table, after which she lit her pipe and squatted near the fire.

The patient soon fell into a refreshing sleep, which lasted until it began growing light, when he awoke, feeling so well that it was hard to keep from leaping in the air with a shout, and dashing out doors. He was sure that he could hold his own in a game of *gah-haw-ge*, if the chance were only given.

But he resolutely forced down his bounding spirits, though he could not suppress the feeling of hunger which was fast assuming a ravenous intensity. When the squaw offered him a half cooked piece of meat, he snatched at it with such wolf-like fierceness that the squaw recoiled with a grunt of dismay. Jack made sure he had secured the prize, when he devoured every particle, which luckily was enough fully to satisfy his appetite.

Whenever the boy saw the chief or his squaw looking at him, he assumed the role of a dunce, and it must be confessed he played it with unquestionable fidelity to nature. He probably afforded considerable amusement to the royal couple who could have had no suspicion that the hopeful youth was essaying a part.

When the forenoon was well along, the chief and his squaw went out, the latter probably to do the manual labor, while the former occupied himself with "sitting around" and criticising the style in which she ran the agricultural department of the household. The dog rose, stretched, yawned and then lay down again and resumed his slumber. Jack was meditating what was best to do, when the door was pushed aside, and the frightful-looking Medicine Man crouched to the middle of the lodge and glared at the patient, who looked calmly back again, as though he felt no special interest in him or anything else, but all the same Jack watched him with more entertainment than he had ever felt before.

First of all, the man with the horns and rattles, took amazingly long steps on the toes of his moccasins around the apartment between the two "columns" which supported the roof, as though afraid of awaking the baby. At the end of each circumambulation, he would squat like a frog about to leap off the bank into the water, and glare at the boy, the corners of whose mouth were twitching with laughter at the grotesque performance.

When tired of this, the Medicine Man stopped in the middle of the apartment, and all at once began using his rattles to the utmost, and dancing with the vigor of a howling dervish. He accompanied, or rather added to the racket, by a series of "hooh-hoohs!" which were not loud, but exceedingly dismal in their effect.

The sudden turmoil awoke the canine, which raised his head, and surveying the scene for a moment, rose, as if in disgust, and started to trot outdoors to escape the annoyance. As he did so, he passed directly behind the Medicine Man, who, of course, did not see him. At the proper moment he made a backward leap, struck both legs against the dog, and then tumbled over him on his back, with his heels pointing toward the roof. The angered pup, with a yelp of pain and rage, turned about, inserted his teeth in the most favorable part of the body, and then limped out of the wigwam with a few more cries, expressive of his feelings. The Medicine Man gave one frenzied kick and screech as the teeth of the canine sank into his flesh, and, scrambling to his feet, dashed out of the lodge with no thought of the dignity belonging to his exalted character.

Jack Carleton rolled over on his back and laughed till the tears ran down his cheeks and he could scarcely breathe. It was the funniest scene on which he had ever looked, and the reaction, following his long mental depression, shook him from head to foot with mirth, as he had never been shaken before. He could not have restrained himself had his life been at stake. After awhile, he would rub the tears from his eyes, and break forth again, until, absolutely, he could laugh no more.

Laughter is one of the best tonics in the world, and that which convulsed Jack Carleton was the very medicine he needed. Though still weak, he felt so well that he could not have felt better.

"I've no business here," he exclaimed, coming sharply to the upright position and running his fingers through his hair in a business-like fashion; "every nerve in my body is just yearning for the cool breath of the woods, and I feel as though I could run and tumble over the mountains all day and feel the better for it. But I must keep it up till the way opens."

After thinking over the matter, he decided to venture outside. Rising to his feet, he walked briskly to the door, pulled the skin aside and passed out, immediately assuming the manner and style of a boy who was barely able to walk and then only with the greatest pain.

He expected a crowd would instantly gather around him, but he actually limped all the way to the spring without

attracting any special attention. It was inevitable that a number should see him, and two youngsters called out something, but he made no response and they forebore to molest him further.

"If I should meet that chap that has found out he can't wrestle as well as he thought he could, he will hardly be able to keep his hands off me. Maybe he would find he had made another mistake, and maybe it would be I who was off my reckoning. However, I've my knife with me, and I will use that on him if there is any need of it, but I hope there won't be."

The water tasted deliciously cool and pure, and he bathed his hands and face again and again in it. He longed to take a plunge into the river, but that would have been impolitic, and he restrained the yearning until a more convenient season should offer.

Jack finally turned about and began plodding homeward, his eyes and ears open for all that could be seen and heard. It was a clear warm day, and the village was unusually quiet. Some of the squaws were working with their primitive hoes, the children were frolicking along the edge of the wood, where the shade protected them from the sun, and the warriors were lolling within the tepees or among the trees. More than likely the major part of the large boys were hunting or fishing.

Sure enough, Jack was still beyond the limits of the village, when he saw his old antagonist walking toward him. The Indian lad was alone, but several squaws and warriors were watching his movements, as though he had promised them some lively proceedings. Jack noticed that his nose had assumed its normal proportions, from which he concluded that more time than was actually the case had elapsed since he himself was prostrated by illness. The pugnacious youth advanced in his wary fashion, gradually slackening his gait until nearly opposite the pale face, who felt that the exigencies of the situation demanded he should brace up so as to impress the youth with the peril of attacking him.

While several paces separated the two, the Indian came to a halt, as if waiting for the other. It would not do to show any timidity, and, without changing in the least his pace, the pale faced youth partly drew his knife from his girdle and muttered with a savage scowl:

"I'm ready for you, young man!"

CHAPTER XXX.

OUT IN THE WORLD.

It cannot be doubted that the Indian youth intended to make an assault on Jack Carleton. He must have known of his prostrating illness and concluded that he was a much less dangerous individual than when they first met; but there was something in the flash of the captive's eye and a meaning in the act of drawing his knife part way from his girdle, which caused the young Sauk to hesitate. Evidently he concluded that much could be said for and against the prudence of opening hostilities.

Jack strode forward, with his shoulders thrown back and a scowl, as though he preferred that the youth should make the attack. He kept his gaze on the savage until some distance beyond him, the latter turning as if on a pivot and narrowly watching him to the very door of the lodge. Jack then withdrew his attention and took a survey of matters in front.

The same quiet which he had noticed a short time before held reign. The few Indians moving about paid no attention to the lad, with the exception, perhaps, of one: that was Ogallah, the chieftain who had just noticed him on his return from the spring. The noble head of the band was lolling in the shade of one of the wigwams, discussing affairs of state with one of his cabinet, when he observed the youth. Summoning all his latent energy, he rose to his feet and strolled in the direction of his own home. The moment Jack saw him, he assumed the most woe-begone appearance it was possible to wear. The defiant attitude and manner, which were a challenge of themselves, vanished: the shoulders drooped forward: the step became slouchy and uncertain, and the poor fellow looked as if about to sink to the ground in a final collapse.

Pretending not to see the sachem, Jack feebly drew the bison skin aside and pitched into the lodge. Glancing around, he found he was alone, whereupon he strode straight across the space, lay back on his couch, and kicked up his heels like a crowing infant.

"I must work off some of this steam or I shall burst," he said to himself, rolling and tumbling about in the very abandon of rapid convalescence: "It's hard work for me to play sick, but it must be done for the big prize that is at stake."

He kept close watch on the entrance, and, when a hand suddenly drew the skin aside and the bent figure of the chieftain came through and straightened up within the lodge, young Carleton had the appearance of a person whose sands of life were nearly run out.

Ogallah walked forward and examined him closely. He saw a youth who was unquestionably a "pale face," staring vacantly at him for a few seconds, and who then rolled on his face with a groan that must have been heard some distance beyond the lodge. Restless flingings of the limbs followed, and, when the sachem turned away, he must have concluded that it would never be his privilege to adopt the young gentleman into his family.

Toward night the squaw and dog appeared and the domestic economy of the aboriginal residence went on as before. When a piece of cooked meat was brought to Jack, he devoured it with a ferocity which threatened incurable dyspepsia, and he swallowed a goodly draught of water freshly brought from the spring.

Recalling the mistake he made while on the journey through the woods to the village, Jack Carleton resolved he would not fail through any similar forgetfulness. He fell asleep at that time on account of his exhaustion, but now the case was different: he had had enough slumber to last two days, while his brain was so clear and full of the scheme that it was impossible for him to rest until after it had been tested.

Nothing is more weary than the waiting which one has to undergo when placed in his position. The hours drag by with scarcely moving footsteps, and before the turn of night comes, one is apt to believe the break of day is at hand. From his couch, Jack furtively watched how things went, which was much the same as he had seen before.

The pup ate until they would give him no more and then stretched out at the feet of the squaw, who, having finished her meal, lit her pipe and puffed away with the dull animal enjoyment natural to her race. The chief himself led in that respect, and the two kept it up, as it seemed to Jack, doubly as long as ever before. At last they lay down and slept.

The captive had noted where his rifle was placed. It leaned against the side of the lodge where it had stood every time he saw it, so that, if he could steal out of the place in the night without arousing the inmates, it would be easy for him to take the gun with him.

The fire flickered and burned up, then sank, flared up again, and at last went into a steady decline, which left the room filled with a dull glow that would have failed to identify the objects in sight had not the boy been familiar with their

appearance.

When convinced that the two were sound asleep, Jack repeated the prayer that had trembled so many times on his lips, rose as silently as a shadow, and began moving across the lodge on tip-toes to where his invaluable rifle leaned. Lightly would that warrior have need to sleep to be aroused by such faint footfalls.

The boy had not yet reached his weapon, when he was almost transfixed by the vivid recollection of the attempt he made to get away when on the journey to the village. He believed his liberty was secured, when he suddenly awoke to the fact that Ogallah and his warriors were trifling with him.

Could it be the chief had read in the captive's face the evidence of his intention?

This was the question which for the moment held life in suspense, while Jack Carleton stood in the middle of the dimly lit wigwam and gazed doubtfully toward the figures near the smoldering fire.

"Likely enough he is only pretending he's asleep, and, just as I am sure the way is clear, he will spring to his feet and grab me."

It was a startling thought indeed, and there were a few moments when the lad was actually unable to stir; but he quickly rallied and smiled at his own fears.

"If I once get my gun in hand, he won't be able to stop me----"

He was reaching forward to grasp it, when one of the embers fell apart, and a yellow twist of flame filled the apartment with a glow which revealed everything. Jack stopped with a faint gasp and turned his head, sure that the chief was on the point of leaping upon him; but he was as motionless as a log, and the hand of the boy was upraised again as he took another stealthy step forward. A half step more, and his fingers closed around the barrel. The touch of the cold iron sent a thrill through him, for it was like the palpable hand of Hope itself.

The powder horn lay on the ground beside the weapon, the Indian having made no use of either since they came into his possession. The string was quickly flung over the shoulder of the boy, who then began moving in the same guarded fashion toward the door, throwing furtive glances over his shoulder at the king and queen, who did not dream of what was going on in their palace.

Jack Carleton "crossed the Rubicon" when he lifted the rifle and powder horn from the ground. Had he been checked previous to that he would have turned back to his couch, and made the pretense that what he did was the result of a delirium. But with the possession of his weapon came a self-confidence that would permit no obstruction to divert him from his purpose. He would not have fired on the chief or his squaw (except to save his own life), for that would have been unpardonable cruelty, but he would have made a dash into the outer air, where he was sure of eluding his pursuers, so long as the night lasted.

But the slumber of the couple was genuine. They did not stir or do anything except to breathe in their sonorous fashion. Jack took hold of the bison skin to draw it aside, when he found the door was locked. It was an easy matter, however, to unfasten it, and a single step placed him outside the wigwam.

Instead of hurrying away, as his impatience prompted him to do, the youth stood several minutes surveying the scene around him. The Sauk village was asleep, and the scrutiny which he made of the collection of wigwams failed to show a single star-like twinkle of light. The night was clear, and a gibbous moon was high in the sky. Patches of clouds drifted in front of the orb, and fantastic shadows whisked across the clearing and over the wigwams and trees. The dwellings of the Indians looked unsightly and misshapen in the shifting light, and Jack felt as though he were gazing upon a village of the dead.

Turning to the southward, he faced the narrow, winding river. From the front of the chieftain's lodge, he caught the glimmer of its surface and the murmur of its flow, as it swept by in the gloom on its way to the distant Gulf. A soft roaring sound, such as we notice when a sea-shell is held to the ear crept through the solitude like the voice of silence itself.

Jack was impressed by the scene, but when he saw a shadowy figure flit between two of the wigwams, and was certain he heard a movement in the lodge behind him, he hastily concluded it was the time for action and not meditation. With a start that might have betrayed him, he quickly left his position and hastened away.

It was natural that the many hours devoted by Jack during his convalescence, to forming his plan of procedure, should have fixed the plan he meant to follow. Thus it was that the few minutes spent in front of the chieftain's lodge were not occupied in debating the proper course to take, and, when he once made a start, he went straight ahead without turning to the right or left.

The reader will readily see how great were the advantages on the side of the fugitive. He was certain of a fair start, which ought to have made his position absolutely safe, for if the American Indian is phenomenally skillful in following the trail of an enemy through the wilderness, that enemy, if he suspects such pursuit, ought to be able to throw him irrecoverably from the scent.

Furthermore, it is scarcely conceivable that the trail of Jack Carleton could be taken at the door of Ogallah's wigwam and followed as the warriors trailed a fugitive through the woods; for the ground whereon he walked had been tramped hard by multitudinous feet, and the faint impressions of the boy's shoes could not be individualized among the thousand footprints. It was far different from fleeing from a camp in the woods, where his trail crossed and was interfered with by no other, and where the slightest depression or overturning of the leaves was like the impression on the dusty highway.

The fugitive's first intention was to take to the woods, and guiding his course by the moon and sun, travel with all the speed and push at his command. Fortunately he was enabled to see that such a course was almost certain to bring disaster. Instead of doing that, he went directly to the river side, where he had seen the Indians frolicking in the water, and he himself had so often sighed for the same delicious privilege.

There were five canoes partly drawn up the bank and waiting the will of their owner. They were made of bark with curved ends, fantastically painted, and each was capable of carrying, at least, six or eight able-bodied warriors. They were so light that the lad found no trouble in shoving the first clear of the shore, and sending it skimming out into the stream. As it slackened its pace, it turned part way round, like a bewildered swan, as if uncertain which way to go. Then it sailed triangularly down current, much after the manner of Ogallah's dog when on a trot.

It was not more than fairly under way, when the second glided out after it, then the third, the fourth and finally the fifth and last. This contained Jack Carleton who took the long ashen paddle in hand and began plying it with considerable skill. He was paying less attention to his own progress than to the manipulation of the other canoes, which he had set free for a special purpose.

He kept the five in the middle of the current until a fourth of a mile was passed. Then he gave one such a violent push that it ran its snout against the bank and stuck fast. Some distance down stream he repeated the man[oe]uvre with the second boat against the opposite shore, continuing the curious proceeding until he was alone in the single canoe, floating down stream.



CHAPTER XXXI.

JOURNEYING EASTWARD.

Jack Carleton reasoned in this wise:

In the morning Ogallah would notice his absence from the lodge and would make immediate search for him. He would quickly learn that the entire navy of his nation had vanished as completely as has our own, and the conclusion would be warranted that it had either run away with the pale face or the pale face had run away with the navy: at any rate they had gone off in company and the hunt would begin.

A quarter of a mile down stream, the first installment of the fleet would be found stranded on the southern shore, as though it was used to set the fashion followed by our country a century later. The conclusion would be formed that the audacious fugitive had landed at that point and plunged into the interior; but a brief examination would show the Sauks their mistake and they would rush on along the banks until the second craft was discovered, when the same disappointment would follow.

This would continue until every one of the five canoes had been found and examined. Inasmuch as the fifth contained Jack himself, it will be seen that more care was required in his case; but the programme had been laid out to its minutest details while the enemy was a guest in the lodge of the king.

After the fourth canoe had been stuck against the bank, the number lying on alternate sides, Jack removed his clothing and letting himself over the stern, plunged into the cool, refreshing current, where he dove, frolicked, sported, and enjoyed himself to the full--his happiness such that he could hardly refrain from shouting for very joy. He kept this up as long as prudent, when he clambered into the boat again, donned his clothing, floated a short distance further, and shot the craft into land with a force that held it fast.

A brief calculation will show that the boy had gone something more than a mile from the Indian village, and he had secured what may well be termed a winning lead; but much still remained to be done. He was now about to leave the element where even the trained bloodhound would be at fault, and step upon the land, where the keen eye of the Sauk warrior would follow his footprints with the surety of fate itself. Hence it depended on his covering up the tell-tale trail, unless chance, against which no one can guard, should direct his pursuers to it.

Both shores of the stream were covered with forest which grew to the edge of the water. In some places there was undergrowth which overhung the river, but it was not very plentiful. The position of the moon in the sky was such that most of the time the middle of the stream reflected its light, while the shores were in shadow. These looked indescribably gloomy, and but for bounding spirits which set the whole being of the lad aglow, he would have been oppressed to an unbearable degree. The course of the river for the first mile was remarkably straight, but it made a sweeping bend just before Jack ran his canoe into shore. His aim now was to quit the water without leaving any tell-tale traces behind. If he stepped ashore and walked away never so carefully, he would fail to do what was absolutely necessary. He believed he accomplished his purpose, by running the boat under some overhanging undergrowth, where he laboriously pulled it up the bank, until it could not be seen by any one passing up or down stream, and could be found by no one moving along the shore itself, unless he paused and made search at the exact spot. The probability of any Indian doing such a thing, it will be conceded, was as unlikely as it could be.

But, on the other hand, the first step the fugitive took would leave an impression which would tell the whole story, and it now depended on the manner in which he overcame that special danger. Carefully sounding the water, Jack found it was quite shallow close to land. He therefore waded a full hundred yards from the canoe before leaving the stream, and then, with his clothing saturated to his knees, he stepped ashore, took a score of long careful steps straight away, and his flight, it may be said, was fairly begun.

"I don't know that I have done so much after all," said he, when he had reached a point a hundred yards from the stream, "for some one of the Indians may strike my trail before sunrise to-morrow morning; but I have done all I can at the start, and if I can have a few miles the lead, it'll be no fun for them to overtake me."

There was no reason why such an advantage should not be secured, for, although the moon was of no help to him in determining his course, he had studied the whole thing so carefully while lying in the lodge of the chieftain Ogallah, that he was as sure of the direction as if he held a mariner's compass in his hand.

Jack, it will be borne in mind was in the southern portion of the present State of Missouri, the frontier settlement of Martinsville lying at no great distance westward from Kentucky, and north of the boundary line of Arkansas, as it has existed since the formation of that Territory and State. The Sauk party of Indians who made him captive had pursued an

almost westerly direction, taking him well toward the Ozark region, if not actually within that mountainous section. It followed, therefore, that he should pursue the easterly course, for the stream along which he had been borne, had carried him almost due north, and it was not necessary for him to diverge in order to leave it well behind.

The fugitive lost no time, but pushed through the wood as fast as he could. It was hard to restrain his desire to break into a run, but he did so, for nothing could have been gained and much was likely to be lost by such a course. Despite the bright moon overhead, few of its rays found their way through the dense vegetation and foliage. Though he encountered little undergrowth, yet he was compelled to use his hands as well as his eyes in order to escape painful accidents.

The hours of darkness were valuable to Jack, yet he longed for daylight. He wanted to be able to see where he was going, and to use what little woodcraft he possessed. So long as he was obliged to keep one hand extended in front in order to save his face and neck, he could adopt no precautions to hide his footprints from the prying eyes of his enemies. He knew he was leaving a trail which was as easy for his enemies to follow, as though he walked in the yielding sand. Much as he regretted the fact, it could not be helped so long as the darkness lasted, and he wasted no efforts in the attempt to do so. It would be far otherwise when he should have daylight to help him.

Fortunately perhaps, he had not long to wait. He had not gone far when he observed the increasing light which speedily announced the rising of the sun; but he was shocked to find that despite his care and previous experience in tramping through the wilderness, he had got much off his course. Instead of the orb appearing directly in front of him, as he expected it to do, it rose on his right hand, showing that instead of pursuing an easterly course he was going north--a direction which took him very little nearer his home than if he traveled directly opposite.

As may be supposed, Jack had no sooner learned his mistake than he faced about and corrected it.

"I've got my bearings now," he muttered confidently, "and I know too much about this business to drift off again. Hurrah!"

He could not deny himself the luxury of one shout and the toss of his cap in the air. This completed, he strode forward with more dignified step, and settled down to work, after the manner of a sensible youth who appreciates the task before him. He calculated that he was two or three miles from the Indian village, much closer than was comfortable, and he could not stop to eat or rest until it should be increased. He felt that this day was to be the decisive one. If he could keep beyond the reach of his pursuers until the setting of the sun, he would throw them off his trail so effectively that they could never recover it.

"And why shouldn't I do it?" he asked, confidently: "Deerfoot taught me how to hide my tracks, and I never can have a better chance than now, where everything is in my favor."

He alluded to the number of streams, the rocky and diversified surface and the general rugged character of the country through which his journey was leading him.

In such a region there must be numerous opportunities for covering his trail from the penetrating glance of those who had spent their lives in studying the ways of the woods. The stealthy tread of the shoe or moccasin over the flinty rock left no impression, but it was hardly possible to find enough of such surface to prove of value; but when he caught the gleam of water through the trees, his heart gave a leap of pleasure.

"*This* is what I wanted," he exclaimed, coming to a halt on the bank of a rapidly flowing creek, some fifty feet wide: "here is something that will wipe out a fellow's trail."

The current was fairly clear and rapid. It was evidently deep, and it seemed to the lad that it was the compression of a considerably wider stream into a space that added velocity to its flow. Its general course, so far as he could learn, was eastwardly, and was therefore favorable to him.

There was but the one way of utilizing the creek, and that was by floating over its surface. Jack could have strapped his gun to his back and swum a considerable distance, but that would have been a useless exertion attended by many discomforts. His purpose was to build a raft or float which would allow the current to carry him for a mile or so, when he could land and continue his journey.

Better fortune than he anticipated awaited him. While moving along the shore in search of logs and decayed wood from which to construct his float, he was astonished to run plump upon an Indian canoe, which was drawn up the bank beyond the probability of discovery.

"Well, now that *is* lucky!" exclaimed the gratified lad, who quickly added the saving clause, "that is, I *hope* it is, though where you find canoes, it is best to suspect Indians."

He looked for them, but no sign greeted eye or ear. He supposed the boat belonged to the tribe which he had left the night before, though it was somewhat singular that it should have been moored such a distance from home. Possibly this was a much used ferry where something of the kind was found convenient.

Nothing was to be gained by speculating about the ownership of the craft, but the part of wisdom was to make use of the means that was so fortunately placed within his reach. Without any delay, therefore, he shoved the frail structure into the water, leaping into it as it shot from shore. No paddle could be found on or about the vessel, and he used his rifle for the implement, as he had done more than once before. Holding it by the barrel, he swung the stock through the current and found it served his purpose well. A slight force is sufficient to propel an Indian canoe through or over the water, and the task was easy enough for Jack Carleton.

"It may be this boat belongs to some other Indians who do not live very far off, and if they should come down and find me sailing away with it, I don't know what would follow."

However, the opportunity was the very one he was anxious to secure, and he was too wise to allow any fancy that might cross his mind to frighten him from turning it to the best account. Guiding the canoe to the middle of the creek, he faced down current, and used his improvised paddle with all the skill and strength at his command. The stream, as I have said, ran rapidly, so that with his exertions he made good progress.

He was struck with the similarity of the shores to those of the larger stream which ran by the Indian village. The wood was dense, and at intervals was so exuberant that it looked difficult for a rabbit to penetrate. Then came long spaces where the forest was so open that he could look far into its depths. The course of the creek was so winding that he could see only a short distance ahead, and several times his own momentum carried him close into land before he could accommodate himself to the abrupt curve around which he shot with no inconsiderable speed.

There remained the comforting thought that every minute thus occupied was taking him further from his captors, who were without the means of following his trail; but at the very moment when Jack was felicitating himself on the fact, he was startled by a most alarming discovery.

CHAPTER XXXII.

A MISCALCULATION.

The youth had stopped paddling for a few minutes' rest, when he observed that he was close upon a broad clearing which came close to the water's edge. He had scarcely time to notice that much when he saw several large conical objects, and before he knew it, he was floating in front of an Indian village, numbering some twelve or fifteen wigwams. Squaws, children, and even warriors were lolling about very much as in the Sauk village, from which he had fled only a short time before.

It fairly took away the breath of Jack. In all his fancies he had not once thought of anything like this, or he would have avoided running into what promised to prove a fatal trap.

"My gracious!" he gasped, "this is a little too much of a good thing; it'll never do at all."

The settlement was on the right hand bank of the stream, which just there had a northerly course. It was, therefore, on the shore where the fugitive desired to land. Dipping his improvised paddle, he drove the boat ahead with all the power he could command, and drew a breath of partial relief, when another sweeping curve shut him from sight.

It was apparent that the Indians failed to grasp the situation in its entirety. They were accustomed to see white men hunting and trapping in that region, and they may have felt no wish to molest one of their number, though tempted so to do by his unprotected situation. At any rate, they stared at the canoe without offering to disturb its occupant. The black-eyed youngsters gaped wonderingly, and Jack saw several point in his direction, while they doubtless indulged in observations concerning him.

But it need not be said that he was frightened almost out of his wits, and filled with self-disgust that he should have gone blindly into a peril against which a child ought to have mounted guard. The moment he felt he was out of sight of the redmen, who showed far less curiosity than he expected, he sprang ashore and shoved the canoe back into the current, which speedily carried it out of sight. Having landed, Jack hastened among the trees at the fastest gait possible. He was close to the village, although beyond sight. Glancing over his shoulder he expected every minute to see some of the dusky warriors, and to hear their whoops as they broke in pursuit.

It must have been that this particular Indian village felt little if any interest in the white youth who paddled in front of their door, for not one of the number made a move by way of pursuit.

When Jack had pushed through the wilderness for a couple of miles he formed the same conclusion, and dropped to a deliberate walk. The face of the country was rocky and broken, and he was confident that in many places he had left no trail at all. But, with that conviction came two others: he not only was tired but was excessively hungry. He had caught sight of game more than once while on the march, as it may be called, but refrained from firing through fear that the report of his gun would guide others who were hunting for him. At the same time he had twice heard the discharge of rifles at widely separated points. Probably they were fired by Indians on the hunt, or possibly some of the trappers of that section had not yet started on their long journey to St. Louis. At any rate when the sun had passed the meridian and the afternoon was well advanced, he made up his mind that he would take the first chance to secure food, no matter in what shape it presented itself.

He smiled to himself, when within the succeeding ten minutes he caught sight of a young deer among the trees less than one hundred feet in advance. It bounded off affrighted by the figure of the youth, who, however, was so nigh that he brought it to the ground without difficulty.

When he ran forward to dress it, he was surprised to find it had fallen within a rod of a ravine fifty feet deep.

This ravine, which had evidently been a canon or ancient bed of some mountain stream, was twenty yards or more in width, the rocky walls being covered with a mass of luxuriant, creeping vines, through which the gray of the rocks could be seen only at widely separated intervals. The bottom was piled up with the luxuriant vegetable growth of a soil surcharged with richness.

Jack Carleton took only time enough to comprehend these points when he set to work kindling a fire against the trunk of a tree which grew close to the ravine. When that was fairly going, he cut the choicest slices from his game, and it was speedily broiled over the blaze. There was no water, so far as he knew, closer than the creek, but he did not specially miss it. Seasoned by his keen hunger, the venison was the very acme of deliciousness, and he ate until he craved no more.

Then as he sat down on the leaves with his back to the tree opposite the blaze, he probably felt as comfortable as one in his situation could feel. He had pushed his strength almost to a dangerous verge, when rest became a luxury, and as he leaned against the shaggy bark behind him, it seemed as though he could sit thus for many hours without wishing to stir a limb.

"I suppose," he said to himself in a drowsy tone, "that I ought to keep on the tramp until night, when I can crawl in behind some log and sleep till morning. It may be that one or two of the warriors from that last village are on my trail, but it don't look like it, and a fellow can't tramp forever without rest. I'll stop here for an hour or two, and then go ahead until dark. There's one thing certain,--I've thrown Ogallah and his friends so far off my track that they'll never be able to find it again."

If any conclusion could be warranted, it would seem that this was of that nature, and yet by an extraordinary chain of circumstances the very danger which was supposed to have ended, was the one which came upon the fugitive.

As he had anticipated, the method of his flight was discovered very early the succeeding morning, and many of the warriors and large boys started in pursuit. The hunt was pressed with a promptness and skill scarcely conceivable. It was inevitable that they should be puzzled by the singular proceeding with the canoes, and the pursuers became scattered, each intent on following out his own theory, as is the case with a party of detectives in these later days. The last boat was not found, but the identical youth who had fared so ill at the hands of Jack, came upon his trail where it left the river. His black eyes glowed with anticipated revenge, which is one of the most blissful emotions that can stir the heart of the American Indian.

The young Sauk might have brought a half dozen older warriors around him by uttering a simple signal, but nothing could have induced him to do so. He had his gun, knife, and tomahawk,--all the weapons he could carry and all that were possibly needed. He had learned long before to trail his people through the labyrinthine forest, and in a year more he expected to go upon his first war trail. He hated with an inextinguishable hatred the pale face who had overthrown him in the wrestling bout and then had struck him a blow in the face, which, figuratively speaking, compelled him to carry his nose for several days in a sling. Ogallah had protected the sick pale face from molestation, but now the chief was the most eager for his death.

The fugitive evidently believed he was safe against all pursuit, and it would therefore be the easier to surprise him. What greater feat could the young Sauk perform than to follow and secretly slay the detested lad? What a triumph it would be to return to the village with his scalp dangling at his girdle!

Holding his peace (though it was hard to keep down the shout of joy that rose to his lips), he bounded away like a bloodhound in pursuit.

Despite the precautions taken by Jack Carleton, the pursuer found little trouble in keeping to his trail, until it abruptly terminated on the bank of the creek, where advantage had been taken of the canoe. There he paused for a time at a loss what to do.

Of course he knew of the Indian village at no great distance down stream and on the other side. Familiar as he was with the creek, he kept on until he reached a place where it broadened and was so shallow that he waded over without trouble. The red men whom he visited were friendly with the offshoot of the Sauk tribe, so that no risk was run in going among them. When he did so, as a matter of course, he gained the very information he was seeking; the canoe with the fugitive in it went by the village early in the morning. The pursuer declined the offer of help and went on alone. He was hardly outside the village when he struck the trail again, and, knowing he was at no great distance from the youth, he followed with a vigor and persistency that would not be denied.

But during most of the time he was thus employed, Jack Carleton was similarly engaged, and, despite the energy of the young Sauk, the hours slipped by without bringing him a sight of the pale face, whose scalp he meant to bring back suspended to his girdle. The fugitive had about recovered his usual health, and he improved the time while it was his. Had he pushed forward until nightfall before halting for food or rest, he never would have been overtaken.

But the signs showed the dusky youth that he was close upon the unsuspecting pale face, and he strode along with the care and skill of a veteran warrior. Finally his trained senses detected the smell of burning wood, and a moment later he caught sight of the camp-fire of Jack Carleton. The Indian stopped, and after some reconnoitering, concluded he could gain a better view from the other side the camp. With incredible pains he moved around to that side and was gratified by a success which glowed in his swarthy countenance and through his well-knit frame.

He saw the pale face sitting on the ground, with his back against a tree, his mouth open, and his eyes closed. His gun rested on the ground beside him, and the wearied fugitive was asleep, and as helpless as an infant.

The Sauk had only to raise his gun, take a quick aim, and shoot him dead, before he awoke or learned his danger. He could leap upon and finish him with his knife, but that would involve some risk to himself. He decided to drive his tomahawk into the skull of his victim, and to scalp him immediately after.

As the first step toward doing so, he leaned his rifle against the nearest tree, so as to leave his arms free, and then, without any more ado, grasped the handle of his tomahawk and poised himself with the purpose of hurling it with resistless force and unerring aim. He was not twenty feet distant from Jack; but while in the very act of raising the missile above his head, his arm was struck a side blow so violent as almost to break the bone. The tomahawk flew from his grasp to the earth, and in a twinkling some one caught him around the waist, lifted him clear of the ground, ran rapidly the few paces necessary, and flung him over the rocks into the ravine!

The Sauk struggled desperately to save himself, but he could not check, though he retarded his descent. He landed with a force that knocked the breath from him, but the abundance of vines and vegetable growth saved his life. After a time he slowly gathered himself together, and seeing nothing of the enemy who had handled him so ruthlessly, he slowly climbed to his feet and began picking his way out of the ravine.

He was compelled to walk a long distance before reaching a place where he was able to clamber to the level ground above. When at last he managed to do so, he sat down on a fallen tree to rest and indulge in a retrospective survey.

His rifle and tomahawk were irrecoverably gone, and nothing would have induced him to go back to look for them. If his right arm was not broken, it was so injured and lamed that a long time must elapse before he could use it, and altogether his enterprise could only be regarded as a disastrous failure.

"It was an Indian that struck the tomahawk from my grasp," reflected the victimized Sauk; "he was a terrible warrior!"

The youth was right in each respect, for the name of the Indian who made such short work with him was Deerfoot the Shawanoe.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

CONCLUSION.

Jack Carleton was in the middle of a pleasant dream of home and friends, when a light touch on his shoulder caused him to open his eyes and look up with a quick, inquiring glance.

"Hello! Deerfoot, is that you?" he exclaimed, springing to his feet and grasping the hand of his old friend, on whose handsome features lingered the shadowy smile which told of the pleasure he felt in finding his beloved friend after such a long search.

"Deerfoot is glad to take the hand of his brother and press it; he has hunted a good while for him and his heart was sad that he did not find him."

"How, in the name of conscience, did you ever find me at all?" demanded Jack, who slapped him on his back, pinched his arm, and treated him with a familiarity which few dared show toward him.

"I've had a very curious time, I can tell you, old fellow--hello! where did that gun come from, and that tomahawk?" exclaimed the wondering youth, catching sight of the weapons.

"'Twill be well if my brother does not stay here," replied the young Shawanoe, who, while he felt no particular fear of the Sauk whom he had flung into the ravine, saw the possibility of his procuring friends and coming back to revenge himself. Prudence suggested that the two should secure themselves against such peril. Deerfoot, therefore, picked up the tomahawk, shoved it into the girdle around his waist, grasped the rifle in his right hand, and strode forward with his free, easy, swinging gait. As there was no call for special caution, he told the story of his encounter with the young Sauk who had raised his tomahawk to brain his sleeping friend. Deerfoot's first intention was to drive an arrow through his body, but he chose the method already described of frustrating his purpose.

To make his story complete, it was necessary for the young Shawanoe to begin with his visit to Jack's mother, and to describe the mental agony of the good parent over the unaccountable absence of her boy. Then he told of his meeting with the Sauk warrior, Hay-uta, who made such a determined effort to take his life. From him he learned that a white youth was a captive in the village, and he concluded, as a matter of course, that there were to be found both Jack and Otto, though no reference was made to the latter. The sagacious Shawanoe, however, discovered an important fact or two which I did not refer to in telling the incident. The first was that Hay-uta was one of the five Sauks who separated from the other five directly after the capture of the boys. With his company was Otto Relstaub, the Dutch youth, while Jack Carleton was with the other. Hay-uta and his friends were on their way to the village, and were almost within sight of it, when Hay-uta felt such dissatisfaction over their failure to bring back any scalps or plunder, that he drew off and declared he would not go home until he secured some prize of that nature. His encounter with Deerfoot followed. When he left the latter he went straight to his village. Deerfoot could have trailed him without trouble, but, inasmuch as the Sauk had departed in that manner, and the Shawanoe knew where his village lay, he purposely avoided his trail, and followed a course that diverged so far to the right that he first reached the village passed by Jack in his canoe. His arrival, as sometimes happens in this life, was in the very nick of time. From the red men, who showed a friendly disposition toward him, he learned that not only had a pale face youth passed down the stream in a canoe, but a young warrior aflame with passion was close behind him.

The wise Deerfoot was quick to grasp the situation, and he set out hot-footed after the aforesaid flaming young warrior, and followed him with such celerity that he came in sight of him long before the Sauk arrived at the camp-fire. Little did the furious young Sauk dream, while panting with anticipated revenge, and aglow with exultation, that one of his own race was close upon his heels, ready to launch his deadly arrow at any moment, and only waiting to decide in what manner the Sauk should be "eliminated" from the whole business.

Seated around the camp fire late that night, the two friends talked over the past. Jack gave full particulars of what befell him since his capture by the Indians, up to the hour when Deerfoot joined him. The young Shawanoe listened with great interest to the story, for it will be admitted that in many respects it was an extraordinary narrative. He told Jack that the people with whom he had passed more than a week were Sauks, under the leadership of the chieftain whose lodge had sheltered the prisoner during his captivity. The Sauks were a brave, warlike people, and this offshoot, which had located in that portion of Upper Louisiana, was among the most daring and vindictive of the tribe. Their leniency toward Jack was remarkable, and could only be accounted for on the supposition that Ogallah took a fancy to the youth and meant to adopt him into his family. It was not at all unlikely that Jack's suspicion that they were "training" him to figure in a scene of torture was correct. His escape, therefore, could not have been more opportune.

Let not the reader accuse the two of indifference, because so little has been recorded in their conversation, concerning Otto Relstaub, the companion of both in more than one scene of peril, and held by them in strongest friendship. They had talked more of him than of any one else, though Jack's heart was oppressed by a great sorrow when he thought of his mother and her grief over his continued absence. Jack had asked Deerfoot over and over again as to his belief concerning their absent friend, but the Shawanoe, for a long time, evaded a direct answer.

"I can tell you what *I* think," said Jack with a compression of his lips and a shake of his head: "Otto is dead."

"How did my brother meet his death?" calmly asked Deerfoot.

"Those five warriors started by another route to the village and they meant to take him there as they took me. After Hay-uta, as I believe you call your friend, left, they made up their minds that it wasn't of any use to bother with poor Otto, and so they tomahawked or shot him."

Having given his theory, Jack Carleton turned toward the young Shawanoe for his comment, but he sat looking intently in the fire and remained silent. Resolved that he should say something on the painful subject, Jack touched his arm.

"Deerfoot, do you think I am right?"

The Indian looked in his face and still mute, nodded his head to signify he agreed with him.

"Poor Otto," added Jack with a sigh, "I wonder how his father and mother will feel when they learn that their boy will never come back."

"They will mourn because the horse was not found," was the characteristic remark of Deerfoot.

"You are right," exclaimed Jack, with a flash of the eye; "if old Jacob Relstaub could get his horse, I believe he and his wife would go on and smoke their pipes with as much piggish enjoyment as before, caring nothing for their only child. How different my mother!" he added in a softer voice: "she would give her life to save mine, as I would give mine to keep trouble from her. I say, Deerfoot, Otto and I were a couple of fools to start out to hunt a horse that had been lost so many days before and of which we hadn't the slightest trace--don't you think so?"

The young Shawanoe once more turned and looked in his face with a mournful expression, and nodded his head with more emphasis than before.

"I knew you would agree with me," assented Jack, "though, to tell the truth, I had very little hope myself that we would ever get sight of the animal, but old Jacob Relstaub really drove Otto out of his house and compelled him to go off on the wild goose hunt. I couldn't let him go alone and, with mother's consent, I kept him company."

"My brother pleased the Great Spirit, and Deerfoot will pray that he shall ever act so that the Great Spirit will smile on him."

"I shall most certainly try to do so," said Jack with a resolute shake of his head: "He has shown me a hundred-fold more mercies than I deserve and I mean to prove that I have some gratitude in me."

The conversation went on in this fashion until the evening was far along, when Jack lay down near the fire, intending to sleep for the rest of the night. Deerfoot assured him there was no danger and as was his custom, the young Shawanoe brought forth his Bible to spend an hour or so in studying its pages. Before he had fixed upon the portion, Jack Carleton came to the sitting position and, with some excitement in his manner, said:

"Deerfoot, I forgot to tell you something: I don't know how it came to slip my mind."

The Indian looked in his face and quietly awaited his explanation.

"One of those Sauks that belonged to Otto's party came into the lodge of Ogallah when I was there, and I think he tried to tell me something about Otto, but I couldn't understand his words or gestures."

"Let my brother show Deerfoot what the movements were," said the other, manifesting much interest.

They were so impressed on Jack Carleton that, springing to his feet, he placed himself in front of Deerfoot and reproduced most of the gestures, the words, of course, being gone. The Shawanoe fixed his eyes on his friend, and scrutinized every motion with eager eyes. Suddenly he sprang up with more feeling than he had shown in a long time. And well might he do so, for he had translated the sign language, as given to him by Jack Carleton, and it told a far different story than the one which both had adopted some time before.

"Otto is alive," was the startling declaration of Deerfoot.

"He is!" exclaimed the amazed Jack, "I should like to know who told you that."

"That was what the Sauk warrior said to my brother; that was what he tried to tell him, but my brother did not understand his words."

"Are you really sure Otto is alive?"

"Deerfoot cannot be sure of that which his eyes do not behold; but such were the words of Hay-uta the Sauk; they did not kill Otto."

"Then where *is* he?"

"He is a long ways off; we will hasten to the settlement that the heart of the mother of my brother shall be lightened. Then Deerfoot will lead his brother on the hunt for him who is so many miles away toward the setting sun."

Within the following three days, Jack Carleton arrived home and was clasped in the arms of his mother, who rejoiced over his return as though it had been a very rising from the dead. Deerfoot had conducted him swiftly through the forest and not a hair of the head of either was harmed.

The limits of this work having been reached, it will be impossible in these pages to give an account of what befell Otto Relstaub, after his capture by the little band of Sauk Indians; but all that, as well as the eventful hunt for him by Deerfoot the Shawanoe and young Jack Carleton, shall be fully told in "Footprints in the Forest," which will form *Number Three of the Log Cabin Series*.

THE END.

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