

FICTION

Oliver Optic

Field and Forest

A PUBLIC DOMAIN BOOK

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FICTION



OLD MATT AND THE HORSE-THIEVES.
PAGE 12.



THE UPWARD AND ONWARD SERIES.

FIELD AND FOREST;

OR,

THE FORTUNES OF A FARMER.

By

OLIVER OPTIC,

AUTHOR OF "YOUNG AMERICA ABROAD," "THE ARMY AND NAVY STORIES,"
"THE WOODVILLE STORIES," "THE BOAT-CLUB STORIES," "THE
STARRY FLAG STORIES," "THE LAKE-SHORE
STORIES," ETC.

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TO
MY EXCELLENT YOUNG FRIEND
CHARLES H. FOWLE

This Book

IS AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED.

THE UPWARD AND ONWARD SERIES.

1. *Field and Forest*; OR, THE FORTUNES OF A FARMER.
 2. *Plane and Plank*; OR, THE MISHAPS OF A MECHANIC.
 3. *Desk and Debit*; OR, THE CATASTROPHES OF A CLERK.
 4. *Cringle and Cross-Tree*; OR, THE SEA SWASHES OF A SAILOR.
 5. *Bivouac and Battle*; OR, THE STRUGGLES OF A SOLDIER.
 6. *Sea and Shore*; OR, THE TRAMPS OF A TRAVELLER.
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PREFACE

"FIELD AND FOREST" is the first of THE UPWARD AND ONWARD SERIES, in which the career of a youth from his childhood to manhood is illustrated and described. In following out the plan which the author adopted when he began to write books for the young, and which he has steadily pursued in the fifty volumes now before the public, he has endeavored to make his hero a young man of high aims and lofty purposes, however strange, stirring, or even improbable his adventures might seem. Phil Farringford, the leading character of this series, though he may have some of the conceit which belongs to youth, is always honest, true to principle, and faithful to the light which he seeks in the gospel, and in all the other sources of wisdom. He aims to be a Christian young man, respects and loves all the institutions of religion, and labors to make his life an "Upward and Onward" progress.

The scene of the story is laid upon the waters of the upper Missouri: and while the writer hopes the reader will find the story sufficiently stirring and exciting to engage his attention, he also trusts that Phil's Christian principles, his reverence for the Bible, and his devotion to duty and principle, will receive the earnest consideration of his young friends.

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FIELD AND FOREST;
OR,
THE FORTUNES OF A FARMER.

CHAPTER I.

IN WHICH PHIL COMES HOME WITH PLENTY OF FISH.

"Hollo, Phil!"

That was the name to which I answered, especially when it was spoken as decidedly as on the present occasion.

"I'm coming," I replied, at the top of my lungs.

I had been a-fishing in a stream which flowed into the Missouri about a mile above my home. I had been very successful, and had as many fish as I could carry. I was gathering them up, after I had fastened my bateau to the stake, and intended to convey them to the Castle, as our log hut was rather facetiously called by its owner.

"Phil! Phil!" repeated the voice above the bluff of the river.

It was Matt Rockwood who called; and as he was the only master and guardian I had ever known, I always obeyed him--when I could not help doing so. His tones were more imperative than before, and I proceeded with greater haste to gather up my fish, stringing them upon some willow twigs I had just cut for the purpose.

Crack went a rifle. The sound startled me, and, dropping my fish, I ran up the steep bank of the river to the summit of the bluff on which the Castle was located.

"What's the matter?" I asked, when I reached the spot by the side of the house where Matt stood.

"Don't you see?" he replied, raising his rifle again, and taking aim.

I looked in the direction towards which his weapon was directed, and saw two Indians, mounted, each of whom had a led horse.

"Them pesky Injuns hes stole our hosses," added old Matt, as he fired his rifle the second time. "'Tain't no use; I might as well shoot at the north star."

The two Indians, with their animals, disappeared in the forest beyond the clearing, and Matt's last chance was gone. A few years earlier in the life experience of the old squatter, the thieves would not have escaped so easily, for Matt was a dead shot before the rheumatism took hold of him. Now he hobbled about a little on a pair of rude crutches I had made for him; but his eyes were rather weak, and his arm was unsteady. His rifle was no longer unerring, and the thieving savages could plunder him with impunity.

There was an Indian village about ten miles from the Castle, and from the known character of its inhabitants, and the direction the marauders had taken, we concluded they had come from there. I went into the house, and procured my rifle--a light affair, which old Matt had purchased on board a trading steamer for my use.

"'Tain't no use, Phil. You needn't run arter 'em," said the old man, shaking his head. "You don't expect to run fast enough to ketch Injuns on hossback--do you?"

On second thought I concluded to take his view of the matter.

"But we can't afford to lose them hosses, Phil," continued old Matt, as he hobbled to a seat. "And if we can, them Injuns shan't hev 'em. I ain't a-goin' to hev old Firefly rid by them critters, and starved, and abused--I ain't a-goin' to do it! Them hosses must be got back. You're gittin' old enough to do sunthin' with Injuns now, Phil, and you must git them hosses back agin."

"I'm ready to do anything I can; but, if I can't catch the Indians, what shall I do?" I replied.

"We can't do a thing in the field without them hosses, Phil; and 'tain't no use to try. We can't plough the ground, and we can't haul no wood. We must hev them hosses back agin, if I hev to hobble arter 'em myself."

"What can I do?" I asked, willing to fight the Indians if necessary; and I was rather impatient over the amount of talk the old man bestowed upon the subject.

"I'll tell you what to do, Phil. Hosses is skuss with them varmints. It's been a hard winter for vagabonds as don't lay up nothin' for cold weather, and they lost half their hosses--starved 'em to death. Them critters they rid on wan't nothin' but frames, and you could hear their bones rattle when they trotted. They won't go far on them hosses to-day, for it's

most night now."

"But if I'm going to do anything, it's time to be doing it," I suggested, impatiently.

"Keep cool, boy; 'tain't time to go yet," added the old man, lifting one leg painfully over the other with his hands. "About dark, them Injuns will camp for the night, and that'll be the time to take 'em."

"Very well; then I will go down and bring up my fish. I'm hungry, Matt," I added.

"So am I."

"While they are cooking, we will talk the matter over."

"Stop a minute, Phil," said Matt, as I started for the river. "There was a jug of fire-water in the barn. I left it there this artemoon. I used some on't to wash Firefly's leg where 'twas swelled up. Go into the barn, and see if it's there now."

I knew what the old man was thinking about, and I went in search of the jug. I could not find it, and so reported to him.

"I didn't think o' that jug before. The Injuns come into the castle, and asked for fire-water. I never gin 'em none, and shan't begin now. They were lookin' for hosses, and went to the barn. They took that jug of whiskey, but it's jest like camphene. 'Tain't fit to drink no more'n pizen."

"They will get drunk on it," I added.

"They kin git drunk very quick on such stuff as that, and they won't go fur afore they do it, nuther."

"Then I can very easily get the horses."

"If you work it right, you kin, Phil; but if they are crazy drunk, you musn't go to showin' yourself to 'em. Wait till they go to sleep, as they will when they git drunk enough. Then take your hosses and come home."

"I will go down and get the fish, Matt."

"Go, boy."

The old man rose with difficulty from his seat, and, with the rifle in his right hand, with which also he was obliged to handle a crutch, he hobbled into the Castle. I hastened down to the river, excited by the prospect of an adventure that night with the Indians. I was a boy of only thirteen, and the idea was an immense one. I was to go out into the forest and recapture the horses--an undertaking which might have taxed all the skill and courage of a person of mature age and experience. But I considered myself equal to the mission upon which I was to be sent. I had been brought up in a log cabin, and even as a child had made long hunting and trapping tramps with old Matt Rockwood. I had stood before angry Indians, as well as thieving and drunken ones. I had shot deer, bears, and wolves, as well as smaller game, with my rifle.

Old Matt had always taught me that there was nothing in the world to be afraid of but one's own self--a philosophy which was very pretty in theory, but not always capable of being reduced to practice. But I certainly was not afraid of an Indian, or of any number of them. From my rough old guardian I had acquired a certain contempt for them; but I had never passed through an Indian war or an Indian massacre. I had heard of the savage Blackfeet, and other tribes, who were not to be contemned, but I had never seen any of them.

I hastily completed the stringing of my fish, thinking all the time how I should conduct the expedition in which I was to engage. Indeed, I could think of nothing else; for, although I had often been away on similar excursions, it was always in company with my guardian, while on the present occasion I was to manage for myself. I forgot that I was hungry, and only lived in the brilliant schemes for recovering the horses, capturing the camp, and even wiping out the Indians themselves. I was bent on desperate deeds, and intended to convince old Matt that I was worthy of the confidence he reposed in me.

"You have been lucky to-day, Phil Farringford," said a voice near me, as I rose from the bottom of the boat to step on shore.

It was Mr. Mellowtone, an old neighbor of ours, who had squatted on an island in the river. He was a good friend of mine, and I regarded him with the utmost love and respect. He had taught me to read and write, and furnished me books, which had been both a comfort and a blessing to me.

"I have done first rate to-day," I replied. "Won't you take some of these?"

"Thank you, Phil Farringford. I will take two or three of them, if you have any to spare."

"Take as many as you can use, Mr. Mellowtone," I continued, removing from the twig some of the handsomest of the fish.

"Enough, Phil Farringford. I am not a swine, to eat more than six pounds of trout in a day," said he, with a smile.

I strung them upon a willow twig, and handed them to him, as he stood in his barge--a very aristocratic craft, which he had brought with him from the regions of civilization.

"I must be in a hurry now, Mr. Mellowtone. Won't you come up to the Castle with me? The Indians stole both of our horses this afternoon, and I am going out after them."

"That's unfortunate," he replied, running his barge upon the bank. "I will walk up to the Castle with you, and you shall tell me about it."

Securing his boat to the stake, he followed me up the bank of the river; and on the way to the house I told him what had happened just as I returned from my fishing trip. We entered the log house, where old Matt had kindled a huge fire to cook our evening meal.

"Good evening, Mr. Rockwood," said my friend, as politely as though he had been speaking to the President of the United States.

"Your sarvant, Mr. Mellowtone," replied Matt, who always labored to be as courteous as his visitor, though not always with the same success.

"You have been unfortunate, I learn from Phil Farringford."

"Yes; them pesky redskins is gittin' troublesome, and I'm afraid we shall hev to wipe out some on 'em."

"We must not allow them to steal," added Mr. Mellowtone, decidedly.

"No; Phil is goin' out arter 'em. They stole my jug of fire-water, and they'll be as drunk as owls afore long."

"If neither he nor you object, I will go out with him."

"I hain't no kind o' objection. I should be much obleeged to you if you help git back them hosses."

"I shall be glad to have you go with me, Mr. Mellowtone," I replied, as I put the pan of fish on the fire.

We were all of the same mind.

CHAPTER II.

IN WHICH PHIL FINDS THE CAMP OF THE INDIANS.

I was certainly very glad to have Mr. Mellowtone go with me on the expedition after the Indians; but I did not exactly like to share the glory of the great deeds I expected to do even with him, though he was one of my best friends. However, I consoled myself with the reflection that his pleasant company would in part compensate me for the share of the glory he would appropriate.

While the fish were on the fire, I set the table in the best style that the contents of our meagre China closet would permit, for our distinguished visitor seldom honored us by taking a meal at the Castle, and I was anxious to make the best possible appearance. Measured by the standard of civilized life, the result was not a success; but for the backwoods it was. Our table ware was mostly of tin, dented and marred at that; but we had one crockery plate, and I devoted that to the use of our honored guest.

If the table ware was not elegant, the fish were infinitely better than are ever set before the pampered sons of civilization. They had been swimming in their native element a couple of hours before, and were a species of trout, weighing from a pound and a half to two pounds apiece. Mr. Mellowtone declared that they were delicious; and he justified his praise by his trencher practice. For bread we had cold johnny cake, for we were out of flour, as no trading steamer had passed since the ice in the river broke up. We lived well at the Castle, for besides the game and fish supplied by the woods and the rivers, we had bacon, pork, potatoes, and vegetables from the farm.

"Now, Phil, you must be keerful," said old Matt, as we were eating our supper. "Injuns is wicked, and Injuns is cunnin'."

"I will try to be careful," I replied. "I suppose, if we follow Little Fish Creek, we shall find the Indians before morning."

"Yes, you will. Go through the forest, and cross the brook. Follow the path till you come to the creek, and you'll be all right. The varmints hain't got no feed for their hosses, and they won't go fur to-night."

The old man gave us directions how to proceed until we finished the meal; and after I had put things in order about the house, I slung my rifle over my shoulder. Mr. Mellowtone had no weapon, and declared that he needed none. Just at dark we left the Castle, and, crossing the field, entered the forest. There was a well-beaten path, so that we were in no danger of losing our way. We crossed the bridge over the brook which bounded the farm on the north-west; we continued our course through the forest till we reached Little Fish Creek, at the point where it flows into Big Fish Creek. All the names of streams and of localities in the vicinity had been given by Matt Rockwood. The brook we had crossed was called Kit's Brook, because, three miles from its junction with the Big Fish, lived on its banks one Kit Cruncher, an old hunter and trapper, who, until the arrival of Mr. Mellowtone, five years before, had been Matt's only neighbor.

We followed the Little Fish for an hour without discovering any signs of the Indians or the horses. We were within a mile, across the country, of Kit Cruncher's cabin, and we concluded that the thieves would not deem it prudent to halt near so formidable a person as the old hunter had proved himself to be.

"Are you sure we are on the right track, Phil Farringford?" asked my companion.

"We are on the right road to the Indian village," I replied.

"Is it certain that the thieves came from there?"

"They must have come from there, for I don't know of any other Indians within forty miles of the Castle."

"They may be wandering Dakotahs, who do not stay long in one place."

"But there were only two of them, and Dakotahs go in bigger crowds than that. Matt says they took this path, and I saw them strike into the woods myself."

"Doubtless we are right, then. We might go over to Kit Cruncher's, and inquire if he has seen anything of the thieves," suggested Mr. Mellowtone.

"I am sure he has not seen them; if he had, he would have stopped them. And the Indians know him well enough to keep out of his way. He is hard on Indians when they don't behave themselves."

"Very well, Phil Farringford. You are the leader of this expedition, and I will obey your orders."

"I hope you won't, sir; at least, I don't mean to give you any orders," I replied, abashed at the humility of one whom I regarded as the greatest and best man in the world.

We walked in silence for another hour, for my companion always did more thinking than talking. I led the way, and kept both of my eyes and both of my ears wide open, expecting every moment to come upon the camp of the savages. While we were thus cautiously tramping through the forest, I heard the neighing of a horse behind us.

"Hark!" I whispered to Mr. Mellowtone. "We have passed them."

"How can that be?"

"They struck off from the river, and went into the woods to sleep. That was old Firefly's voice, I know. I shouldn't wonder if he heard us."

"If he did, perhaps the Indians heard us also."

"If they have that jug of whiskey with them, they are too drunk to hear anything by this time."

"We must look for the place where they left the path."

"It is rather dark to look for anything tonight," I replied, as I led the way back.

We proceeded with great care, though we made noise enough to apprise Firefly of the approach of friends. He was a knowing old horse, and had faithfully served his master for ten years, but was still a very useful animal. I fancied that he despised Indians quite as much as old Matt himself, and that he was utterly disgusted with his present situation and future prospects. Doubtless he was very uneasy, and displeased at being away from his rude but comfortable stable. The grass had just begun to start a little in the wet soil, and as our stock of hay was getting low, I had picketed them with long ropes where they could feed. In this situation they had become an easy prey to the Indians.

I hoped old Firefly would speak again, and I ventured upon a low whistle, to inform him of my presence, but he did not respond. The other horse was a good beast, and worked intelligently by Firefly's side at the plough and the wagon: but he was an ignoramus compared with his mate, and I expected nothing of him.

"They can't be far from here," said I, as I halted and whistled again a little louder than before.

"We must examine the ground, and see if there are any horse tracks," replied Mr. Mellowtone, as he lighted a match to enable us to see the path.

"No tracks here," I added. "They all lead the other way."

"Then they turned in farther down."

We resumed our walk, but in a few minutes we examined the ground again.

"Here they are," said my companion. "They turned in between this place and that where we stopped last. Whistle again, Phil Farringford."

"We are farther from them now than when I heard the voice of old Firefly," I replied, after I had whistled in vain several times.

"But we are on the track of the horses. There can be no doubt of that," answered Mr. Mellowtone. "We can follow their trail till we find where they left the path."

"I hope you have a good supply of matches."

"I have about a dozen more."

We examined the path in several places, and at last found that the Indians had left it to follow a small brook which flowed into the Little Fish. I whistled at intervals, but received no response from Firefly. The stream which was our guide did not lead us far from the creek.

"I smell smoke," said Mr. Mellowtone, after we had proceeded a considerable distance. "We are not far from them."

"I don't see the light of any fire."

"Probably it has burned down by this time, for the Indians must be asleep."

I whistled, and this time a very decided answer came back from Firefly.

"We are close by them," said I; and involuntarily we slackened our pace.

"I am afraid the noise that horse makes will awaken the Indians."

"They are beastly drunk, without a doubt, and no ordinary sounds will rouse them," I replied. "If they had known what they were about, they would not have built a fire. They are not more than two miles from Kit Cruncher's cabin."

In silence, then, and very cautiously, we crept towards the bivouac of the Indians. In a few moments I saw the four horses, fastened to the trees: but between us and them lay the extended forms of the two Indians. They reposed on the ground, one on each side of the smouldering embers of a fire they had kindled earlier in the evening. The faint light enabled me to see the whiskey jug, lying on the ground near them. The cork was out, and it was evidently empty. The thieves snored so that the earth seemed to shake under them, and I was satisfied that they were as drunk as human beings could be and live.

We made a circuit around the sleeping Indians, and reached the place where the horses were fastened. Firefly neighed and danced in his delight at seeing me, and even his more stolid mate was disposed to make a demonstration of joy; for both animals had been in the habit of spending their nights in a comfortable stable. The horses of the Indians were as they had ridden them, wearing their bridles, and the folded blankets, which served us saddles, strapped upon their backs.

"We needn't spend much time thinking about it," said I, after I had patted Firefly on the neck to assure him I was still his friend. "They have nothing but halters on their necks, though we have only to mount them, and they will go home without any guiding."

"The Indian horses have saddles and bridles on," answered Mr. Mellowtone. "I think we had better do as the redskins did--ride their horses, and lead the others."

"Shall we take their horses?" I asked, rather startled by the proposition.

"Certainly; we must teach them a lesson which they will remember. We are in the world as instructors of those who are less wise than we, and it is our duty to impart wisdom to those who need it."

"They will come down after them, when they are sober."

"They will do that if you take only your own animals. They will fight just as hard to recover the property they stole as to obtain what is justly their own."

Without stopping to debate the matter any further, we mounted the Indians' horses.

CHAPTER III.

IN WHICH PHIL TAKES GOOD CARE OF THE HORSES.

I took old Firefly's halter in my hand, while Mr. Mellowtone had that of our other horse. We were ready to start; but the problem of reaching the river path without disturbing the Indians did not seem so easy of solution as at first. We intended to make a circuit around the drunken thieves; but I found the underbrush was so thick that a passage with the horses was impossible. There was seldom any undergrowth in the forest, but this place appeared to have been chosen by the redskins for the purpose of presenting to us the very difficulty we now encountered.

They knew that they must be pursued, if at all, from the direction of the Castle, and they had built their fire in the space between the brook and the dense undergrowth, so that the horses could not be taken back without passing over them. I had visited the place before, and, as I recalled its peculiarities to my mind, the difficulty of the situation increased. The ground was low and swampy, and though I had easily passed through it on foot, the horses could not go through without brushing off their riders. The brook had its rise in the low ground. We could cross it, but the bushes were just as thick on the other side.

We tried in vain to find a passage for the horses; and it occurred to me then that the Indians had possibly come to a halt here because they could go no farther in this direction. I did not like to ride over the drunken thieves, though this seemed to be our only means of passing them. They were asleep, and snoring like the heavy muttering of an earthquake, and we could not tell exactly how drunk they were. It was possible that they were still able to use their rifles and knives, though, if they had drank the entire contents of the whiskey jug, which probably was not less than a quart, we had little to fear from them. Some Indians, however, could drink a pint, and still be able to use a rifle, while others would be overcome with half that quantity.

"We can't get out in this way," said Mr. Mellowtone, after we had vainly sought a passage around the Indians.

"I will take a look at the drunken redskins," I replied, dismounting, and fastening my two horses to a sapling.

I walked cautiously to the spot where the Indians lay. I threw a few dry sticks on the fire, so as to obtain some light from the blaze. I found that the thieves lay on a knoll between the brook and the swamp. There was not space enough on either side for two horses to pass abreast without stepping over or on their sleeping forms; but there was no other way for us to get out of the trap. The horses might pass singly, and I decided at once what to do.

"I think we will ride the Indian horses, and let the others follow," said I, returning to my companion.

"But they may take it into their heads not to follow."

"Firefly will go as straight to his stable as he can," I replied, loosing him, and securing the halter around his neck. "The other one will follow him."

Mr. Mellowtone released his led animal, and I mounted my steed. The latter was an ugly beast, as he must have been from the force of association. I urged him towards the Indians, and Firefly closely followed me. The horse I rode was not disposed to pass the fire and the sleeping forms; but I pounded his naked ribs till he changed his mind, and stepped over the legs of his drunken master. Firefly snorted, and sprang over the obstruction.

"Hoo!" shouted the savage, over whose legs I had passed, springing to his feet.

But he was too drunk to stand up, and pitched over upon the body of his companion. As the path was now clear for an instant, Mr. Mellowtone urged his horse forward, and joined me. Our other horse, which I had always called Cracker, though Matt never recognized the name, followed without making any sensation whatever. The fall of the one Indian upon the other had awakened the latter, and by the light of the blazing sticks I saw them clutch each other. Probably the second, in his tipsy stupor, supposed the first was an enemy, having designs upon his life. They rolled over together, and in the struggle the legs of one of them were thrown upon the fire.

Such an unearthly yell I had never heard. He was not so drunk that fire would not burn him, and the pain made him howl like a wounded buffalo. They rolled and struggled, and the firebrands were scattered in every direction. In a moment they sprang to their feet, but only to fall again upon the burning brands which were strown over the ground. They did not appear to see us, though we had halted quite near them, curious to see the result of the struggle.

As they fell upon the earth, the brands burned them, and they leaped to their feet again; but they no longer grappled with each other. It was now only getting up and falling down, and this continued until they had stumbled out of the

circuit where the brands had been strown. Exhausted by the violence of their exertions, or bewildered by the fumes of the liquor, they lay still, and we started on our return to the Castle. If the Indians saw us at all, they were unable to follow us; and their experience seemed to point the moral that, when one steals horses, he must not steal whiskey at the same time.

"They had a warm time of it," said my companion, as we jogged along very slowly through the forest, for the horses we rode could not be persuaded to go faster than a walk.

"I am glad they wasted their strength upon each other, instead of us."

"What a condition for a human being to be in!" added Mr. Mellowtone, with an expression of disgust.

"I don't see why Indians take to whiskey so readily. It is a curse to all the redskins I ever knew."

"It is a curse to any man, red or white."

"I never saw a white man drunk."

"Your experience has been very limited, Phil Farringford."

"That's very true. I never saw much of the world, but I hope to see more of it one of these days. What do you suppose these Indians will do when they become sober?" I asked.

"No doubt they will try to get back their horses. They came down for more, and they go back with fewer, unless they can recover them. If they behave themselves we will let them have their own horses. We don't want them."

"They are nothing but skin and bones."

"Very likely they are good horses, but they have been starved and overridden."

"Old Matt won't care about filling them out, for we haven't more than grain enough to carry us through. I suppose we shall see these redskins again by to-morrow."

"Perhaps not; they may go to their village first, and return with more men."

"Well, we won't borrow any trouble about them. When they come we will take care of them. We shall be obliged to watch our horses after this; for I would rather shoot old Firefly than have him abused by those redskins."

"They are not worthy to possess so noble an animal as the horse. But, after all, the white man is more to blame for their present degraded condition than they are themselves. Out of the reach of the vices of civilization there are still noble red men."

"I never saw any of them," I added, rather incredulously.

We continued on our way through the solemn forest, and by the side of the rolling river. Old Firefly and Cracker were ahead of us, but we could hear the tramp of their feet, and were satisfied that they were on the right track. When we reached the Castle, we found them patiently waiting at the stable for our arrival. I opened the door for them, and they returned to their quarters with a satisfaction which they could not express. As our stock of hay was nearly expended, we had room enough in the barn for the two Indian horses. I fed all the animals alike, for it was not the fault of the strangers that they kept bad company.

Old Matt had gone to bed when we went into the house, but he wanted to know all about our adventures; and, when I had told him the story, I was pleased to hear him say that I had done well. Late as it was, Mr. Mellowtone insisted upon returning to his home on the island, two miles above the Castle; but he promised to come down early the next day, for we expected trouble with our Indian neighbors. I went down to the river with him, and watched his barge till it disappeared in the gloom of the night. I was beginning to be sleepy, but I dared not go to bed, fearful that the Indians would come before morning, and steal the horses. I had concluded to sleep in the barn, if at all, with my rifle at my side, so as to be sure that no accident happened while I was in the house.

I did sleep in the barn, and with my rifle at my side; but I was not disturbed by the visit of any redskins, and the horses were all right in the morning. I fed them alike again, and watered them at the brook. Before we had finished our late breakfast in the Castle, Mr. Mellowtone arrived.

"Have you seen any more Indians, Phil Farringford?" he asked.

"No, sir; but we expect to see the two who stole the horses very soon."

"I brought my rifle with me this time," he added. "I saw Kit Cruncher this morning. He says there is a band of Indians in the woods north of him."

"How many?" I asked.

"He saw ten together, all of them mounted, and thinks they came down to find feed for their horses. I told him what had happened here yesterday, and he says there will be trouble before the day is over."

"Does he think so?" asked old Matt, rather anxiously.

"He does; and I came prepared to assist you, if need be."

"Thank'e, Mr. Mellowtone. Time was when I didn't want no help agin any ten of these yere redskins; but the rheumatiz has spiled me, and my armshakes so I can't shoot much now," added old Matt, mournfully.

"Kit said he would come here immediately."

"Kit is a good neighbor, and is allus on hand when he's wanted, and there's any Injuns to shoot."

At that moment the door was darkened by the appearance of Kit Cruncher, who bowed his head, and entered without ceremony.

CHAPTER IV.

IN WHICH PHIL LOSES AN OLD AND VALUED FRIEND.

Kit Cruncher was about six feet and a half high, and it was necessary that he should bow his head when he entered even the humble log cabin of Matt Rockwood. He wore a cap made of skins, so tall that it seemed to add another foot to his height. It was ornamented with the long, bushy tail of a fox, which dangled on one side like the tassels from the cap of a hussar. His beard, gray and massive, was more than a foot long, and gave him a patriarchal aspect. His pants were stuffed in the legs of his long boots, and he wore a kind of hunting frock, which reached nearly to his knees. He was lean and lank, but, annealed in the hardships of backwoods life, he was wiry and sinewy. He was about fifty years old, though his gray hair and beard alone appeared to betray his age. He was from the south; a fine specimen of the real Kentucky hunter--"half horse and half alligator."

There was a kind of stern dignity in his countenance that always awed me, though I knew that Kit had a kind heart, and was only terrible to those who injured him or his friends. He lived by hunting and trapping, and always had a large supply of peltries to dispose of whenever a trading steamer came up the Missouri.

"How's yer bones, Matt?" said he, dropping the butt of his long rifle upon the earthen floor of our cabin.

"Poorly, Kit, poorly," replied Matt. "I'm about did for in this world. I can shoot no more, and couldn't hit the moon at ten paces."

"That's bad; 'cause 'pears like some shootin' must be did. There's a squad o' redskins up above me, and I cal'late they mean mischief, if they begin by stealin' your hosses. We'll git out into natur'," said Kit, as he left the house, followed by the rest of the party.

He evidently expected a visit from the savages very soon. I took down my little rifle from the brackets, and also, at Matt's request, carried out his long weapon, with the accoutrements. We were all rigged for the war path, and, for my own part, I was never so much excited in my life. I wondered how Kit could keep so cool. He was deeply skilled in Indian craft, and when he thought there was danger, others might be excused for adopting his opinion. Old Matt seated himself on a box near the barn door, and the rest of us gathered around him.

"Them Injuns has had a hard winter on't," said Kit. "They won't git their gov'ment money and traps for a month yit, and they are half starved. They've lost half their hosses, and all these things makes 'em ugly. But I didn't think o' nothin' till I heered they stole your hosses, and you hed theirs."

"I never hed much trouble with 'em," added old Matt. "They've stole my hosses afore, but I allus got 'em back, as I did this time."

"When an Injun's hungry, he's ugly."

The two patriarchs discussed the situation at length, while I listened in reverent humility to their words. Mr. Mellowtone smoked his pipe in silence. I think his pipe was in his mouth at least two thirds of the time, and was a very great comfort to him. We were all watching the path which led across the field into the forest, for this was the only approach to the Castle by the land side. Matt's farm--as he called it--was situated between two deep creeks, the Fish on the west and the Bear on the east. Half a mile from the cabin, in the midst of the forest, was a lake, through which flowed Bear Creek. Half way between this sheet of water and the Little Fish ran Kit's Brook, on the bank of which was a path leading to the hunter's cabin. The great thoroughfare to the north was by the Fish, and this was the only practicable way for mounted men, and was the road by which the Indians came down to the Missouri to exchange their peltries for powder and whiskey.

While we were all watching the spot where the path entered the forest, a couple of redskins emerged from its shades, and hurried towards the Castle. As they approached we all raised our rifles. Even old Matt rose from his seat, and prepared to use his weapon. But the savages made the signs of peace; and Kit, to whom we all looked for inspiration and direction, permitted them to approach. I immediately identified them as the two who had stolen our horses, and whom I had seen rolling among the burning brands the night before. Their greasy garments showed the marks of fire, and the leggings of one of them were nearly burned off.

"Those are the redskins who stole our horses," said I to Kit Cruncher.

"Jest so," replied Kit, as the savages halted before us.

They were very much excited, and looked decidedly ugly. Their eyes were bloodshot after the debauch of the preceding night, and their eyeballs seemed to be marked by the fiery nature of the liquor they had drank.

"Ugh!" growled one of them, shaking his head.

"Well, old Blower, what do you want?" demanded Kit, straightening up his tall, gaunt form.

"Want um hosses," snarled the Indian, shaking his head violently, as though he was so ugly he could not contain himself.

"D'ye want to steal some hosses?" added Kit, sternly.

"Ugh! White man steal hosses! Lose um two hosses," howled the spokesman, pointing to the barn.

We understood what he meant. He evidently thought it quite right for him to steal our horses, but very wicked for us to reciprocate in the same manner.

"Well, they sarved you jest as you sarved them. You stole Matt's bosses, his folks stole yours. That's fair play," added Kit.

"No steal hosses!" growled the Indian. "Give back hosses."

"They kin hev their own hosses. I don't want 'em," interposed Matt. "They ain't fit for scarecrows."

"Bring 'em out, Phil," said Kit. "They shall hev their own. We won't wrong an Injun, no how."

I led out the bony racks which the Indians had ridden, and delivered them to their owners.

"Now you kin leave," added Kit.

"Want more hosses," said the Indian who spoke this pigeon English, and which the other appeared not to be able to do, and only grunted and howled his anger and indignation.

"You won't git no more hosses here."

"Want corn, want meat, want whiskey."

"Not a corn, not a meat, not a whiskey," replied Kit, decidedly. "Ef you'd come as a hungry man, we mought hev fed you."

"Big Injun come, burn house, kill white man--no give hoss and whiskey."

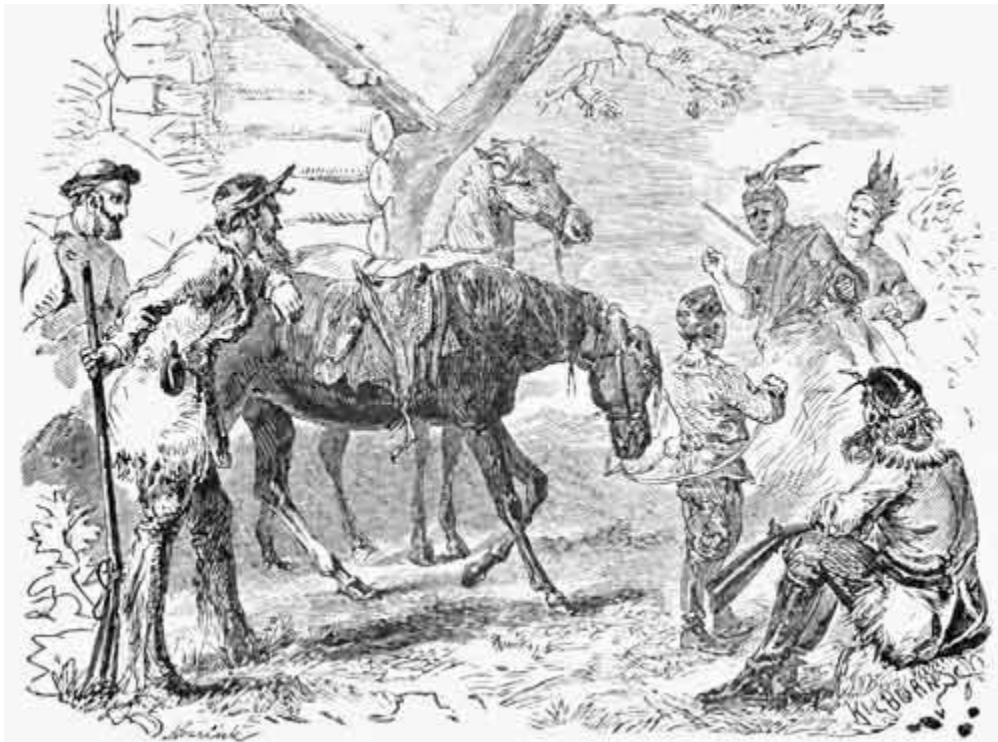
"Big Injun mought git shot, ef he don't behave hisself."

"Ugh!"

"You kin leave," repeated Kit, significantly, as he raised his rifle.

"No go," howled the Indian, though he retreated a few paces, and plainly did not like Kit's cool and stiff manner. "White man pappoose steal um hosses, and burn Injun."

The speaker stooped down, drew aside his tattered leggin, and pointed to a huge blister on his leg, made by the fire into which he had rolled in his drunken frenzy. Then he pointed to me, and as he did so, his bloodshot eyes lighted up with rage and malice. I understood him to charge me with the infliction of the injury upon his leg. Since both of the thieves were so very drunk when we were at their camp, I did not at first see how they had been made aware of my presence. They did not seem to see me, and I concluded that they had identified me in the morning by the smallness of my track in the soft soil. They could not have known what transpired in their fury, but probably reasoned that, as I had been there, and taken the horses, I had burned their legs also.



THE INDIANS' HORSES RETURNED TO THEIR OWNERS.
PAGE 47.

"I did not do it," I protested, hardly able to restrain a laugh, as I recalled the ludicrous scene of the night, before at the camp fire.

I explained how the Indian had burned himself.

"Pay Injun damage," added the injured thief.

"Nary red. You stole whiskey, got drunk, and rolled into your own camp fire," answered Kit. "You kin leave."

The tall hunter raised his rifle again, and the two Indians, mounting their bony steeds, rode off, yelling in the fury of their rage and disappointment. They had intended to obtain something more than their horses. Indeed, the Indians never visited the Castle without begging or demanding something, always whiskey, and often corn and meat.

"There's more on 'em up there somewhere," said Kit, as the thieves rode off.

"Do you think they will return?" asked Mr. Mellowtone.

"I'm afeered they will. Them Injuns is ugly, and I reckon they mean to make trouble. They don't ask for bread and meat; they demand 'em. They spoke for t'others more'n for theirselves. 'Tain't wuth while to quarrel with 'em ef you kin help it. I allus give 'em sunthin' to eat, when they are hungry, ef they ask for't; but I don't let 'em git the upper hands on me. 'Twon't do."

"If you think they mean to attack us, don't you think we had better prepare to defend ourselves?" suggested Mr. Mellowtone.

"I'm allus ready, and I am now," replied Kit.

"So am I," added old Matt, as he examined the lock of his weapon.

"But we might do something to make a better defence," said Mr. Mellowtone. "There are ten or a dozen Indians, you think, while we are but four."

"What kin we do except shoot 'em when they come?" replied old Matt.

"There is a bridge over the brook in the woods yonder," continued Mr. Mellowtone, pausing to permit Kit to take up the suggestion, if he chose.

"Yes, there is; and it cost me a deal of hard work to make it," said Matt. "It wan't an easy matter to get a hoss over afore it was put up."

"Precisely so, and it won't be an easy matter now. Therefore I think we had better take up the bridge, and make the brook our line of defence."

Kit approved the plan, and we hastened to execute it. The brook ran at the bottom of a deep gully as it approached its mouth, and for half a mile it was impossible to take a horse over, except on the bridge. We removed the logs with which it was covered, but allowed the string-pieces to remain. Kit thought we could do better if we prevented the Indians from coming over on their horses.

By the time we had finished our work, old Matt had hobbled over the ground, dragging his rifle after him. Just as he approached we heard the yell of the savages on the other side of the stream, and a band of ten dashed up to the position. Kit told us to get behind the trees, to guard against any accident. The Indians drew up their horses when they discovered that the bridge had been dismantled. I heard the crack of a rifle.

Old Matt uttered a deep groan, and dropped to the ground, shot through the heart.

In his weak condition he had not been able to reach the shelter of a tree in season to save himself. We knew now what the savages meant.

CHAPTER V.

IN WHICH PHIL FOLLOWS KIT CRUNCHER.

Old Matt Rockwood, my friend and protector, the friend and protector of my childhood, was dead.

Ten years before, he had taken me to his home and his heart, and since that time had done for me all that his limited means would permit. He had been a father to me, and the bullet that sped through his heart lacerated mine.

All that I could remember of existence was associated with the Castle and its vicinity, though I was not born there. I knew nothing of my parents, and nothing of the circumstances under which I had come into the world. Ten years before, while upon a hunt, Matt Rockwood had wrapped himself up in his blanket, and slept on the bank of the Missouri, about a dozen miles below the Castle. It was in the spring, and the water was very high, for the melting snows in the mountains had swelled the mighty stream to its fullest volume.

A bright light awoke the hunter in the evening, and he discovered a steamer on fire in the river, only a short distance below. Launching his bateau, in which he had come down the stream, he paddled with all his might to the scene of disaster. The pilot had run the steamer ashore; but before those on board could escape,--for the fire was in the forward part of the boat,--the swift current carried her off again, and she descended the stream at a rapid rate. Matt paddled after her; but, half a mile below the point where the steamer had run ashore, he heard the wail of a child, very near him.

The light from the burning boat enabled him to see the child. It was floating on a door, which had evidently been put into the water to support its helpless burden. Matt, who often told me the story, believed that the child's father, or some other person, had intended to ferry the little one on shore in this manner, when the steamer had been run aground. Probably the starting of the boat had defeated his plan, or possibly the person who was trying to save the child had lost his hold on the door. There was no one near the little raft. Matt took the young voyager on the great river from its perilous situation. It was benumbed with cold, and he wrapped it in his blanket, and laid it in the bottom of the boat.

Hardly had he accomplished this humane task before the boilers of the burning steamer exploded, and she was instantly a wreck on the swift tide. Matt paddled his bateau as swiftly as possible, but he was unable to overtake the mass of rushing fire. He shouted occasionally, in order to attract the attention of any sufferer; but no one responded to his call. Though he searched diligently, he was unable to find another survivor of the terrible calamity.

The little child thus saved from the fire and the water was myself.

Matt took his charge to the shore, made a fire, warmed it, and fed it with buffalo meat and soaked cracker. Wrapping the little stranger in his blanket, he pressed him to his bosom, and both slept till morning. The next day, with the child in his bateau, he renewed the search for any survivors of the calamity. He could find none; but months afterwards he read in an old newspaper he had obtained from a trading steamer, that another boat had passed down the river and picked up a few persons; but neither the names of the lost nor of the saved were given.

Loading his bateau with as much buffalo meat as it would carry, Matt started for the Castle with his new charge; but the current of the swollen river was so swift that it was night before he arrived. At this point in his story, I used to ask my kind protector whether he tried to find out anything more about me. He always answered that he was unable to obtain any information; but, after I was old enough to understand the matter better, he confessed that he did not wish to discover the friends of the child. After he had taken care of it for a few months, he became so attached to it that he was only afraid of losing the little waif.



MATT AND THE LITTLE FOUNDLING.
PAGE 55.

I was only two years old when I was thus cast upon the protection of the old squatter. He watched over me and cared for me with all the tenderness of a mother, and I became a stout and healthy child. The plain food and the wholesome air of the wilderness gave vigor to my limbs. The old man took care of me like a woman when I had the maladies incident to childhood, and I passed safely through the whole catalogue of them.

The steamer which had been burned was the Farringford, and Matt had read the name on her paddle-box. He gave it to me as a surname, to which he prefixed Philip as a Christian name, simply because it suited his fancy. With such a charge on his hands Matt was unable to make any hunting expeditions for several years; but he had already begun to turn his attention to farming. His only neighbor at that time was Kit Cruncher, with whom he exchanged corn and pork for game and buffalo meat. Matt was disposed to indulge more in the comforts of civilization than the hunters and trappers generally do. He sold wood to the steamers that passed, and thus obtained money enough to purchase clothing, groceries, and other supplies.

When I was about seven years old Matt began to take me with him when he went hunting and fishing, and I soon learned to be of some service to him. I acquired all the arts of the backwoodsman, and soon became quite skilful. I worked in the field, and tramped a dozen miles a day with him. I was tough and sinewy, and knew not the meaning of luxury. My clothes were made by old Matt, until I was able with his help to manufacture them myself.

It was a fortunate thing for me that Mr. Mellowtone established himself in the vicinity of the Castle, for he took an interest in me, and taught me to read and write. He was a singular man; but I shall have more to say of him by and by. Until he came, I spoke the rude patois of Kit and Matt; but Mr. Mellowtone taught me a new language, and insisted that I should speak it.

Matt had been a pioneer in Indiana, but had afterwards engaged in trade and failed. His ill success had driven him into the far west to resume his pioneer habits. Even then he had passed the meridian of life; but he cleared up a farm, and had been prosperous in his undertakings. The sale of wood and the produce of the field to the steamers brought in considerable money, and he had supplied himself with all needed farm implements, so that we were able to work to advantage. We had a grist-mill, turned by horse power, which enabled us to convert our corn into meal. We raised pigs, and always had an abundant supply of pork and bacon.

I was about thirteen years old when my story opens. I was contented with my lot, though I was occasionally troubled to ascertain who my parents were. Matt had no doubt they were both dead, since no inquiries had ever been made for the lost child. Some day I expected to visit the regions of civilization, and see the great world. Only twice in my life had I seen any white women, at least within my memory. They were on the deck of a steamer, lying at our wood-yard near the mouth of Fish Creek. I had a reasonable curiosity, which I hoped to gratify when I was older. For the present, I was willing to cleave to old Matt, as he had to me.

But now the old man lay upon the ground, silent and motionless. The crack of the rifle which had sent the ball to his heart was still ringing in my ears. It was almost instantly followed by another, and I saw a burly savage drop from his horse, and roll over into the brook. Kit Cruncher had fired, and was loading his rifle for a second shot. It was fortunate that we had removed the logs from the bridge, for the Indians were kept at bay by the deep gully in which the brook flowed.

When the big Indian fell, his comrades set up a fierce howl, for he seemed to be the leader of the band. Mr. Mellowtone fired next; but his aim was less certain than that of the hunter. For my own part, heedless of the howling savages, I stood behind the tree gazing at the prostrate form of old Matt. I wept bitterly, and should have thrown myself upon his body if Kit had not sternly commanded me not to move.

The savages were not long in discovering that all the advantage was on our side, and, with a ringing whoop, they turned their horses and retreated a short distance.

"They are unhossing theirselves," said Kit. "Don't move, boy!"

"Matt is shot!" I exclaimed. "I must go to him."

"Don't go, boy. You can't help him any now, and you mought git shot if you show yourself. Don't do it, boy."

"Is Matt dead?" I asked, trembling with emotion.

"Dead as a hammer," replied Kit. "He'll never move hisself again. Hold still, boy."

"He may be alive, and I want to do something for him," I insisted.

"He hain't moved since he dropped, and I know by the way he went over that it's all up with Matt. Don't throw your life away, boy."

"Poor Matt," sighed Mr. Mellowtone, from his position near us. "It is a sad day for him, and for us."

"Keep your eyes wide open, or some o' the rest on us will smell the ground," added Kit. "The redskins is gittin' down into the brook."

The savages retreated to a point on the stream, where they dismounted, evidently with the intention of crossing. They picketed their horses, and we judged that they meant to complete the work which they had begun.

"We must follow them up," continued Kit. "Boy, take Matt's rifle, and follow me."

I bent over the form of the fallen patriarch. I placed my hand upon his heart, but there was no answering throb. He was indeed dead, and my whole frame was shaken with convulsive grief.

"Don't stop there, boy!" called Kit.

"He is dead!" I groaned in bitterness of spirit.

"I know he is, boy; but we can't help it. We can't stop to cry now."

"My best friend!"

"Come, boy!" shouted Kit. "Bring his rifle, powder, and ball."

I wiped the tears from my eyes, but I could not banish the sorrow from my heart. Gently I raised the head of the old hunter, and removed the powder-horn and bullet-pouch which were suspended over his shoulder. Picking up the rifle, which lay near him on the ground, I followed my companions into the forest. I felt then that I could shoot an Indian without any remorse.

CHAPTER VI.

IN WHICH PHIL ASSISTS IN THE BUILDING OF A BLOCK HOUSE.

Kit Cruncher was a prudent man, brave as he was. We did not therefore march boldly through the forest, for there were only three of us against four times as many Indians. We dodged from tree to tree, always keeping our bodies sheltered from the bullets of the savages. Kit went along near the brook, and presently I saw him raise his rifle and fire. The shot was followed by a wild yell from the savages.

"Give me Matt's rifle, boy," said Kit, as he passed me his own, with his powder-horn and ball-pouch. "Load that, boy."

With his eye still on the spot where he had seen the Indian, he told me how much powder to put in his rifle, and to be sure and ram the ball home. I loaded it as quickly as I could, but he did not find another opportunity to fire.

"Did you hit the one you fired at, Kit?" I asked.

"I hit him, but I didn't kill him. They won't cross the brook in that place. I'm afeard they'll scatter next. Howsomever, we've did enough out here. We'll go back to the bridge. That's the safest place for us. I don't hear 'em now; and that's a bad sign with Injuns."

"Where are they?"

"They was trying to cross the brook when I fired last time. They hev got behind the trees now. We must git nearer the Castle, or they'll drop in atween us."

Kit led the way, and Mr. Mellowtone and myself followed him, dodging from tree to tree, until we reached the bridge. A couple of shots, fired by the enemy, assured us they were on the watch, though none of us was injured.

"Tain't no use to stay here," said Kit. "The brook is a good line agin hosses, but not agin Injuns afoot."

"I think you are right," replied Mr. Mellowtone. "When I spoke of the brook as a line of defence, I considered the enemy as mounted men."

"The Castle is the best place for the rest of this fight."

"But the Indians can cross the brook, and then lay down this bridge again," suggested Mr. Mellowtone.

"Set them sticks afire, boy," added Kit, pointing to the heap of logs we had removed from the bridge. "It will be easier to cut some more than to let the redskins use them."

Mr. Mellowtone gave me a card of matches, and I piled up some dry sticks against the heap, which I set on fire. While I was thus employed, my companions made a litter, on which they placed the body of Matt. As we could neither see nor hear the savages, we concluded they had gone farther up the brook to find a crossing. We waited till the fire had nearly consumed the bridge material, and then started for the Castle. Kit and Mr. Mellowtone bore the litter, while I carried two rifles. It was a mournful procession to me, and my companions were sad and silent. I knew that Kit grieved at the loss of his old friend; but he was only grave and solemn, as he always was.

When we reached the Castle, the body of the old man was placed upon his bed, and we left the room to prepare for the defence of the place. It was not in the nature of the Indians to go away without further wreaking their vengeance. Besides, the Castle was rich in plunder to men pressed with want, and even with hunger. We must expect a visit from them by night, if not before.

The Castle was a log cabin, containing only a single room, with the chimney on the outside, and next to the river. On the other side was built the barn, which was twice as large as the house. They were joined together, so as to save the labor of building one wall, as well as for convenience in winter. The building stood on a kind of ridge, which was the "divide" between Bear Creek and Kit's Brook. From one stream to the other the land was cleared, and included in the farm. The forest line was within a hundred and fifty rods of the river.

We had, therefore, an open space from stream to stream, three miles long by about a hundred and fifty rods wide, from which Matt Rockwood had cut off the wood, hauling it to the landing-place at the mouth of Fish Creek for the steamers. Only a portion of this territory had been cultivated, though all of it was used for crops or for pasture. Kit had come to the conclusion that we could defend ourselves better in the open space than in the woods, so long as we were able to prevent the Indians from dashing suddenly upon us on horseback.

"Our army's small," said the old hunter, as we met again in front of the Castle. "We must see, and not be seen."

"We can stay in the Castle, and fire out the windows, then," suggested Mr. Mellowtone.

"That won't do. It hain't but two winders, and none on the wood side," replied Kit. "We must make a block house, or sunthin' o' that sort. Here's plenty of timber sticks."

He pointed to the pile of wood which we had hauled to the vicinity of the Castle during the milder days of the winter, when Matt was able to be out. The sticks were about eight feet long, and suitable for such a stockade as I had seen at the fort twenty miles up the Missouri.

"You mean to build a fort?" asked Mr. Mellowtone.

"That's jest what I mean," replied Kit; "a kind of a den we kin fire out on, and will turn a bullet at the same time."

"Where shall we put it?"

"Jest on the ridge back of the barn. Then we kin see the whole clearin', and draw a bead on a Injun jest as quick as he shows his head. We hain't no time to lose, nuther."

"I'm ready," replied Mr. Mellowtone, throwing off his coat.

"Fetch on the shovels, boy," added Kit.

I furnished them with picks and shovels, and went to the high ground in the rear of the barn. We carried all the arms with us. Kit marked out a circle about ten feet in diameter, outside of which we began to dig a trench. The ground was soft for the first foot, and the work easy. Below this the labor was very severe. We watched the woods all the time, that the Indians might not surprise us. We were out of the range of their rifles, and only by coming into the open space could they fire with any chance of hitting us. We found they were not disposed to waste powder, and we judged that their supplies of ammunition were as low as those of food.

At noon I was relieved from work to get some dinner for my companions. I went back to the Castle and built a fire. The form of Matt lay on the bed in the room where I was at work, covered over with the quilt. I put the fish and potatoes on the fire, but I could not refrain from crying. I had often before attended to my domestic work while the old man lay in the bed, but he was never so still as now. He did not speak to me, and did not know that I was there. I could not help looking frequently at the bed, and gazing at the outline of his form beneath the quilt. His death might change the whole current of my destiny, but I did not think much of that then. I dwelt only upon the loss I had sustained, recalling the kindness of the old man to me. I was glad then to think that I had always done my best to serve him; that I had tenderly and devotedly nursed him in sickness, as he had me; and this thought was a very great comfort to me.

When I had cooked the dinner, I carried it out to the site of the block house, and with our faces to the forest we ate it. We were a sad and a silent party. For ten years before I had not eaten a meal except in the presence of him who was now no more. Kit said not a word about his lost friend; but Mr. Mellowtone, seeing how badly I felt, tried to comfort me.

After dinner, my companions resumed their labors; but Kit directed me to commence carting the timber to the block house. I put away the dishes, and harnessed the horses to the wagon. The sticks were only three or four inches in diameter, and I loaded them without difficulty. By the time I had hauled a sufficient number for the structure, the trench was deep enough, and we all went to work setting up the sticks. We placed them on the inside of the ditch, propping them up with others, until we had a dozen up, when we began to throw in the dirt around them, jamming it down with a maul.

After a beginning was made, I was directed to set up the sticks, while Kit threw in the earth, and Mr. Mellowtone rammed it down. Once in every four feet I was required to put in a stick only five feet long, so that above it there was an opening three inches wide, which formed a loophole from which the rifles could be discharged at the enemy. The trench was two feet deep, leaving the bottom of the loophole three feet above the level of the ground.

As none but the straightest sticks were used in the works, the cracks were very narrow; but the earth was to be heaped up to the bottom of the loopholes against the outside, thus making the structure absolutely bullet-proof for three feet from the ground. By the middle of the afternoon, the sticks were all set, and the trench filled up. A space a foot and a half wide was left on the side next to the barn, for a door. I nailed together a sufficient number of sticks, putting cross-pieces of board over them, to fill this space, and serve as a door. In the mean time my friends shovelled the dirt against the outside of the palisades; and before sundown the work was completed, and we were ready for the Indians as soon as they wished to make an attack.

"No doubt this fort is a great institution; but the Indians will come upon us in the night, when we can't see them," said Mr. Mellowtone.

"But we must see 'em," replied Kit.

"The nights are rather dark now."

"There is plenty of pitch wood, and we can make it as light as we please."

"That's your plan--is it?"

"That's the idee. We must keep the fires up all night, and one pair of eyes wide open."

"It's a pity we haven't my twelve-pounder here," added Mr. Mellowtone.

"I reckon you'll hev to fotch it down, Mr. Mell'ton."

"I would if I could leave."

"I reckon we kin stand it one night."

"I don't wish to stay here any longer," I added, sorrowfully. "Matt is dead, and I don't care much where I go."

"You'll git over that, boy, one of these days. You kin kerry on the farm and do well here," added Kit. "But I reckon we must plant the old man to-night."

He meant, to bury him; and while they were digging a grave near the block house, I made a rude coffin of some boards we had saved for another purpose. It was the saddest job I had ever done, and my tears fell continually on the work. I carried the box into the house, and my companions laid the silent old man in it. I took my last look at the face of my venerable friend, and the lid was nailed down. We bore him to his last resting-place, as the shades of night were gathering around us. Mr. Mellowtone was to make a prayer at the grave, and had knelt upon the ground for that purpose, when we heard the wild yell of the savages on the border of the forest.

CHAPTER VII.

IN WHICH PHIL AND HIS FRIENDS GUARD THE CASTLE.

We had realized all day, while building the block house, that we were watched by the Indians, and that whenever a favorable opportunity was presented, they would make a dash upon us. The dusk of the evening now favored them, and I think they understood what we were doing. But the movement on their part was premature, for it was still light enough to enable us to see an Indian anywhere in the clearing.

"Run for the block house!" said Kit Cruncher, leading the way with long strides.

It was only a few rods distant, and we rushed in before the savages were near enough to use their rifles, which were not of the best quality. Our four weapons rested against the palisades, loaded and ready for instant service.

"Shut the gate, boy," continued Kit, as he thrust the muzzle of his rifle through a loophole.

I closed and barred the gate with the heavy timber I had prepared for the purpose. Before I had done so, Kit fired, and I heard an awful yell from the savages.

"There goes one of them," said Mr. Mellowtone.

"I shall fotch down one every time I shoot," replied Kit, calmly, as he picked up the rifle of old Matt. "Load my piece, boy, and be sure you ram the ball home."

"They have come to a halt," added Mr. Mellowtone, as he discharged his rifle.

"You didn't hit nothin', Mr. Mell'ton," said Kit, quietly, as he gazed through the loophole in front of him.

"I see that I missed my aim that time. Well, it's too late now; they are running away again."

"They kin no more stand it to be shot at than they kin live without eatin'," added Kit, as he set the rifle against the palisades. "They was go'n to run up and shoot, because they see we hadn't nary gun in our hands. We kin leave this place now."

The Indians had disappeared in the forest, bearing with them the body of the one who had fallen. We left the block house, after making sure that our rifles were in condition for use at the next attack.

"We mought light the fires now, afore we finish planting Matt," said Kit. "But I don't reckon them Injuns will come agin jest yit."

"I should not think they would come at all," added Mr. Mellowtone. "They have lost two of their number, and one or two have been wounded."

"We've lost one man, too," replied Kit. "That gin 'em courage to go on."

"But they are sure of losing more the moment they show themselves. I should think they would get tired of the game."

"They'll wait till they think it's safe afore they come agin. Now light up the fires, boy."

While I had the horses harnessed, I had hauled a supply of pitch-wood and other fuel for this purpose, and had prepared two heaps, one on each side of the block house, in readiness to apply the match. I lighted them, and the combustible wood blazed up, and cast a red glare upon all the clearing. Kit Cruncher's calculation was fully justified, and we were satisfied that no Indian could approach the Castle without our knowledge, if we only kept a vigilant watch.

Again we gathered around the coffined form of old Matt. Mr. Mellowtone knelt at the head of the grave, and we followed his example. He prayed fervently and solemnly for both Kit and me, and I wept anew when he recounted the virtues of the deceased. I forgot that there were any Indians within a thousand miles of me, as I recalled the kindness of him who was now lying cold and silent before me.

Mr. Mellowtone finished the prayer, and we lowered the rude coffin into the grave. Not one of us spoke a word, and there was no sound to be heard but the crackling of the fires, and the sobs I tried in vain to repress. I was unutterably sad and lonely. I felt that no one on the broad earth could take the place of Matt, and be to me what he had been. The current of existence seemed to have come to a sudden stop, and in my thought I could not make it move again.

My companions filled up the grave, and I watched the operation with a swelling heart. I saw them place the sods on the mound they had heaped up, and more than before I realized that I was never again to behold the face from which had beamed upon me, for ten long years, so much of love and joy. I thought of the old man pressing me as a little child to his heart on the banks of the Missouri, when he had saved me from the cold and the waters. I considered the days, months, and years of care and devotion he had bestowed upon me--upon me, who had not a single natural claim upon his love.

"Come, boy, don't stand there any longer," said Kit Cruncher, calling to me from the vicinity of the block house. "You may git shot."

I turned, and found that my companions had left me alone. I joined them, and with an effort repressed the flowing tears. I tried to realize that I was still living, and that there was a future before me.

"I know you feel bad, boy; but 'tain't no use to cry," said Kit. "We'll take good care on you."

"Matt has been very good to me," I replied.

"That's truer'n you know on, boy. Many's the time he sot up all night with you when you was sick, and held you in his arms all day. I've been twenty miles to the fort in the dead o' winter myself to git some medicine for you. If Matt hed been a woman, he moughtn't have nussed you any better."

"I'm very grateful to him, and to you."

"I know you be, boy. You took good care of old Matt when he was down with the rheumatiz. You've been a good boy, and I don't blame you much for cryin' now the old man's dead and gone. I think we will have sunthin' to eat now."

I went to the Castle, and prepared a supper of fried bacon and johnny-cake, which I carried to the block house. My companions ate as though life had no sorrows; but we had all worked very hard in the construction of our fortress, and the circumstances did not favor the development of much fine sentiment. I carried the supper things back to the Castle, washed the dishes, gave the pigs their supper, watered and fed the horses, and then returned to the block house. Kit had brought an armful of hay from the barn, and some blankets from the house, with which he had prepared sleeping accommodations for two of the party. Mr. Mellowtone was walking up and down between the two fires, smoking his pipe, and doing duty as sentinel.

"Now, boy, you kin turn in and sleep," said Kit. "Mr. Mell'ton kin sleep too, and I will keep an eye on the Injuns. 'Pears like they won't come when they finds we are all ready for 'em."

"I'm not sleepy, Kit," I replied; "but I'm rather tired."

"You mought turn in and rest, then," replied Kit, as he left the block house.

Mr. Mellowtone, relieved by the old hunter, soon joined me. I lay down on the hay, and covered myself with a blanket. My friend sat down on the ground and smoked his pipe. I could not sleep. Old Matt was in my mind all the time. I continued to see him fall before the bullet of the savage, and I still saw him lying silent and motionless on the ground.

"I think the Indians will be shy about coming here again," said Mr. Mellowtone, after I had rolled about on my bed for a time; and I think he spoke to turn my thoughts away from the engrossing subject which burdened me.

"I wish they had not come at all. They have made it a sad day for me," I replied, bitterly.

"You mustn't take it too hardly, Phil Farringford."

"How can I help it?"

"It is not strange that you weep; but you are young, and your spirits are buoyant. You will feel better in a few days."

"What is to become of me now?" I asked. "Old Matt is gone, and I need stay here no longer."

"Why not? You can carry on Matt's farm, with the help of Kit and me. You have done most of the work for the last year, and you can get along as well in the future as you have in the past."

"Shall I live here alone?"

"Of course you may do as you please. You are your own master now, as not many boys of your age are. But it is rather early now to consider a matter of so much importance."

"What should I do if the Indians came upon me?"

"You would defend yourself, as you do now. But the Indians will be taken care of. As soon as we can send word up to the fort, the officer in charge will detail a force to punish them for what they have done, and secure our safety in the future. I have been in this vicinity for five years, and this is the first time I have known any serious difficulty with the

savages."

Mr. Mellowtone smoked his pipe out, and then lay down by my side. In a few moments he dropped asleep. I was very tired after the severe labor of the day, and I had been up most of the preceding night. Nature at last asserted her claim, and I slept.

When I awoke, the sun was shining in through the loopholes of the block house. Kit Cruncher lay by my side, still fast asleep. I realized that the Indians had not made an assault during the night. I rose carefully, stepped over the long gaunt form of the stalwart hunter, and left the fortress. Mr. Mellowtone was walking up and down, with his pipe in his mouth, between the expiring embers of the fires, which had been permitted to go out at daylight.

"Why didn't you call me, and let me take my turn on the watch, Mr. Mellowtone?" I asked, after the sentinel had given me a pleasant greeting.

"Kit told me not to call you, and I did not intend to do so, Phil Farringford. You are a boy, and you need sleep."

"I'm willing to do my share of the watching."

"You shall take your turn to-night. We can do nothing to-day but eat and sleep. If you will give us some breakfast, we shall be ready for it."

"I will--right off. Have you seen anything of the Indians?"

"No; not one of them has ventured into the clearing. Being ready for them is more than half the battle. I doubt whether they trouble us again at present. We have taught them a lesson they will not soon forget."

"Yes; and they have taught us one which we shall not soon forget," I added, glancing at the mound over the grave of Matt Rockwood.

I went to the Castle, made a fire, and while the kettle was boiling I attended to the horses. I cooked some fish and potatoes, and we breakfasted between the block house and the forest. All day long we watched and waited for the coming of the savages; but we heard nothing of them. At night I took the first watch, and walked around the Castle, keeping up the fires, till I was so sleepy I could hardly keep my eyes open; and then, as a matter of prudence rather than comfort, I called Kit.

CHAPTER VIII.

IN WHICH PHIL SEES THE FIRST YOUNG LADY HE EVER SAW.

We were rather tired of this life of inactivity after a couple of days. We watched for Indians, but none came; and, on the third day after the death of Matt Rockwood, Kit declared his intention to take a tramp into the woods in the direction of his own cabin. If he found any Indians he would return; but he was satisfied that the party who had made the attack expended all their provisions, and were obliged to retire to obtain more.

"I shall be atween you and the Injuns all the time, boy," said he.

"I am not afraid, Kit; and I'm very grateful to you for what you have done for me--and for Matt," I replied, walking with him towards the brook.

"Matt and I was good friends; but all that's passed and gone. I shall come back in a few days--sooner ef there's any Injuns round. Good by, boy."

He walked across the brook on one of the stringers, and disappeared in the forest. Mr. Mellowtone was also impatient to depart. He had been away from his home on the island for several days. In the afternoon, as Kit did not return, we concluded the enemy had retired, and my friend embarked in his barge for home; but he promised to return before night. I was alone then, and I walked about the farm thinking of Matt. Whichever way I turned, there was always something to remind me of him.

I could not help considering my prospects for the future. I had concluded to carry on the farm that season, though I did not like the idea of living all alone. Mr. Mellowtone said nothing about taking up his residence with me, though I had suggested the idea to him. I knew that he was fond of solitude for a large portion of his time. He was too much enamoured of his island to leave it. Kit's habits would not permit him to settle down and dwell in a house, for though he had a cabin, he did not live in it except in the winter. If I carried on the farm, I must do it alone, though I should doubtless receive frequent visits from my neighbors.

I walked about the farm thinking what I should do the coming season, and I laid out work enough to keep me well employed till the coming of the autumn. I intended to plant ten acres in corn, potatoes, and vegetables. Fortunately the soil was easily worked, and I had no doubt of my ability to perform the labor, with the aid of the horses and the implements at my command. I walked till I had arranged my plans, and then went into the Castle to consider them further.

My thoughts wandered away from the practical duties of the farm to the past. I recalled the scene on the banks of the Missouri, where Matt had folded me in his arms by the bivouac fire. He was not my real father, though he had done all a parent could do for me. I had had a real father and mother, who probably believed, if they were saved from the calamity, that I had perished. The subject was full of interest to me. Perhaps my parents had been saved, and still lived. Matt had told me that one half of the people on board the Farringford had been picked up by the steamer that passed the next morning.

The more I thought of this subject, the more curious and anxious I became. I glanced at a large chest, which stood near the head of the bed. It contained all the valuables of Matt, and he always kept it locked. I had never known him to open it, except when he had sold a lot of wood, and wished to put away the money. Although he never said anything about it, I thought he did not wish me to see what the chest contained. He kept it locked, it seemed to me, to prevent me from opening it, for there was no other person who was likely to meddle with it. I respected his wishes, though he never expressed them, and refrained even from looking at him when he opened the chest. There must be money in it; but that was of no use to me, except when the trading steamers came along.

I was sure that it was not to keep me from meddling with the money that my patriarchal friend locked the chest. There was something in it, I fancied, which was connected with the mystery of my parentage. Though it did not occur to me then, I have thought since that Matt Rockwood did very wrong in not trying to ascertain who my father and mother were. Even Kit Cruncher had insisted upon his doing this; but after he had loved me and cared for me, he could not permit me to be taken from him. I could forgive him because of his tenderness and affection for me; but even these could not justify his conduct.

I rose from the bench on which I was seated, and walked across the room to the chest. It was locked; but where was the key? Old Matt had always carried it in his pocket, and I concluded that it had been buried with him. Had it been in my possession I should have opened the chest; but I had not the courage to break it open. I resumed my seat on the

bench, and the mystery of my parentage seemed to become awful and oppressive. Why could I not know whether my father, or mother, or both, were alive or dead? But all was dark to me, and I could not penetrate the veil which hung between me and those who had given me being.

While I was thinking, I heard the whistle of a steamer, frequently repeated, indicating that she wanted a supply of wood. I hastened to the stable, and mounted Cracker, for the landing-place was a mile from the Castle. By the time the boat had made fast to the tree, which served as a mooring-stake, I reached the wood-yard. We had one hundred cords of cotton-wood piled up in readiness for sale.

"Hallo, Phil Rockwood," said the captain, crossing the gang-plank to the shore. "Where is your father?"

"He is dead, sir," I replied, gloomily enough, for the scene reminded me very strongly of Matt, and this was the first time I had been called upon to make a bargain myself.

"Dead! I am sorry for that. When did he die?" added the captain, with an appearance of real regret.

"He was shot by the Indians four days ago."

"Shot! Well, that's too bad."

"I wish you would tell the commander of the fort above all about it."

"I will, certainly. But what do you ask for wood?"

"Matt Rockwood said he must have four dollars a cord now, for we have to haul it farther than we used to," I replied.

"That's rather high."

But I stuck to the price which Matt had fixed, and the captain finally agreed to it, though it was more than we had ever charged before. We measured off twenty cords, and the deck hands of the steamer began to carry it on board. While they were thus engaged, I told the captain all about our difficulty with the Indians, and he was confident that the commandant of the fort would send a force to chastise them.

While the boat was wooding up, the passengers went on shore, and walked in the woods to vary the monotony of the tedious voyage. Among them I observed a young lady of twelve or thirteen, the first I had ever seen in my life of the white race. I gazed at her with curiosity and interest, as she walked up the cart path towards the castle. She was alone, for the other passengers took the road on the bank of the brook. She was very prettily dressed, and the sight of her gave me a new sensation. I saw two ladies, but they were watching the labors of the deck hands, and did not leave the steamer.

"You have some passengers, captain," said I, wishing to introduce the subject, so that I could inquire about the young lady.

"A few, but it is rather too early in the season for them. Mine is the first boat this year," he replied.

"Where are these ladies going?"

"They are going to Oregon--Portland, I believe."

"Who is that young lady?" I asked.

"She is the daughter of one of the ladies on deck, and a very pretty girl she is, too. Her name is Ella Gracewood."

The hands had nearly finished loading the wood, and the captain ordered the bell to be rung and the whistle to be blown, in order to call back his passengers, who were wandering about on shore. He paid me eighty dollars in gold for the wood; for in this wild region we used only hard coin, and did not believe in banks hundreds or thousands of miles distant. I took the money, and with a portion of it purchased a barrel of flour, a keg of sugar, a quantity of ground coffee, and some other supplies needed at the Castle. The steamer hauled in her plank, and casting off her hawser, renewed her long voyage up the river. Mounting Cracker, I rode back to the Castle, and harnessed both horses to the wagon, in order to haul up the stores I had purchased.

While I was thus employed, I saw the young lady, who had landed from the steamer, walking very deliberately across the field from the forest, to which she had extended her promenade. In her hand she carried some of the little flowers which blossomed in the grass. Occasionally she held them to her nose, and seemed to enjoy their fragrance very much. I drove my horses down the slope, and intercepted her as she reached the road. I knew she had made a serious mistake in not returning before; but she, as yet, had no suspicion that the steamer had departed. I hauled in my horses, but she was not disposed to take any notice of me.

I may say now, fifteen years after, that I was not a dandy, and my appearance was not calculated to make an impression upon a young lady. I wore coarse gray pants, "fearfully and wonderfully made," besides being fearfully soiled with

grease and dirt, the legs of which were stuffed into the tops of my boots, after the fashion of our backwoods locality. Above these I wore a hunting-frock, made of a yellow blanket, with a belt around my waist. My cap was of buffalo hide, and shaped like a gallon tin-kettle. My frock was dirty, greasy, and ragged, for I wore it while cooking, taking care of the pigs and horses, and in doing other dirty work about the house and barn.

I thought the young lady did not like my appearance, for she seemed to be very timid, and perhaps thought I was a brigand. I was near enough to see that she was very pretty, even according to the standard of later years, though I had no means of making a comparison at that time.

Though I pulled in my horses, she only glanced at me, and resumed her walk towards the landing, apparently determined to avoid me. I was rather vexed at this treatment, for I wished to invite her to ride down to the river. I knew nothing about the shyness and reserve of young ladies in civilized life. I drove on once more, and she stepped out of the road to permit the team to pass. She glanced at me again, and I saw that she was not angry with me. I stopped the horses, and then I ventured to speak to her.

CHAPTER IX.

IN WHICH PHIL HAS A VISITOR AT THE CASTLE.

"Won't you ride?" I asked, as the young lady stepped out of the road to allow my team to pass.

"No, I thank you," she answered, with a smile and a blush.

I did not then understand the absurdity of the invitation I extended to her. The wagon was simply a platform on wheels, with stakes. It had been built by old Matt, though the wheels had been brought from some town hundreds of miles down the river. It was the only vehicle on the place, and was used for carting wood and hay, and for all the purposes of the farm. It was not a suitable chariot for a civilized young lady, dressed as prettily as Miss Gracewood was.

"Did you know that the steamer you came in had gone?" I added.

"Gone!" exclaimed she, with a start, and an expression of utter despair.

"She left half an hour ago."

"What shall I do!" cried she, so troubled that I felt very bad myself. "The steamer cannot have gone without me."

"She went more than half an hour ago," I added. "I suppose they thought you were on board."

"O, dear! what shall I do!"

"She will come back after you when they find you have been left behind."

"Do you think they will?"

"To be sure they will."

"Why did she go so soon? They have always stopped three or four hours in a place."

"I suppose the boat had more business to do at other landings than here. She only stopped here for wood. She whistled and rang her bell half an hour before she started. Didn't you hear the whistle?"

"I did hear it, but not the bell, which I supposed was the signal to call the passengers. It was such a pretty place in the forest that I enjoyed it very much, and I did not think of such a thing as the steamer starting for several hours. The boat whistles so much that I am used to it, and don't heed it. What will become of me!"



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"I don't think you need trouble yourself much about it. The steamer will come back as soon as they miss you," I continued, very much moved when I saw the tears starting in her eyes.

"I'm afraid they won't miss me."

"Why, certainly they will," I protested, earnestly. "Won't you ride down to the landing?"

She glanced at the dirty wagon. She appeared to be tired after her long walk, and the invitation was a temptation to her; but the character of the vehicle did not please her. I had put a clean box on the wagon to contain the small stores I had purchased.

"You can sit on this," I added, pointing to the box.

"I don't think I can get into the wagon."

I jumped upon the ground, and placed the box near the vehicle, so that she could use it as a step. I did not understand the rules of gallantry well enough to offer to assist her when she really needed no assistance. She stepped upon the box, and, grasping one of the stakes, easily mounted the platform. I placed the box in the middle of the wagon, and she seated herself. I drove slowly to the landing-place, so that the motion of the rude vehicle might not disturb her.

"I am afraid they won't come back to-night," said she, as she strained her eyes in gazing up the river.

"Your friends on board would compel the captain to return; but he is a very good man, and I think he will be willing."

"But they may not miss me. There are very few passengers on board, and I have a state-room all to myself. I have been in it half the time, reading, and they may think I am there."

"There will be another steamer along in a few days, and you can go in her."

"In a few days!" repeated she. "What can I do for two or three days?"

"There's Mr. Mellowtone," I interposed, pointing to the pretty barge of my friend, who was returning to the Castle, as he had promised to do.

"And who is Mr. Mellowtone?" inquired my fair companion.

I explained who he was: and by the time I had finished my description, we arrived at the landing.

"There is no steamer to be seen," said Miss Ella, sadly.

"But she will come back, I am sure, even if she has gone a hundred miles, when they discover your absence," I replied.

"I wish I could think so."

"You may depend upon it."

"It is almost dark now."

"The steamers run by night as well as by day, in this part of the river, when the water is as high as it is now."

She walked down to the bank of the river, and continued to gaze earnestly up the stream, while I employed myself in loading my goods. I did not think, when I bought the barrel of flour, that I was now alone, and two hundred pounds was more than I could lift from the ground to the body of the wagon. But in the backwoods every person is necessarily full of expedients. Taking a shovel from the shanty, which Matt had built as a shelter in stormy weather, I dug a couple of trenches into the slope of the hill, corresponding to the wheels, and then backed the wagon into them, until I had a height of less than a foot to overcome. Using a couple of sticks as skids, I easily rolled the barrel of flour upon the vehicle. After loading the other articles, I was ready to return to the Castle.

Miss Ella stood on the bank of the river, still watching for the steamer. It did not come, and I invited her to return with me. She was chilled with the cool air of the evening, and reluctantly consented. I made a seat for her on the wagon, and assured her I should hear the whistle of the steamer when she returned.

"I am afraid she will not return," said she again, very gloomily.

"Of course she will. I doubt whether she will go any farther to-night than the fort, about twenty miles farther up the river," I replied. "Your friends must have discovered your absence by this time."

"No," she replied, shaking her head, "they will think I am in my state-room."

"Your mother is on board, I heard the captain say."

"She is, and my aunt."

"I am sure your mother will discover your absence. She will want to see you before you go to bed."

"No."

I had no experience of domestic life among civilized people, but I had read in books, lent to me by Mr. Mellowtone, that parents and children were very affectionate. In the stories, little girls always kissed their mothers, and said "good night" after they repeated their prayers. I thought it would be very strange if Ella's mother did not discover her absence till the next day. The young lady was very sad, and shook her head with so much significance, that I was afraid her mother was not kind to her, though I could hardly conceive of such a thing.

"Do you live here all alone?" she asked, after a silence of a few moments, as though she wished to turn my attention away from a disagreeable subject.

"I am all alone now, though it is only four days since the old man with whom I lived was killed by the Indians."

"By the Indians!" exclaimed Miss Ella, with a look of terror.

I repeated the story of the attack of the Indians; but I did not wish to alarm her, and refrained from saying that we expected another visit from them soon. I had heard nothing from Kit Cruncher since he departed, and I concluded that there was no present danger. My fair companion sympathized with me in the loss I had sustained, and asked me a great many questions in regard to my life in the woods. I told her how I happened to be there, and I think she forgot all about herself for the time, she was so interested in my eventful career.

We arrived at the Castle, and I found a good fire blazing in the room, but I did not see Mr. Mellowtone, though he had lighted it. I conducted Miss Gracewood into our rude house, and gave her a seat before the fire. Unhitching my horses, I went to the barn with them. While I was feeding them for the night, Mr. Mellowtone came in.

"I have been out into the woods," said he; "but I see no signs of any Indians."

"I don't think there are any very near us," I replied. "If there were, Kit Cruncher would return, and let us know of their approach. I have some company in the Castle, Mr. Mellowtone."

"Company?"

"Yes; a young lady."

"Is it possible!"

"She was left by the steamer. She had been to walk in the forest, and did not heed the whistle."

"This is not a very good place for ladies. We are liable to receive a visit from the Indians at any time."

"Don't say anything to her about it. It would only frighten her, and she is uncomfortable enough now," I suggested, as I led the way towards the house.

"Stop a minute, Phil Farringford," interposed Mr. Mellowtone. "I think I will not see your visitor."

"Not see her!" I exclaimed, astonished that one who had hardly seen a lady for years should desire to avoid one, especially a young lady of twelve.

"No; I think not."

"But she is young, and very pretty."

"So much the worse. It would revive old associations in my mind which are not pleasant. I will tell you more about that another time. But the steamer will return for the young lady--will it not?"

"Of course it will; but she thinks her friends in the boat will not discover her absence before morning, for she occupied a state-room alone."

"If the boat comes in the night, we shall hear her whistle. You and I can sleep in the block house, and your visitor can have the Castle all to herself."

"Very well."

"Now go and attend to her wants, and I will smoke my pipe in the field. It would not be polite to smoke in the presence of a lady," continued Mr. Mellowtone, as he left me.

He disappeared behind the building, leaving the aroma of his pipe after him. I thought his conduct was very strange; but then I had always regarded him as a singular man. He had never gone to the landing when a steamer arrived. If he wanted any stores, or wished to send to St. Louis for anything, he always commissioned Matt or me to do his business for him. He had never whispered a word in my hearing in regard to his past history, though he took a great interest in me.

I went into the Castle, and found that Miss Ella was as comfortable as the circumstances would permit. I put some pitch wood on the fire, which made the room light enough to enable one to read in any part of it. I prepared some supper, of which she ate very sparingly, though when, like an accomplished housekeeper, I apologized for the fare, she declared that it was very good.

I had to unload the wagon; but the barrel of flour was still too much for me, and I asked Mr. Mellowtone to help me, and he came to the front of the Castle for that purpose. I lighted a pitch-wood torch, and went out. Miss Ella followed me, and insisted upon holding the torch, when I began to thrust one end of it into the ground.

Mr. Mellowtone could not help seeing her; and when I was ready to roll down the barrel of flour on the skids, I saw that he was gazing at her very intently.

"What is this young lady's name, Phil Farringford?" he asked, in a low tone.

"Ella Gracewood," I replied.

"My daughter!" exclaimed he, with deep emotion, as he sprang towards her.

CHAPTER X.

IN WHICH PHIL VISITS PARADISE, AND FIRES AT AN INDIAN.

Ella raised the torch, and gazed earnestly into the face of Mr. Mellowtone.

"Father!" exclaimed she, springing into his arms.

I took the torch from her hand, utterly confounded by the scene. I could not see how Mr. Mellowtone could be the father of Miss Gracewood, for I knew enough of the customs of society to be aware that the daughter bore the parent's name. They wept and sobbed in each other's arms, and I was so touched that I could not help crying, too.

"You are but little changed, Ella," said the father. "Only a little taller."

He stepped back and gazed at her, as if to note the change which time had wrought in her.

"And you don't look any older than when we parted; how well I remember it!" replied Ella, her pretty face lighted up with joy. "Only your clothes are different."

Mr. Mellowtone wore the costume of the woods--a blue hunting-shirt, or frock, over pants stuffed into the tops of his boots, with a felt hat.

"I suppose, if I wore my black clothes, you would see no change at all in me," replied the father. "But I will help you unload your flour, Phil Farringford."

"I am in no hurry," I answered.

"Let us do it at once."

I handed the torch to Ella again, and we rolled the heavy barrel to the ground.

"How funny it looks to see you doing such work, father!" said she, laughing.

"But I am my own cook and my own servant. I chop my own wood, and shoot my own dinner. You shall go to my island home to-morrow, and I think we shall be very happy there."

"You needn't do anything more, Mr. Mellowtone," I interposed, when he was going to help unload the rest of the goods. "You can go into the house, and talk with your daughter."

"Why do you call him Mr. Mellowtone?" asked Ella. "That is not his name."

"It is the name by which I am known here in the forest," added he.

"But your name is Henry Gracewood."

"And you may call me so, Phil Farringford, in future," said Mr. Mellowtone. "My own name sounds strange to me now. I changed it to escape impertinent questions which might possibly be put to me."

Father and daughter entered the Castle, and seated themselves before the blazing fire. I rolled the barrel of flour into the store-room, between the house and the barn. Disposing of the rest of the articles I had bought in their proper places, my work was finished for the night.

"I will go to the block house now, Mr. Gracewood," I remarked, not wishing to intrude myself upon the happy father and child in the Castle.

"No, Phil Farringford," replied he; "I shall have no secrets from you after this, for you have learned enough to make you desire to know more."

"I don't wish to intrude, sir."

"Sit down, Phil Farringford. Now Matt Rockwood is gone, I shall regard you both as my children," continued Mr. Gracewood, with more sprightliness than I had ever seen him exhibit before.

I put some more pitch wood on the fire, and seated myself opposite the father and daughter, where I could see the glowing faces of both.

"Now, Ella, tell me how you happen to be so far from St. Louis," said Mr. Gracewood.

"We were going to Portland, Oregon. Mr. Sparkley failed in business, and lost all his property," replied she.

"Mr. Sparkley is my brother-in-law, Phil," added Mr. Gracewood. "And you are going with him, Ella?"

"Yes; Mr. Sparkley has a good chance to go into business there."

"Is your--is your mother with him?" asked Mr. Gracewood, with some embarrassment.

"She is."

I was not a little puzzled by what I heard. My good friend spoke of the mother of Ella, and I knew that she was his daughter. The mother, therefore, was his wife, as I reasoned out the problem; but I could not understand how he happened to be living in the backwoods, away from her and his child. Mr. Gracewood was silent for a time, and I began to realize that there was something unpleasant in his family relations, though the matter was incomprehensible to me.

"I suppose your mother does not speak very kindly of me," said the father, at last, with considerable emotion.

"I never heard her speak an unkind word of you, father," replied Ella, promptly; and at the same time her eyes filled with tears.

"I am glad to hear that."

"It is true, father," added the daughter, wiping the tears from her eyes.

"Don't cry, Ella; all may yet be well. Perhaps I was to blame, in part."

"You will see mother when she comes back in the steamer--won't you, father?" pleaded she.

"She may not wish to see me."

"I know she will be glad to see you."

Mr. Gracewood was moody and agitated again. I saw that he was struggling with his feelings, and I hoped that the gentle words of his daughter would lead to a reconciliation. She seemed like an angel of peace to me, as she threw oil upon the troubled waters. But I felt like an intruder in such a scene, and I left the Castle on the pretence of attending to the horses. I did not return, feeling that I was not needed in such an interview. I made up a bed in the block house, and was about to turn in, when Mr. Gracewood joined me. He told me he had attended to all the wants of his daughter, and that she would sleep in the Castle.

"I know you were astonished at what you heard, Phil Farringford," said he, as we lay down in the block house.

"I was, sir, and I felt very bad when your daughter wept."

"I am afraid, from what Ella says, that I am quite as much to blame as her mother. Indeed, I had begun to think before that the fault was not all on her side. When my father died, he left a handsome fortune, which was divided between my brother and myself. I was educated at one of the best colleges in the west, and intended to study the profession of law; but the death of my father placed sufficient wealth in my possession to enable me to live in luxury without any exertion. I was married, and for a few years lived very happily.

"I had always been very fond of fishing and hunting, and while in college I spent all my vacations in camp, on the prairie or in the forest. After I was graduated, I used to devote two or three months of the year to these pursuits. When I was married, I was not willing to forego this luxury,--for such it was to me,--and without going into the painful details, this subject became a source of difference between us. I thought my wife was unreasonable, and she thought the same of me. Six years ago she told me, if I went on my usual excursion, she would leave me, never to return. I could not believe she was in earnest. I had reduced the period of my absence to six weeks, and when I returned found my house closed. Mrs. Gracewood was at the residence of her brother, Mr. Sparkley. I sent her a note, informing her of my return.

"She wrote me in reply, that if I would promise to abandon my annual hunting trip, or take her with me, she would come back. I replied that I would travel with her wherever she desired to go, and at any time except in June and July, and that a woman was out of place in a camp of hunters. She positively refused to return or to see me on any other than her own conditions. I met Ella every week at my own house, where she came in charge of a servant. Neither of us would yield, and life was misery to me. The next spring I placed all my property in the hands of my brother, with instructions to pay my wife an annuity of three thousand dollars a year, and made a will in favor of my child.

"I had been to this region before, and hunted upon the island where I now live. To me it was a paradise, and I determined to spend the rest of my days there. I felt that I had been robbed of all the joys of existence in the love of my wife and child. Taking the materials for my house, furniture, a piano, and my library, with a plentiful supply of stores, I came up the river in a steamer, and have lived here ever since."

"But didn't you wish to see your daughter?" I asked.

"Very much; but I was afraid that the sight of her would break down my resolution, and induce me to yield the point for which I had contended. A kind Providence seems to have sent my child to me, to open and warm my heart."

"Do you still think you were right?" I asked.

"I do; my annual hunt was life and strength to me for the whole year. I thought my wife's objections were unkind and unreasonable; but I believe now, since I have seen Ella, that my manner was not conciliatory; that I was arbitrary in my refusal. Perhaps, if I had been kind and gentle, and taken the pains to convince her that my health required the recreation, she would have withdrawn her objections. Quarrels, Phil Farringford, oftener result from the manner of the persons concerned than from irreconcilable differences."

I went to sleep, but I think it was a long night to Mr. Gracewood. When I waked he had left the block house; but I found him with Ella, at sunrise, on the bank of the river. He had called her up, and was going to start at that early hour for Paradise, as he called his island. He invited me to go up as soon as I could, declaring that there was no danger from the Indians so long as Kit did not return. I was sorry to lose my pretty visitor so soon; but she was as impatient to see the home of her father as he was to have her do so.



MR. GRACEWOOD AND ELLA LEAVE FOR THE ISLAND.
PAGE 114.

I watched the beautiful boat as Mr. Gracewood pulled up the stream; but I trembled when I considered the danger of losing my neighbors, for Ella would not think of remaining long in such a lonely region. I took care of the horses, and turned them out to feed on the new grass, believing that they would be better able to take care of themselves in my absence if the Indians visited the clearing. After breakfast, I walked down to the landing, where I had a boat, as starting from there would save me the labor of paddling a mile against the current. I soon reached the island, and landed upon the lower end. I had taken my rifle with me, so as to bring down any game I happened to see.

As I walked up the slope of the hill, I discovered in the water, on the north side of the island, a couple of Indian dugouts. I was alarmed, and hastened with all speed to the house of my good friend. I heard the music of his piano, and was assured that the Indians had not yet done any mischief. I went up to the door, which was wide open. Mr. Gracewood sat at the instrument, with his pipe in his mouth, inspired by the melody he was producing. At the same instant I perceived the head of an Indian at a window behind the pianist. I saw him raise a rifle, as if to take aim. As quick as my own thoughts, I elevated my own piece and fired.

CHAPTER XI.

IN WHICH PHIL ENGAGES IN THE PURSUIT OF THE INDIANS.

The shot which I fired was instantly followed by a fierce and savage yell. Until this moment the invaders had been creeping like cats up to the house, and Mr. Gracewood and Ella had no suspicion of their presence. In coming up the river I had crossed to the opposite side by a diagonal course, partly to shorten the distance, and partly to avoid a strong current, which swept in close to the shore above the mouth of Fish Creek. The Indians must have been making the passage at the same time; but the island was between them and me, so that I could not see them.

They belonged to the same band that had attacked us at the Castle. The fact that they had their dugouts with them assured me they had come down Crooked River, the next stream above the Fish, on our side of the Missouri. I concluded that they intended to renew the attack upon the Castle, and had come in their boats so that they could approach on the water side of the farm. They knew Mr. Gracewood very well, and meant to plunder him first, for his share in the occurrences of the last week.

I could form no idea of the number of Indians on the island. I judged that there were but few, for I could see only two dugouts on the bank of the river. The savage at whom I had fired was in the act of stealing in at the window. He had but just raised his head, and was the only one I could see. His companions were near him, however, as I soon learned from the yell they uttered.

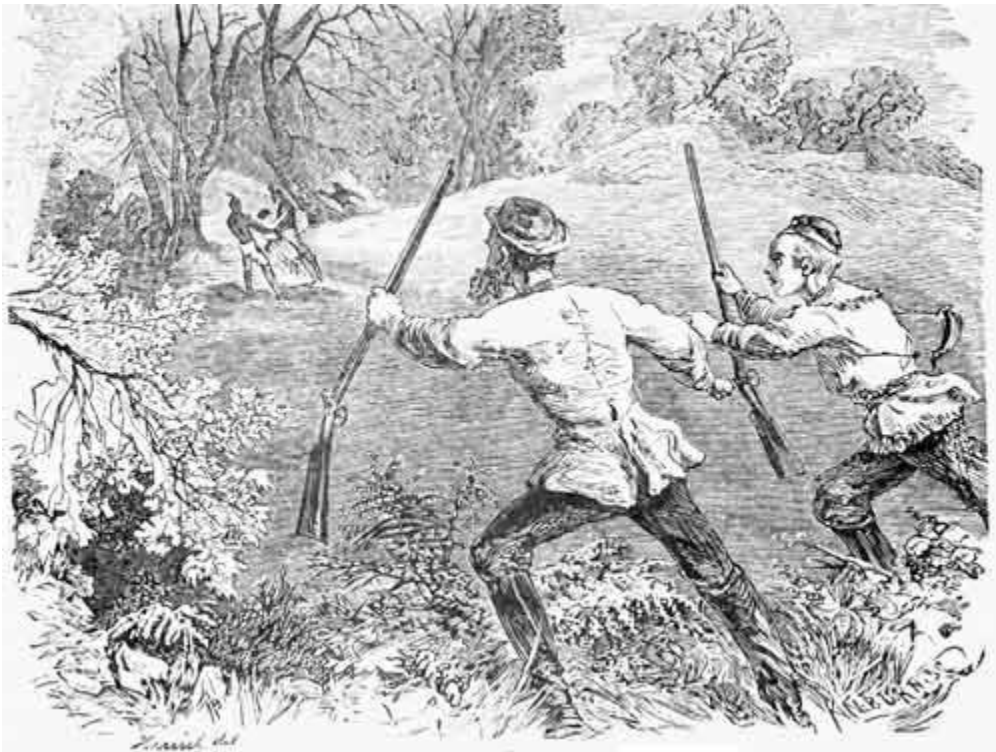
Mr. Gracewood's house was large enough to contain two rooms below, and two sleeping apartments in the attic. The front room, on the south side of the building, was nearly half filled by a Chickering's grand piano--a magnificent instrument, which was the joy and solace of the recluse in his self-imposed exile. I had often sat for hours, while he played upon it, listening to the wonderful melody he produced. He was an enthusiast in music, and when he played he seemed to be inspired. Almost invariably his pipe was in his mouth when seated at the instrument, and I supposed his two joys afforded him a double rapture. I used to think, if it had been my case, I could have dispensed with the pipe, for it seemed like adding gall to honey.

The grand piano was a powerful instrument, and I had heard its tones before I landed, and I listened to them with pleasure until my attention was attracted by the sight of the dugouts. The front door was open, and Mr. Gracewood glanced at me as I appeared at the door, but he did not suspend his rapturous occupation. Behind him stood Ella, enjoying the music; and both were totally unconscious of the deadly peril that menaced them. At the same instant I discovered the head of the Indian. He had evidently surveyed the interior of the room before, and he did not see me. I fired, and he dropped. His companions yelled, and Ella uttered a scream of terror. She was beside herself with fear, and apparently thinking the house was full of Indians, she rushed out at the open door as I entered. Mr. Gracewood seized his rifle, and a revolver which hung on the wall.

I loaded my piece without delay, and followed the recluse out of the house. I heard him fire before I overtook him. The plan of the savages failed as soon as they were discovered, for they were too cowardly to stand up before the rifles of the white man. As I hastened after Mr. Gracewood, I glanced at the outside of the window through which I had fired at the Indian. I supposed I had killed him, but his body was not there. A terrible scream from Ella, followed by a cry of anguish from her father, startled me at this moment, and I ran with all speed in the direction from which the sounds came. Passing beyond the house, I discovered four Indians in full retreat. Two of them were dragging the shrieking Ella over the ground towards the point on the river where the dugout lay. My blood ran cold with horror as I realized that they had captured the fair girl.

The poor child, in her terror, had run away from the house to escape the savages, who, she supposed, were in it, but only to encounter them where we could not prevent her capture. The agony of her father was fearful. He groaned in the heaviness of his soul. We could not fire upon the Indians without danger of hitting Ella, whom her captors cunningly used to protect their own bodies from our bullets.

Mr. Gracewood ran, but his limbs seemed to be partially paralyzed by the agony of his soul. It was but a short distance to the river, and before we could overtake the Indians they had dragged their prisoner into one of the dugouts, and pushed off from the shore. I passed the poor father, but reached the bank of the river too late to be of any service to Ella. There were two Indians in each boat. They had gone but a few rods before a bullet whistled near my head, and I retreated to the shelter of a tree until Mr. Gracewood joined me.



ELLA CARRIED OFF CAPTIVE.
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"Heaven be merciful to me and to her!" groaned he, pressing both hands upon his throbbing head. "What shall we do, Phil Farringford? Tell me, for I am beside myself."

"Let us take your barge and follow them."

At that moment the shrill whistle of a steamer echoed over the island. The sound came from up the river, and I was satisfied that it was the boat in which Ella had been a passenger, returning for her.

"It will be a sad moment to her mother when she hears what has become of Ella," groaned Mr. Gracewood.

"Let us get into your boat as quick as possible, and meet the steamer as she comes down," said I.

We ran to the landing-place at the lower end of the island, and embarked in the barge. Mr. Gracewood rowed with all his might up the stream.

"Do you see the dugouts, Phil Farringford?" he asked, after he had pulled to the upper end of the island.

"I can just see them. They are making for Crooked River."

"Do you see the steamer?"

"She is not in sight yet."

The mouth of Crooked River was half a mile above Paradise Island. Its head waters were in the Indian country, but the most of its course was through a more level region than that through which the two branches of the Fish flowed, though the mouths of the two were not more than a couple of miles apart. Crooked River was, therefore, practicable for boats, while there were frequent rapids in Fish Creek and its tributaries.

"There's the steamer," said I, after we had gone a short distance farther.

"And where are the dugouts?"

"They have gone into Crooked River."

"Can the people in the steamer see them?" asked the anxious father.

"No," I replied, sadly.

Mr. Gracewood continued to pull with all his might, and in silence, till we came within hail of the steamer.

"Hold on!" I shouted, making violent gestures with my arms.

The captain immediately recognized me, and the wheels of the steamer stopped. Mr. Gracewood pulled the barge up to the steamer, and we went on board.

"Where is the young lady we left at your wood-yard?" demanded the captain, very much excited, as I stepped on deck.

"She was captured by the Indians less than an hour ago," I replied, breathless with emotion. "They have taken her up into Crooked River. Do put your boat about and chase them."

"Captured by the Indians!" exclaimed the captain, aghast at the intelligence.

"Will you put about, and follow them, captain?" interposed Mr. Gracewood.

"He is Ella's father," I added.

"I am," said he.

The captain directed the pilot to start the steamer, and head her up the river, as we dragged the barge on deck.

"But we can't go up these small streams," he added.

"The Indians cannot have gone far, and the water is deep for several miles," replied Mr. Gracewood.

"I will do the best I can. We have a detachment of troops which I am to land at your yard, Phil," continued the captain.

"I'm glad to hear that. The Indians will give us no peace until they have been punished for the mischief they have done."

"Did you say this gentleman was Ella's father?" asked the captain, pointing to Mr. Gracewood, who had gone to the bow of the boat, and was on the lookout for the Indians.

I told him all that had transpired since we met the evening before, including the capture of Ella.

"If he is Ella's father, his wife is on board," said the captain. "I suppose I must tell her what has happened to her daughter; but I don't like to do it."

As he left me to perform this unpleasant duty, I saw two ladies and three gentlemen, two of them officers, coming down the steps from the boiler deck. I inferred that one of these ladies was the mother of Ella. She had evidently received an intimation that something had occurred to her daughter, for she was very much disturbed.

"What has happened, Captain Davis? Where is Ella?" she demanded, in broken tones.

"I am sorry to say that the news is not as pleasant as I could wish," replied the captain.

"Where is she?" cried Mrs. Gracewood.

"Her father is here, and----"

"Her father!" exclaimed the anxious mother.

Mr. Gracewood, whose attention was attracted by the sound of her voice, came up to the group, and was instantly recognized by his wife.

"O, Henry!" gasped she. "Forgive me!"

"Nay, I ask to be forgiven," he replied, choking with emotion.

Without any explanation or terms whatever, the reconciliation seemed to be perfect.

"This must be a sad meeting, Emily, for I fear that Ella is lost to us."

"Where is she?" demanded Mrs. Gracewood.

"In the hands of the Indians," replied the suffering father.

"O, mercy! mercy!" groaned the poor mother. "They will kill her!"

"Let us hope not," replied Mr. Gracewood, struggling to repress his emotions.

But this intelligence was too heavy for the strength of the poor lady, and she was borne fainting up the stairs to the saloon. Mr. Gracewood assisted in this duty, and I was left to give the military officers the information they needed. The steamer had already entered Crooked River, and a leadman was calling out the depth of water.

"There they are!" I cried, when the boat turned a sharp bend in the river, as I discovered the two dugouts paddling up the stream.

"We will make short work of them," replied Lieutenant Pope, who was in command of the detachment of soldiers sent down for our relief.

The Indians saw the steamer, and immediately made for the shore, where they landed.

CHAPTER XII.

IN WHICH PHIL TAKES DELIBERATE AIM AT ONE OF THE CAPTORS OF ELLA.

"What is your name, young man?" said Lieutenant Pope to me.

"Phil Farringford, sir."

"Are you acquainted with the country in this vicinity?"

"Yes, sir; I have been over it many times."

"Then you can act as a guide," added the officer, who had collected his force on the forward deck, in readiness to disembark them.

Presently the steamer reached the point at which the Indians had landed. The dugouts were hauled up on the shore; but we could see nothing of the savages, who had disappeared in the forest, half a mile from the stream, where the land began to rise.

"Can we make a landing here?" asked the captain.

"You can," I replied.

"Do so, captain," added Lieutenant Pope.

"I wouldn't land here," I interposed.

"Why not?"

"This boat can go three miles up the river, sure, and perhaps five. The Indians must travel up stream in order to escape you. If you go up two miles farther, you can head them off."

"Keep her a-going, captain," added the officer.

"Two or three miles east of us is Big Fish Creek. The Indians can't get across below us without swimming."

"Then we shall have them between these two streams."

"Of course it is possible for them to get across the Big Fish, but it won't be very easy, unless they get rid of their prisoner."

"How far is it across the country to the creek?" asked the lieutenant.

"About three miles here. Crooked River twists round in a half circle."

"You may be gone a week, Lieutenant Pope," interposed the captain. "I can't wait here a great while."

"You need not wait an hour after you have landed my force," replied the officer. "But you must take my stores down to the landing at the wood-yard. I will send a sergeant and ten men to take charge of them."

The campaign, it appeared, was to be commenced at this point, and I was to guide the soldiers to the Indian village north of our settlement. Mr. Gracewood soon appeared on the forward deck, and the plan was explained to him. His wife was a little better, and he was anxious to join in the pursuit of the savages. I tried to prevail upon him to go down to the landing with the soldiers; but he was resolute, and declared that he would follow the Indians till he recovered his daughter.

"One of us should go down with the soldiers, and take care of Mrs. Gracewood; for I suppose she no longer thinks of going to Oregon," I said.

"Why will you not go, Phil Farringford?" he replied.

"I am to act as the guide for the soldiers who pursue the Indians."

"I will guide them," added Mr. Gracewood.

"Either of you," interposed the lieutenant.

I was anxious to go with the soldiers myself, and to have a hand in capturing the miscreants who had carried off Ella; but her father had a stronger claim upon this duty, and I yielded. Two miles above the point where we had passed the dugouts, the steamer made a landing. After I had explained to Lieutenant Pope the nature of the country, and the localities of the streams, he decided to take only half his force with him, and to send the other half to the landing, with instructions to march up the Little Fish towards the Indian village. The two detachments would come together on the river before reaching their final destination.

The soldiers who were to pursue the Indians landed, and the steamer started again. It was about noon when we reached the landing at the Castle. The captain, who had been detained so long by the events narrated that he was impatient to be on his voyage up the river again, hurried the soldiers on shore. Mrs. Gracewood bade adieu to her brother and his wife, who proceeded on their long journey. It was hard to leave without knowing the fate of poor Ella, but the circumstances were imperative. I conducted Mrs. Gracewood to the shore, and the steamer departed.

The poor mother was in a state bordering on frenzy. Her anxiety and suspense were hardly endurable. I went up to the Castle, caught the horses, harnessed them to the wagon, and conveyed her and her trunks to the house. In the mean time the soldiers had marched up to the clearing, and decided to pitch their tents near the block house, for they were not to start for the upper country till the next morning, lest the Indians should be alarmed before the other force could reach the place of meeting.

The troops hauled their tents and provision to the camp ground with my team; and the scene at the clearing was vastly more lively than I had ever before seen there. Mrs. Gracewood could not stay in the Castle, and she joined me in the field. I said all that I could to comfort and console her. I know not how many times she asked me whether I thought the savages would kill her daughter. I did not believe they would.

"Why should they, Mrs. Gracewood?" I reasoned. "They know very well that such a murder would bring a terrible vengeance upon them. Before this time they have seen that the soldiers are on their track."

"Why should they carry her off, then?" asked the poor mother, wiping away the tears that so frequently blinded her.

"As a prisoner, alive and well, she may be of great value to her captors. They may procure a large ransom for her, or they may protect themselves by having her in their power. To kill her would bring nothing but disaster to them."

"But they will at least abuse her."

"They may compel her to travel too fast for her strength, for the soldiers will keep them moving at a rapid rate. Wasn't it very singular that she was left behind last night?" I asked, wishing to change the current of her thoughts a little, if possible.

"It seems strange now. I did not think of such a thing as that she was not on the steamer. I supposed she was in her state-room reading till evening. Her room was lighted, as usual; and when I retired, as the light seemed to assure me she was there, I thought I would not disturb her. The steamer stopped at the fort. She did not appear at breakfast, and I went to her room. I was frightened when I saw that it had not been occupied, and I ran to the captain. Inquiry proved that she had not been seen since we left this landing. I was told that people lived here, and that she would not suffer. As soon as the freight was unloaded, the steamer returned."

While I was talking with her, the shrill screaming of a steamboat whistle assured me I had another customer for wood. Slung my rifle over my shoulder,—for in these troublous times it was not safe to go unarmed,—I rode old Firefly down to the landing. I sold twenty cords of cotton-wood, and put eighty dollars into my pocket. I told the captain all the news, while the hands were loading the fuel; and the steamer went on her winding way up the river. In a short time she disappeared beyond the bend. I was about to mount my horse, and return to the Castle, when I discovered a dugout in the distance cautiously stealing down the great river, under the shadow of the bank. It contained two Indians; but I was thrilled with excitement when I discovered a young lady seated between them.

It was Ella Gracewood.

I was in a clump of trees, where I had fastened Firefly, and the savages could not see me. I unslung my rifle, and satisfied myself that it was in condition for use. Breathless with interest and anxiety, I watched the dugout. I realized that the Indians had doubled on the soldiers in pursuit of them by returning to their boats, and coming down Crooked River. They evidently intended to ascend the Fish River. Aware that the troops were in hot pursuit of them, I could understand that their only solicitude was to escape with their prisoner, whose presence was a sort of guarantee of their own safety.

I hardly dared to breathe, lest the savages should discover me. I crouched behind a bush, and watched the progress of the enemy, as they rounded the point, and paddled up the Fish River. I could not make up my mind what to do. If I went up to the camp to inform the soldiers of what I had seen, I should lose sight of the dugout. I expected every moment to see the other two Indians come round the point in the second dugout, but they did not appear.

As the savages ascended the stream, I crawled out of my hiding-place. Mr. Gracewood's barge had been left at the

lauding by the steamer, and I launched it as the dugout disappeared beyond a bend in the creek. I rowed with the utmost caution up the stream, fearful that the quick ear of the Indians might detect the sound of the oars. I took the precaution to muffle the oars, using an old coat I found in the boat for the purpose. At the bend where I had lost sight of the enemy, I held the barge by an overhanging branch, until I had satisfied myself that it was safe to proceed. The dugout was not in sight, and I continued to pull up the stream, pausing at every turn to take an observation.

As it was not safe for me to go forward while the dugout could be seen, I had not obtained another view of it when I reached the junction of the Big and Little Fish Creeks. As the soldiers were between the former and Crooked River, I knew the fugitives would not take that branch, and I confidently pulled up the Little Fish. Two miles above the junction the rapids commenced, and boats could go no farther in this direction. Unfortunately the stream was too straight to suit my purpose, and seeing the dugout half a mile ahead of me, I landed, and determined to walk in the path on the bank of the creek.

The trees enabled me to keep out of sight, and I quickened my pace, so as to lessen the distance between myself and the enemy. As they made but slow progress against the current, I was soon as near them as I dared to go. In this manner I crept along the path till the dugout arrived at the rapids. The Indians landed, and compelled Ella to do so. I could not see her face, but I judged that she had in some degree become reconciled to her situation.

The place where the fugitives landed was at the mouth of the little brook up which Mr. Gracewood and I had followed the horse thieves. The rapids were just above the mouth of this stream, and the locality was my favorite fishing-ground. I supposed the savages would follow the path on the bank of the creek, which led to the Indian village; but instead of doing so, they struck into the woods by the route the horse thieves had taken. I walked up to the mouth of the brook; but I knew the Indians could go but a short distance in the direction they had chosen. It was nearly sundown, and I concluded that they intended to encamp for the night. I had about decided to return to the Castle, and procure the assistance of the soldiers, when I heard one of the Indians approaching. Concealing myself behind a tree, I waited to observe his movements.

He went to the river, embarked in the dugout, and pushing out into the middle of the stream, commenced fishing, not fifty yards from me. I could not resist the temptation to open the battle, and taking deliberate aim at the Indian with my rifle, I fired.

CHAPTER XIII.

IN WHICH PHIL AND HIS COMPANION ARRIVE AT THE CABIN OF KIT CRUNCHER.

If I had considered the matter a moment longer, probably I should not have had the courage to open the battle; for, if I failed to hit the Indian, my situation would become desperate, and with an empty rifle in my hand, I could only depend upon my legs for safety, while the savages would be able to escape with their prize before the soldiers could be brought up.

Fortunately for me, I did not miss my aim. My bullet evidently passed through the brain of the savage, for he threw up his arms, and dropped over into the bottom of the dugout. His fall disturbed the boat, and detached it from the overhanging branch by which he had secured it, to enable him to fish. The current whirled it around, and carried it down the river.

Though I could not rid myself of a certain sensation of horror, when I found that I had actually taken a human life, I was well satisfied with what I had done. My frame trembled with emotion and excitement as I hastened to load my rifle again. I expected that the sound of the shot would bring the other Indian to the spot, and I nervously awaited his approach; but he did not appear. As the first Indian had come to the creek to obtain food, his companion doubtless supposed he had fired at some game. The wind wafted the smell of smoke to me, and I surmised that the savage at the camp was preparing to cook the fish or game which the other was to obtain.

The sun went down, and it began to be dark in the shades of the forest. I had become composed and resolute again, after waiting half an hour for the coming of the other redskin. I had arrived at the conclusion that it was not worth while to return to the Castle for the soldiers. I was sure that the Indian at the camp fire would soon come down to the creek to ascertain what had become of his companion. To prevent him from stumbling upon me, I retreated a little farther from the stream into the forest. I could not be mistaken in my calculation, which was soon verified by the sound of footsteps in the direction of the Indian camp.

I found my heart beating violently again, and I dreaded the necessity of shooting the savage almost as much as I did the consequences if I failed to do so. It was still light enough for me to see him distinctly when he made his appearance on the bank of the brook. I raised my rifle with the intention of firing the instant he stopped long enough to enable me to insure my aim, for I had not confidence enough to shoot while he was in motion. But I was so agitated that I was not in condition to do justice to my own skill. The savage walked rapidly to the bank of the creek, and halted, looking up and down in search of the dugout and his companion.

"Ugh!" grunted he, in order to express his dissatisfaction at the long absence of his associate, I suppose.

Then he shouted, and waited for a response from his absent friend; but he did not hold still long enough to enable me to cover his head with the muzzle of my piece. I was so excited by the consideration of the fatal consequences to me, and perhaps to Ella, if I failed to bring him down, that I had not pluck enough to fire. I had slain one man, and it was awful to think of killing another. I would have given all the gold in my pocket if Kit Cruncher had stood by my side at that instant, and relieved me of the fearful responsibility of the occasion.

Of course there was no response to the call of the Indian; and, after glancing all around him, he walked rapidly down the path on the bank of the creek in search of his lost mate. This movement on his part afforded me a new hope. As Ella had not come to the stream with her surviving captor, it was evident enough that he had left her at the camp fire, probably tied to a tree, or otherwise secured.

I waited till the Indian had disappeared, and then hastened in the direction of the camp. I did not take much pains to move without noise, for I concluded that the Indian would have his ear to the ground frequently, to obtain tidings of his missing associate. I ran with all the speed I could command. I found Ella fastened to a tree near the fire. Her hands were tied behind her, so that she was unable to help herself.

"O, Phil Farringford!" cried she, as I approached.

"Don't make any noise, Ella," I replied, cutting the cords which bound her. "Follow me, and be very careful."

"Where are the Indians?" she asked, in a whisper, her teeth chattering with terror and excitement.

"I have shot one, and the other is not far off."

I conducted my fair companion a short distance down the brook, and taking her in my arms, I bore her across the

stream.

"Hark!" said I, as I placed her on the other side.

We listened, and I heard the Indian shouting for his companion. From the direction of the sound I concluded that he was near the mouth of the brook. Certainly he had retraced his steps from the point where he was when I started to rescue Ella. It was probable that he had heard my steps, but doubtless he supposed they were those of his missing mate. I had made considerable noise when I scrambled up the steep bank of the brook with my burden, which was immediately followed by his call.

"He has heard us," I whispered, preparing my rifle for use.

"What shall I do?" asked my trembling charge.

"Come with me. The brook is between him and us now, and I don't think he will hear our steps, if we move very carefully."

I took her by the hand and led her through the dark forest. I intended to proceed in an easterly direction till I came to Kit Cruncher's Brook, and then follow the path along its bank to the Castle. I paused occasionally to listen, but I heard no more shouting. The savage had probably gone back to his camp, and discovered that his prisoner was missing.

"We must hurry along as fast as we can, Ella," said I, finding that my companion was inclined to go very slowly.

"I am very tired, Phil."

"I am sorry, but we cannot waste our time. If that Indian can find where we crossed the brook, he will pursue us."

"How far must we go?"

"It is five miles to the Castle, but it is only two to Kit Cruncher's cabin."

"I am very faint, for I have eaten nothing since we breakfasted on the island very early this morning," added Ella.

"I think I can find something for you to eat when we get to Kit's cabin."

"But where is my father, Phil?" asked Ella. "I hope nothing has happened to him."

"Nothing has happened to him. He is with the soldiers who landed up Crooked River. Did you not see the troops?"

"I saw them when they landed, but not afterwards."

"Did the Indians use you badly?" I inquired.

"No; they only compelled me to walk when I was so tired that every step was painful."

"Where did you go after you left the dugouts?"

"I'm sure I don't know. We travelled till we came to another river."

"That was the Great Fish," I added.

"Two of the Indians left us then, and paddled across this river on a log. They had a talk before they separated, and they pointed often at me. I knew that it was about me."

"Where did you go then?" I asked, anxious, if possible, to ascertain the plan of the savages.

"We walked back again till we came to the edge of the forest, not far from the river. Here one of the Indians lay down on the ground, so that the soldiers could not see him, and crawled to the stream. The other led me through the woods towards the Missouri, two or three miles, I should think; at any rate, I was completely exhausted. At last we arrived at the great river, in sight of the island where my father lived."



PHIL BEARING ELLA ACROSS THE FORD.
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"But where were the soldiers?" I asked.

"I suppose they were beating about the woods, looking for us. The Indian drove me down the steep bank of the river to the water-side. I was terribly frightened, and if my savage conductor had not held my arm I should have slipped down into the river. Here I was permitted to rest myself for an hour, and then the other Indian came in the boat."

"Did you see the steamer that went up the river this afternoon?"

"I did; and when the Indians heard the whistle, they ran the boat into a creek, and kept very quiet until she had passed. Then they paddled up the river by the wood-yard."

"I saw you when you went by, and followed in your father's barge," I added.

"Did you come all alone?"

"Yes; there are about thirty soldiers at the Castle; but I thought, if I went after them, I should lose sight of you, and so I came up alone. I have some good news for you, Ella."

"What is it?" she asked, faintly.

"Your father and mother met on board of the steamer, and are now good friends."

"I am so glad! But I do wish we could rest," she added.

"Sit down on this log, Ella," I replied, conducting her to a fallen tree. "I haven't heard anything from that Indian, and I don't believe he is on our track."

"O, I hope not; but I couldn't run if I saw him this instant."

"We ought to get back to the Castle to-night, if it is possible," I added.

"I don't believe I can walk so far."

"Your poor mother is suffering every moment. If she only knew you were safe, I would not go farther than Kit's cabin to-night."

After resting for half an hour, we resumed the weary tramp through the woods, and at last reached the brook on the other side of which was the hunter's log hut. There was a light in it, which assured me Kit was at home. I carried Ella over the stream in my arms, and we approached the house. I took the precaution to reconnoitre the premises before I

entered, for it was not impossible that some of the enemy had taken possession of the cabin; but through the open door I saw the tall hunter at work over the fire, evidently cooking his supper.

"How are you, Kit?" said I, leading my charge into his presence.

"Are you hyer, Phil, boy!" exclaimed he. "Who's that with you?"

"It's Mr. Mellowtone's daughter."

"I never knowed he had a darter."

As briefly as possible, I told Kit what had occurred since he left the clearing.

"I've jest kim in from the nor'ard," said he. "The Injuns is on the rampage. There's more'n a hund'ed on 'em not more'n a two hours' tramp up the Little Fish, and there's goin' to be more trouble. I was goin' down to the Castle as soon as I'd eat my supper. I ain't sartin there ain't some redskins 'tween hyer and the clearing. Leastwise, I don't think it's safe to go down by the brook path."

I was surprised and annoyed at his last remark; and Kit, after putting another slice of bacon in the pan over the fire, proceeded to explain the ground of his fears.

CHAPTER XIV.

IN WHICH PHIL ROWS THE BARGE UP THE BIG FISH RIVER.

If there were any Indians between the Castle and Kit Cruncher's cabin, we were certainly between two fires, and it was necessary that something should be done very soon.

"What makes you think there are Indians below us, Kit?" I asked.

"I'll tell you, boy," replied the patriarchal hunter, as he turned a slice of bacon in the pan. "I've seen Injun tracks p'inted that way."

"Where did you see them?"

"Over on the Little Fish. It has rained hard sence I went up the river, and the tracks I see was new ones."

"Were they above or below the lower rapids?"

"Above, boy. I struck across the country above the swamp, and hit my brook near the spring where it starts. Two Injuns had come down, I know."

"Well, Kit, those were the two who crossed the Big Fish on a log--two of the four who went to the island this morning and captured Miss Gracewood. The other two came around by the river in the dugout, and camped near the lower rapids. In my opinion, they had agreed to meet there."

"Most like it is as you say, boy. I'm glad it's no wus. But 'tain't safe for the gal to stay hyer. There'll be a hund'ed Injuns down hyer to-morrow, mebbe as arly as daylight. I cal'late them two that come over this mornin' is doggin' round the Castle now."

"If they are, they have found a camp of soldiers there, and not a very good chance to plunder the place."

Kit Cruncher placed the frying-pan, in which the great slices of bacon had been cooked, upon a chest, with a basket of crackers. Ella ate heartily of the meat, for it was very good, in spite of the homely manner in which it was served. We finished the meal without any interruption from Indians or others. The poor girl declared that she felt very much refreshed and strengthened, and was able to walk again.

"Now we are ready for a start," said Kit, when he had put his house in order.

"How far is it through the woods to the Little Fish, Kit?" I asked.

"Across hyer 'tain't more'n a mile."

"Then I think we had better go that way," I added. "I left Mr. Gracewood's boat not far from the place where the two rivers join, and we can go down in that."

"Very well, boy; but I cal'late there's three Injuns atween us and the Castle somewhar. But 'tain't no matter; if they show theirselves, my rifle will make quick work on 'em."

We crossed the brook, and struck into the woods on the other side. Ella walked by my side, holding my hand, while Kit led the way through the gloomy forest.

"Where do you suppose my father is now, Phil?" asked the poor girl.

"With the soldiers."

"But where are the soldiers?"

"They are in the woods beyond the Big Fish, I suppose. They must have scoured the woods down to the Missouri before dark. I have no means of knowing whether they were able to find any tracks of the fugitives to assist them; if not, they have been very much puzzled."

"And all this time my poor father thinks I am in the hands of the Indians, and fears that I have been killed or abused," added Ella.

"I am very sorry; but I do not see that we can do anything to-night to relieve his anxiety."

"No, Phil, I see that you cannot. You have been very brave and noble, and very kind to me, and I shall remember you with gratitude as long as I live."

"I don't ask for anything better than to serve you," I replied. "In the morning the troops at the Castle will start, and I have no doubt they will communicate with those beyond the Big Fish in the course of the day."

"I do wish father were here. I am afraid he will expose himself to the Indians, or wear himself out, he is so anxious for me."

"We will do the best we can to let him know that you are safe. Perhaps Kit and I will try to find him, as soon as we have conducted you to the Castle, and relieved the anxiety of your poor mother."

"We marched very cautiously through the woods, and with our rifles in our hands ready for instant use. In a short time, under the skilful lead of the hunter, we reached the river; but I had left the barge a mile farther down the stream.

"I am not sure that we shall find the barge where I left it, Kit," said I, as we took the path on the bank of the Little Fish.

"Most like you won't, boy. That Injun that went down to look for t'other mought have took it."

"What will you do, then?" asked Ella.

"We shall be obliged to walk another mile, to the landing-place."

My trembling companion was constantly in fear of an attack from the savages, or that a shot from them would hit her, or some other one of the party. I said all I could to comfort and assure her; but the circumstances were so novel to her that she could not be reconciled to them. As I was not without fear myself, I could not take the matter so coolly as Kit did. But the old hunter, steady and brave as he was in peril, was a prudent man, and not at all disposed to be reckless. He knew that an Indian bullet could kill him, as well as another man, and he had none of that affectation of courage which so often belies the boaster and the reckless man.

"Hyer's your barge," said Kit, ahead of us, when we had gone less than half a mile down the stream.

"So it is; but I did not leave it here," I replied, as I glanced at the boat.

"That Injun has come up stream in it, and left it hyer. Most like he ain't fur from hyer."

I assisted Ella into the barge. Kit seated himself in the bow, and I took the oars.

"Fotch her over under the further shore, boy," said Kit, as I pushed off the boat. "Keep as fur as you kin from danger allus."

The old hunter's suggestion was certainly a good one, as was fully demonstrated only a few minutes later. I pulled the barge to the other side of the river; but we had gone only a few rods before the crack of a rifle, followed by a whizzing bullet, assured us the enemy were at hand. The barge was painted white, and was a shining mark in the night for the savages to fire at.

"O, mercy!" cried Ella.

"Did it hit you?" I asked, alarmed by her cry.

"No, no--but----"

"Don't make any noise, then."

"Run the barge ashore hyer, boy," said Kit Cruncher, quietly.

I obeyed instantly; but another shot followed the first one, though, fortunately, neither of them did any harm.

"Let the gal go ashore," added Kit.

I understood his plan, and assisted Ella to land.

"Run up the bank into the woods, and get behind a tree," I said to her, as a third shot came across the river.

But the Indians were firing blindly in the dark, and though the last bullet hit the boat, we were still safe. Kit stepped on the shore, and we dragged the boat out of the water. The hunter paused on the bank of the river, and gazed across in the direction from which the shots came.

"There's three on 'em over thyer," said Kit. "The shots was too near together to come out of one barrel. Haul the barge up the bank afore they hev time to load up agin."

The barge was light, and we had no difficulty in taking it up the bank into the woods. For the present we were safe; but

it was certain that there were three savages on the bank of the river, and between us and the Castle. We had, luckily, escaped injury so far, and Kit was not the man to lead us into any unnecessary peril. We were now on the tongue of land between the Big and the Little Fish Rivers, and only a short distance above their junction. At the point where we landed it was less than a quarter of a mile from one river to the other.

"We can't go down Fish River to-night," said I, when we had pulled the boat up the bank.

"Not without resk, boy," replied Kit.

"What shall we do?" asked the frightened Ella.

"Don't be skeered, little gal," interposed Kit, in a tone more tender than he was in the habit of using. "You are as safe hyer as you'd be in your marm's lap."

"Can't the savages come over here?" she inquired.

"Pears like they can't; leastwise, not without swimming, and we kin stop 'em faster'n they kin come over. Rifle-balls travels fast," answered Kit, sagely. "But I don't reckon they'll want to come over hyer."

"Do you suppose they know there are soldiers at the clearing?" I asked.

"I don't reckon they do. They mought know it, and they mought not; but from what you say, I cal'late they hain't had time to go down and see."

"Perhaps they intended to go there to-night," I suggested.

"It mought be."

"I think they were looking for something to eat first. I believe the two Indians who came across the river on the log were to meet the other two at the camp on the brook where I went. They knew they could get plenty of fish there. After I shot one of the party at the camp, the remaining one must have come across the other two. They will keep between us and the Castle."

"Most like they've been lookin' for the gal all the evenin'," added Kit.

"It seems to me, if they knew the soldiers were at the clearing, they would not stay here."

"Tain't much use to guess at these things. You mought as well shoot at nothin' in the dark. We can't go down Fish River to-night; that's all that's sartin."

"That is very true."

"And I cannot see my mother to-night, then," said Ella.

"I dunno, little gal; 'pears like you can't; but mebbe you kin see your father," replied Kit. "And it mought be you kin see both. I dunno. We must be keerful. Better not see 'em till to-morrer 'n not see 'em at all."

"What do you mean by seeing her father tonight, Kit?" I inquired, afraid that he was kindling vain hopes in the mind of the suffering maiden.

"I'll tell you, boy. Ef, as you say, them soldiers is rampagin' over the country 'tween the Fish and Crooked River, we mought find 'em afore mornin'. We kin kerry this boat over to the Big Fish, and land on t'other side on't."

"That's a capital plan, Kit, and our safest course," I replied.

We wasted no time in debating a question on which we were perfectly agreed. We carried the light barge across the tongue of land, and launched it in the Big Fish. Our party embarked, and I pulled up the river. I realized that it would not be an easy matter to find the soldiers, for they would not kindle any camp fire, which would betray their presence to the savages.

I pulled vigorously, for half an hour, against the current; and we were satisfied that the three Indians had not crossed the river, for we were not again annoyed by them. As the barge approached the rapids, beyond which we could not go by water, we heard a noise on the shore.

"Who goes there?" shouted a soldier.

"Friends," I replied.

"Advance, friends, and give the countersign."

We had no countersign, but I immediately ran the boat ashore, and we landed.

CHAPTER XV.

IN WHICH PHIL AND HIS COMPANIONS START FOR THE CASTLE.

"Who are you?" demanded the soldier who had hailed the boat, probably astonished to find himself answered in plain English.

"Friends," I replied.

"What is your name?"

"Phil Farringford."

"You are the boy that came on board the steamer this morning?"

"I am; have you seen any Indians to-day?"

"Not an Indian."

"You didn't go where they were," I added.

"We have been beating about the woods all day; but the Indians who captured the girl have dodged us."

"Then you haven't recovered her yet?"

"No."

"I have; and here she is," I continued; helping Ella out of the boat, and up the bank of the river.

By this time half a dozen soldiers had gathered on the shore, with their blankets on their arms. When they understood that the young lady had been recovered from the Indians, they gave an involuntary cheer.

"Where is my father?" asked Ella, anxiously.

"I suppose he is with Lieutenant Pope," replied Corporal Flint, who was the spokesman of the party. "The headquarters are about a mile up the river."

"I must go to him at once," added Ella, nervously.

"You shall, miss. The hunt's up now, and we needn't stay here any longer," continued the corporal. "We are divided into three squads, and posted on the river to keep the Indians from crossing."

"There hasn't been an Indian on this neck for six hours," I added; and I proceeded to inform the corporal in what manner the Indians had made their escape.

"They are cunning," said he. "They know the country better than we do."

"Whar's the cap'n?" demanded Kit, who had been engaged in hauling the barge out of the water, and concealing it in the bushes.

"Who are you?" replied Corporal Flint, as the tall hunter loomed up before him.

"I don't reckon it makes any matter who I am; but I want to see the cap'n, and show him whar the redskins is."

"Lieutenant Pope commands the troops, and he will be very glad to know where the redskins are."

"My father is with him; do let us make haste," said Ella, dragging me by the hand in the direction of the next post of the soldiers.

"We will escort you, miss," added the corporal, ordering his squad to march.

Our walk was enlivened by the frequent challenge of the sentinels posted along the bank of the river. One half of the troops were watching the stream, while the other half slept. In a short time we reached the bivouac of the commanding officer. As we approached, I recognized the form of Mr. Gracewood, who was walking back and forth near the party asleep on the ground.

"Here she is, Mr. Gracewood!" I shouted, while the soldiers were going through their military forms, for they were very precise in all these matters.

The unhappy father halted, and Ella dragged me towards him, impatient to heal the wounded heart. He seemed to be unable to comprehend the meaning of my words; but as soon as he saw her in the gloom of the forest, he rushed forward and clasped her in his arms. I heard them sob in each other's embrace, and while the tears started in my own eyes, I had an all-sufficient reward for the peril and labor I had incurred in restoring her.

"Why, Ella, I can hardly believe it is you," said he, his voice tremulous with emotion.

"It is I, father," she replied, clinging to him convulsively. "I am so happy!"

"Are you safe? Are you hurt? Did they injure you?"

"No, father I have been awfully frightened, but I am not hurt. You don't say a word to Phil. He saved me."

"Phil Farringford!"

"Yes, father."

"My dear boy, you have saved me from a misery you cannot understand," said the glad parent, grasping my hand.

"I am very glad to do something for you, after you have done so much for me, sir."

"But how was it? Tell me about it. Where did you find her?" asked Mr. Gracewood.

"I congratulate you, sir," said Lieutenant Pope, approaching the spot, having learned the substance of the story from Corporal Flint.

"I am the happiest man in the world," added Mr. Gracewood, with enthusiasm. "Phil Farringford is a hero! Now let us know where you found her."

"Here's Kit Cruncher, too," I added, unwilling that my stalwart ally should be ignored.

Mr. Gracewood shook hands with Kit, who was duly introduced to the lieutenant.

"I'm hyer, Mr. Mell'ton, or Mr. Greasewood--if that's your name."

"Greasewood," interposed the happy Ella.

"Jest so; Greasewood--that's what I say. I'm hyer, and I want to tell the cap'n whar the redskins is; but I don't reckon my story'll spile while Phil tells you about the gal. Go on, boy; wag your tongue as fast as you wagged your legs to-day."

"I've had rather a long tramp to-day, and I'll sit down and rest while we talk," I answered, availing myself of a log.

I related minutely all the circumstances of the recapture of Ella, and gave her explanation of the plan by which the Indians had escaped from the soldiers.

"I never thought of those dugouts," said the lieutenant. "We have not been near the river to-day."

"Now, cap'n," interposed Kit Cruncher, "the Injuns from the nor'ard is on a rampage. More'n a hund'ed on 'em is camped on the head streams of the Little Fish, working down this way. They mean to wipe out all on us. They stole Matt's hosses, but we got 'em back. Then they kim down on us, and two or three on 'em got shot. Now the whole on 'em's comin' down."

"I will take care of them if you will show me where they are," added the officer.

"I'll do that. I ain't no milintry man, but I kin tell you how to fix them redskins. Them Injuns up thar has got hosses. They're go'n' to come down by the Little Fish. Phil tells me you sent a force to the Castle. Ef you take 'em in the rear with your men, by marchin' round across both the Fish rivers, the t'other kin take 'em in front, and atwixt the two you'll chaw 'em all up."

"Do you think we had better march to-night?" asked Lieutenant Pope, evidently impressed by the suggestion of the veteran hunter.

"No; that would spile the whole game. Let 'em kim down as fur's they will."

"But where are the three Indians who were engaged in the capture of Miss Gracewood?"

"They're doggin' round the clearin'; but I don't reckon they know any sogers is over thar yet."

"They will join the large force on the Little Fish, and inform them of our presence here."

"They mought do it; but a march of seven mile will fotch you to 'em. They'll start arly 'n the mornin'; and them three Injuns won't go up to their camp to-night, for they're as fur off from it as we are. Ef you start at sunrise, you kin git in behind 'em, crossin' both rivers in the forenoon."

Kit Cruncher was very clear in his views, and the commander of the troops saw the wisdom of his plan. The latter knew nothing of the country, and was dependent upon the information afforded by such men as Kit for the means of punishing the Indians when they violated their treaty obligations.

"As my daughter cannot go with you, we need remain here no longer," said Mr. Gracewood.

"But you can't get to the clearing to-night," replied Lieutenant Pope. "You may be intercepted by these strolling savages; and I cannot spare my men to escort you, for they may be obliged to march all day to-morrow."

"Where is my barge, Kit?" asked the anxious father.

"In the bushes down the river."

"We can carry it across the land to the Crooked River, and go down in that way. I am very anxious to join my wife, who is still suffering with anxiety for our child," added Mr. Gracewood.

"Very well; if you feel safe to leave the camp, I shall not object," continued the lieutenant. "My men shall carry your boat over to the river."

"Phil will go with me, and I don't think there is any danger."

"I should be glad to have you go, for I wish to send some orders to Lieutenant Jackson, commanding the men at the clearing."

"Exactly, cap'n," interposed Kit. "Send word for 'em to form a line atween the Little Fish and the pond. Phil kin show 'em whar it is."

Four men were sent to carry the barge across the country to Crooked River, and Kit explained to the officer the nature of the region where he suggested that the line of defence should be established. By the light of a match, the lieutenant wrote an order, which he gave to me, to be delivered to the officer in command of the detachment at the Castle. Bidding the lieutenant good night, we started for the river, attended by Kit, who was determined to see us safely embarked.

"I am afraid you are too tired to walk, Ella," said I, placing myself at her side.

"I am very tired, and I hope the distance is not long."

"Not less than two miles," I replied.

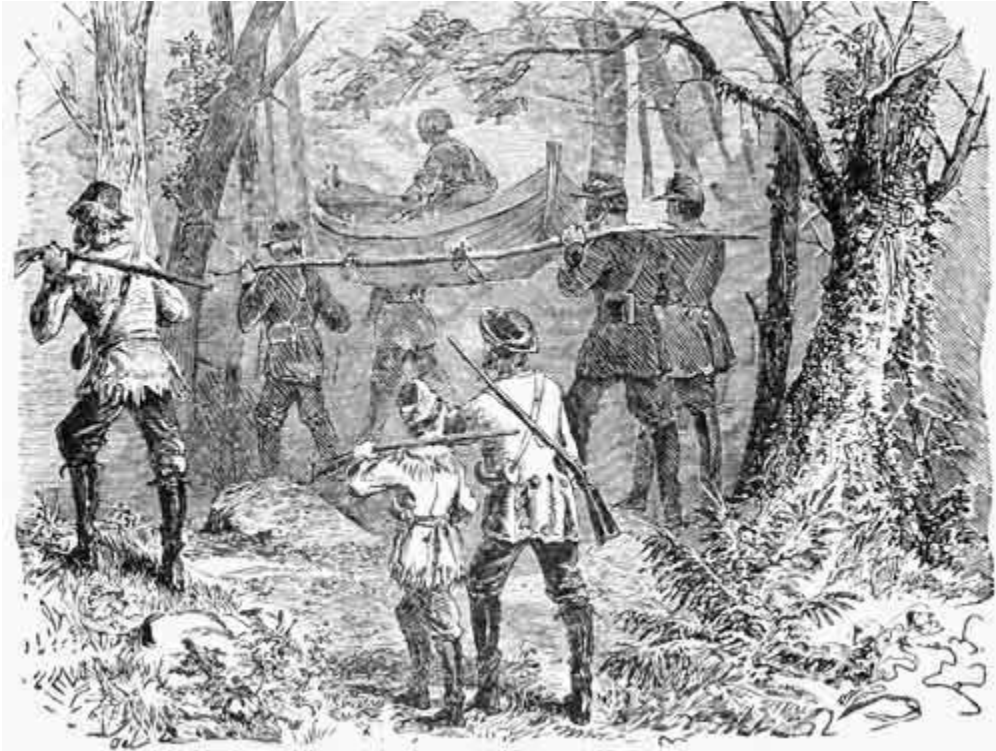
"I will try to do it," said she, with all the courage she could muster.

After going half the distance, we met the men who were carrying the boat. They had laid it on a couple of poles, and were bearing it on their shoulders. By this time poor Ella was almost fainting with exhaustion.

"We kin tote the gal in the boat," said Kit.

"She cannot sit on the keel of it," replied Mr. Gracewood; for the soldiers had placed it bottom upwards on the sticks.

"We kin turn it t'other side up," added Kit. "Drop that boat, sogers."



NIGHT JOURNEY THROUGH THE FOREST.
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The men, who were full of sympathy for Ella, laid the boat upon the ground. Kit turned it over, and with the painter and another line, slung it to the poles right side up. Ella seated herself in the barge, and the soldiers lifted it up, placing the poles upon their shoulders. The march was resumed, and occasionally Kit and Mr. Gracewood relieved the men, so that it was not very hard work. We reached the river, and embarked.

"Take care of yourself. There'll be a big fight to-morrer, and the Injuns'll git squeezed."

"I will endeavor to take care of myself," I replied, as we pushed off.

Mr. Gracewood took the oars, and I was permitted to rest myself, after the severe fatigue and excitement of the day.

"Is there any danger now, father?" asked Ella.

"No, child, I don't think there is," replied Mr. Gracewood.

"Do you think there is, Phil?" she added, appealing to me.

"No; but I should like to know where those two dugouts are."

"According to your story, one of them has gone adrift, and the other is up this river," said Mr. Gracewood. "Is your rifle in order, Phil?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then keep a sharp lookout, Phil; and I think we shall be all right."

And we were all right till we reached a point near the mouth of Fish River, where I discovered a dugout moving out into the Missouri, and containing three men.

CHAPTER XVI.

IN WHICH PHIL ARRIVES AT THE CASTLE.

Mr. Gracewood was not rowing at the time I discovered the dugout, for the swift current of the Missouri gave us sufficient headway, and the oars were only used to keep the boat from whirling. Poor Ella, worn out by the fatigues and perils of the day, had dropped asleep, her head resting upon my shoulder. I only raised my hand, and pointed out the position of the dugout. Mr. Gracewood understood me, and looked in the direction indicated.

The three Indians in the boat were doubtless the ones who had visited the island in the morning. I concluded that they had found the dugout in which I had shot the savage, and which had probably grounded somewhere in the shallow water. But the Indians were not coming towards us, and I judged from their movements that they did not see us. The dugout came into the great river, and then headed down the stream.

"Don't move," I whispered to Mr. Gracewood.

"But the current is carrying us upon them," he replied, his anxiety apparent in his tones.

"If you can work her farther in shore without making any noise, do so," I added.

In paddling the dugout the Indians all faced ahead, instead of astern as in rowing. We were under the shadow of the high bank of the river, which was covered with wood. Mr. Gracewood carefully worked the barge nearer to the bank, until I was able to grasp the branch of a tree which had fallen down as the earth caved off beneath its roots. I held it there, and in a moment more the dugout disappeared in the gloom.

"They are not looking for us," said Mr. Gracewood.

"No; but they have not come down here for nothing," I replied.

"What do you think they intend to do?"

"They fired at us as we were coming down the river. Possibly they followed us, and saw us go up the Big Fish. Perhaps they think now that there is no one at the Castle, and they can plunder it without opposition. They will soon discover their blunder."

"But Mrs. Gracewood is there."

"So are the soldiers."

"They may capture her if she is in the Castle, while the soldiers are encamped in the rear, not expecting an enemy on the river side."

"We need not stay here any longer," I added, letting go the branch, and permitting the current to carry the barge down the stream. "Don't make any noise with the oars, Mr. Gracewood."

"We must hurry forward and alarm the soldiers. They have no suspicion that there are any Indians within many miles of them."

"What's the matter, father?" cried Ella, waking with a start.

"Hush! Ella. Don't make any noise. We are safe, and there is no danger."

"What has happened?" she whispered, trembling with fear.

"Nothing has happened; but we saw three Indians go down the river. They did not discover us, and there is nothing to fear. Don't be alarmed."

The barge floated down to the mouth of the Fish, and Mr. Gracewood, using the oars very carefully, guided it to the landing, where we went on shore. I hastened up the rising ground to ascertain if there was any demonstration against the Castle. On the way, I heard old Firefly neigh; and then I remembered that I had left him there when I started to follow the Indians. The old fellow was very glad to see me, for he probably did not like to be excluded from his warm stable, and robbed of his supper.

I jumped upon his back, and rode down to the landing, where Mr. Gracewood was hauling up his boat. My appearance

on horseback startled him and Ella, but the sound of my voice reassured them. I explained in what manner I happened to be mounted so speedily.

"I will ride up to the Castle, and see that the soldiers are on the lookout for those Indians," I added. "I will return with the wagon in a few minutes, and carry you to the house."

"And leave us here alone?" said Mr. Gracewood.

"Do you think there is any danger?" I inquired.

"Those Indians may land here and discover us. For myself I don't care; but I am afraid on account of Ella, who is too weak to run, how ever great the peril."

"I will take her on the horse with me if you like," I suggested.

"But you may meet the savages, and a bullet from the cunning foe might destroy all my hopes in this world."

"I will not leave you, then, sir; but I thought Ella was too feeble to walk another mile."

"I could not walk a mile," added she, faintly.

"What shall we do, then?" I asked.

"We will go a little way with you."

Ella had sat so long in the barge that her limbs were stiff, and she was unable to walk, even a short distance. Her father had lifted her out of the boat, and seated her on a log.

"I could do nothing if the Indians came upon me, with my child in this helpless condition. I will carry her in my arms a little way, and we will conceal ourselves in the bushes. Go as quick as you can, Phil Farringford," said the anxious father.

"I will not be absent long," I replied, as I urged Firefly forward.

The horse was anxious to reach his stable, and he galloped at the top of his speed. I kept a wary lookout for the savages, as I approached the Castle, but I saw none.

"Halt!" shouted a sentinel, placing himself in the road.

This vigilance on the part of the troops assured me the Castle was in no danger of a surprise, and I reined in my steed.

"Who goes there?" demanded the guard.

"Friend, in a tremendous hurry," I replied.

"Advance, friend in a tremendous hurry, and give the countersign."

"I have no countersign; but I am Phil Farringford."

"O, the young fellow that belongs here!"

"Yes; and by this time there are three Indians in a dugout in front of you. Stir up your men, and send two or three of them down towards the landing. Mr. Gracewood and his daughter are there, and the Indians may find them."

"Has the girl been found?"

"Yes; but I can't stop to talk. Wake up your officer."

I hurried Firefly to the barn, and dismounted.

"Who is it? What has happened?" asked Mrs. Gracewood, in trembling tones, as she came towards the stable.

"It's only Phil," I replied. "All right, Mrs. Gracewood."

"Where have you been? I was afraid the Indians had caught you."

"I have been after Ella."

"O, have you heard anything from her?" demanded she, choking with emotion.

"Yes, we have heard from her. She's all right," I answered, as I throw the harness upon Firefly.

"What do you mean? Don't deceive me, Phil."

"I won't, Mrs. Gracewood. You shall see her yourself in ten minutes."

"Where is she?" gasped the poor mother, apparently unable to believe the good news.

"She is down at the landing; but she is all worn out, and not able to move a step. I am going down with the wagon after her."

"Do you really mean so?"

"Certainly I do, Mrs. Gracewood; and her father is with her."

"Father in heaven, I thank thee!" exclaimed she, fervently, sobbing and weeping.

"It's just as I tell you; but you had better go into the house, for there are some Indians along the river somewhere."

"I am not afraid of them, if I can only see Ella."

By this time, the sentinel who had confronted me had passed the word to the camp, and the soldiers were all under arms. A squad of them hastened to the river, and presently I heard a couple of shots in that direction. I had finished harnessing the horses, and was putting old Matt's bed upon the wagon for Ella to lie upon, when Lieutenant Jackson, the officer in command of the detachment, rushed up to me.

"What is the matter?" he demanded. "Are we attacked?"

"There are three Indians on the river. I suppose your men are firing at them. Here is an order from Lieutenant Pope," I added, handing him the paper, and jumping upon the wagon, where Mrs. Gracewood had already placed herself. "We have recovered the young lady, and I am going down to the landing after her."

"But I wish to know----"

"Well, I can't stop now to talk, sir."

"I will go with you;" and he leaped upon the wagon.

"I advise you to take two or three more with you. You may capture the three Indians your men are firing at now."

He called three of his men, who joined us in the wagon, and I drove off as fast as I could make the horses go.

"Where did you see Lieutenant Pope?" asked Mr. Jackson.

"At his camp on the Big Fish. You must keep those three Indians from going up the Fish River if you can."

"Why so?"

But the violent jolting of the wagon prevented me from talking, and him from hearing; so I deferred my explanation till a more convenient season. In a few minutes, I stopped the horses a short distance from the landing, when Mr. Gracewood hailed me from a clump of bushes. I felt relieved when I saw that Ella and he were safe. I helped the trembling mother out of the wagon, and conducted her to the spot.

"My child! O, Ella!" cried Mrs. Gracewood, as she bent over the form of her daughter.

"I am safe, mother," she replied, faintly.

They sobbed and wept in each other's arms till Mr. Gracewood interposed, and then we placed the sufferer on the bed in the wagon.

"Now, lieutenant, if you will let one of your men drive the horses up to the Castle, I will tell how the land lies here," said I, when the party was ready to start.

Mr. Jackson ordered one of the soldiers to go with the wagon, and return with it; but Mr. Gracewood preferred to drive himself while Ella was a passenger. As the team started, I walked with the officer and two soldiers down to the landing. I imparted all the information I had obtained, including the movements of the Indians who had captured Ella.

"You are a plucky little fellow to stand up and shoot down an Indian: but I think you would have done better if you had called me, instead of following the Indians yourself," said Lieutenant Jackson.

"I don't think so. We might have gone a dozen miles before we found them, if I had lost sight of them. The three Indians went down the river just as we came in sight. I heard your men fire at them. Now you must not let them go up the Fish, for they will carry information to the large party up that river, and spoil the plan of Lieutenant Pope."

"You are right, my boy," replied the officer, as he posted his two men where they could see the dugout as it approached.

"You will have a big fight to-morrow," I added.

"I should think so from what you say; but I haven't read my orders yet."

"Hark!"

I heard the splashing of paddles in the river below us, and I concluded that the three Indians who had failed in front of the Castle were returning to Fish River.

CHAPTER XVII.

IN WHICH PHIL CONDUCTS THE SOLDIERS TO THE LINE OF DEFENCE.

I had a theory of my own in regard to the movements of the four Indians who had come down the Crooked River in the two dugouts. The savages were incensed against us because they had failed to obtain our horses, and because we had shot two or three of their men in the skirmishes which followed. This party had gone home and stirred up the Indians, who were now upon the war-path. Mr. Gracewood had identified himself with the defence of the Castle, and they had visited his island to wreak their vengeance upon him, and obtain his property.

If he was at home, they would kill him; if not, they would appropriate or destroy his property. Having disposed of him, if he were there, the four Indians were to go down the river to the front of the Castle, and when the main body appeared in the forest, make an attack on the river side, or steal upon us in the night, and murder us in our sleep. At any rate, these Indians knew that a large force of their own people were coming down the Fish, and they were in some manner to assist them.

Lieutenant Jackson and myself went to the bank of the river, and soon saw the dugout, two of the Indians in it paddling with all their might. They had discovered their blunder, in part at least, when the soldiers opened upon them. The fact that any one was awake at the Castle was enough to turn them from their purpose, for they had not the courage to stand up before the rifle of Kit Cruncher, whom they doubtless supposed to be there.

"Give them a shot, Morgan," said the lieutenant to one of his men.

The soldier fired, but without effect, except to alarm the Indians.

"Why didn't you hit them?" added the officer, as the savages turned the dugout from the shore, and paddled with renewed zeal towards the opposite side of the great river.

"So I would if they would hold still long enough for me to cover them," replied the soldier.

The other man fired, but with no better success, so far as we could discover. Before they could reload their pieces, the dugout was too far off to warrant the wasting of any more powder and lead.

"You will not see them again to-night," said I, as the Indians disappeared in the gloom.

"Can they get to the rear of our position by any other way than up this river?" asked Lieutenant Jackson.

"Yes, sir, they can. They may go up Bear River to the lake, and cross the country to the Fish," I replied. "But there are rapids between the lake and the Missouri, and they would have to carry their boat half a mile."

"Then I must put a guard at the mouth of the Bear."

"It will be the safest way," I added, as the soldier returned with my team.

We drove back to the Castle, and I put up the horses. The lieutenant sent a corporal and two men to the mouth of Bear River, two miles below the Castle; and I was satisfied that the three Indians could not possibly join the band which was moving down the Fish. We went into the house together, where a cheerful fire of pitch wood was blazing on the hearth. Poor Ella had dropped asleep, and her father and mother sat by her bedside watching her heaving chest. They were very anxious about her, though Mr. Gracewood declared that she suffered only from exhaustion, and that rest would restore her.

The lieutenant read the order I had brought to him, and we left the Castle, so as not to disturb Ella. By this time I was willing to believe I was tired myself. I thought it must be nearly daylight, and was surprised when the officer told me it was only twelve o'clock. It seemed to me that I had lived a whole year since sundown. I was invited to sleep in the lieutenant's tent, and I did sleep there in good earnest till long after sunrise the next morning, when a soldier called me.

"We are about ready to start, Phil," said Mr. Jackson. "My orders say you are to be my guide."

"I must take care of my horses and pigs, and eat my breakfast."

"My men have fed your horses, and cleaned them. I thought you would be very tired, and I had your work done for you," said the lieutenant.

"I was tired--that's a fact; but I am as good as new now."

"Mr. Gracewood says your breakfast is all ready."

"How is Ella?" I asked.

"She is better, but still very weak."

"Is she sick?"

"No, they say not; only worn out."

I went to the Castle, and was at once greeted with an outpouring of thanks from father, mother, and daughter for what I had done the night before. Ella, as the officer had said, was suffering only from stiff limbs and over-fatigue. Mr. Gracewood had cooked our breakfast, and we all sat down to the table. It was a happy family which gathered around the board, and the father said a prayer of thanksgiving for the mercy of God in sparing our lives during the perils of the preceding day and night; and it was a prayer in which we all joined, in mind and heart.

The scene was a novel one to me. It was the first time in my life that I had ever sat at table with women--the first family I had ever seen together. I had read of such things, and my kind teacher had told me all about the customs of civilized life. I thought that every family, as father, mother, and children gathered together at table, or in the evening, ought to be very happy. Still I knew it was not so, for even the reunited husband and wife before me had quarrelled and separated. People do not understand and appreciate their greatest blessings, because they are so common; but I, who had never known a mother's care,--at least not since my infancy,--could realize what a joy it was to have a father and mother, and to be with them every day. It seemed to me that I could never disregard the slightest wish of father or mother, if I had them.

I ate a hearty breakfast, for even the pretty sentiment which was flitting through my mind could not impair my appetite. When I went out I found that the lieutenant had drawn up his force in the field, struck his tents, and loaded his baggage upon my wagon. Firefly and Cracker were harnessed, and I had only to take my seat on the load. The soldiers had repaired the bridge over the brook, and everything was ready for a start.

"Of course you leave a guard here, lieutenant," I said, as I took my place on the wagon.

"I have detailed a corporal and three men to take care of the Castle," replied Mr. Jackson. "Do you think that is force enough?"

"Plenty, sir, if they keep their eyes wide open," I replied. "They have only to guard the approach on the water side."

"All right. Attention--company! Shoulder arms! Right shoulder--shift! Forward--march!"

The soldiers marched ahead, and I followed with the wagon. It was about two miles to the point between the lake and the Little Fish, where the detachment was to be posted, and in less than an hour we arrived at our destination. We halted, and a sergeant and three men were sent forward to scout the woods, and give the troops early intimation of the approach of the enemy. The rest of the force was immediately set at work in the erection of two breastworks--one near the river, and the other between Kit's Brook and the lake. The first commanded the road on the Little Fish, and the other the brook path.

"Don't your soldiers have any cannons?" I asked, after the lieutenant had set the men at work.

"We have some mountain howitzers at the fort; but field-pieces are not available for this bushwhacking service," replied Mr. Jackson. "I wish we had a couple of howitzers here."

"Mr. Gracewood has what he calls a twelve-pounder."

"Indeed! Is it mounted?"

"It's on wheels, if that is what you mean."

"Do you know whether he has any ammunition for it?" asked the officer, evidently much interested in the information I had given him.

"He has plenty of powder, and some tin cans----"

"Canister shot: just the thing for us," interposed the officer. "Is it possible to have this gun brought down here?"

"I don't see why it isn't."

"It would be as good as twenty men to us in these breastworks. Couldn't you take a couple of my men, and go after it?"

"Of course I could, and I will."

"You will do us a great service, for I may have to fight four times my own force."

Two men were selected to go with me to the island, and taking them upon the wagon, I drove back to the Castle. Mr. Gracewood readily gave me permission to bring off the gun, but he wanted to know how I expected to bring it over.

"In the boat," I replied.

"Do you mean my barge?"

"Yes, sir."

"How much do you think it weighs?" he asked, with a smile.

"I don't know--perhaps a hundred weight," I answered, comparing it with a barrel of flour, which was my standard.

"Not less than six hundred," said he. "The barge will not carry it with three of you besides; and if it would, you could not load it."

"I can get it over, I know," I replied, confidently, and rather pleased to have a difficult problem to solve.

"Very well. The ammunition is in the blue box; and that will be a good load for the barge."

"I will agree to get them both over here," I replied; and, jumping upon the wagon, I drove down to the landing.

While I was securing the horses, the two soldiers put the barge into the water. I was thinking all the time of the problem of transporting the gun and ammunition. I was quite sure that I could do the job, and I had my plan ready. I took a couple of axes from the shanty at the landing, and we embarked. One of the soldiers rowed the boat.

"What are you going to do with the axes, Phil?" asked the soldier who was seated in the bow.

"I thought we might want them, and so I brought them along," I replied, not caring to discuss my plan with him.

"How big is the gun we are to bring?"

"Mr. Gracewood says it weighs about six hundred."

"Do you expect to bring a gun weighing six hundred in this little boat?"

"We'll see," I replied.

"We are on a fool's errand."

"You wait and see."

"I think you are smart, Phil, after what you did last night; but you might as well try to drink up the Missouri as to bring that gun in this boat," persisted the soldier.

"Let Phil alone," said Morgan, the oarsman, who seemed to have more confidence in my ability than his companion.

We landed at the south end of Paradise Island, because there were no bluffs to interfere with our operations. Securing the boat, we walked up the hill to the house. I was still thinking of the plan by which the gun was to be transported to the main shore, when I was startled by the crack of a rifle from the direction of the house.

CHAPTER XVIII.

IN WHICH PHIL FIGHTS THE INDIANS ON THE ISLAND.

"Get behind the trees!" I called to my companions, as I promptly adopted the tactics of Kit Cruncher; for in fighting Indians discretion is eminently the better part of valor.

"Was any one hit?" asked Morgan, the man nearest to me, as he dodged behind a cotton-wood tree.

"I am not," I replied.

"Nor I," added Plunkett, the other soldier; "but that ball came within a quarter of an inch of my right ear."

"Who fired that shot?" asked Morgan. "I didn't see anybody."

"The Indians are here," I replied.

"Then we had better take ourselves off as quick as possible," suggested Plunkett.

"Not without the gun," I continued. "The three Indians you fired at on the river last night have come over here. You don't mean to run away from three Indians--do you?"

"No; but I don't like the situation," said Plunkett.

The cotton-wood trees were large enough to furnish us ample shelter, and we waited a reasonable time, with our guns pointed, for the savages to show themselves; but they were no more disposed to do so than we were. It looked like a slow and lazy fight, and I was afraid the main body of the redskins would attack the lieutenant before we could reach him with the gun.

"What shall we do? We don't want to stay here all day," said Morgan.

"It is just as dangerous to go back as it is to go forward," I replied.

"Forward it is, then," added Morgan. "I don't want to be shot in the back, if I am to be shot at all."

As my companion did not suggest a plan of operations, unless the proposition of Plunkett to run away may be regarded as such, I endeavored to solve the problem myself. The formation of the island, like many others in the Mississippi and Missouri, was peculiar. Its surface was a gradual slope from the point where we had landed to the up-river end, which was a bluff of considerable height. On the most elevated portion grew the tallest of the trees, which gradually diminished in size, till at the lower end they were mere bushes. The current of the river beating against the upper end washed away the earth, and carried the soil to the lower end, leaving an annual deposit there.

From the high ground the water had gullied for its passage a channel to the lower end. As the descent was considerable, it was dry except during heavy rains. This gully in the part of the island where we had halted was about four feet deep. Farther up and lower down it was less than this. In leading the way up to Mr. Gracewood's house, I had followed this channel, and when we stopped, I had taken shelter behind a tree on the side of it, whose roots reached into it. The Indians were some distance from the gully, which led, in a sinuous course, within a few rods of the house.

"I am going to do something," said I, when I had arranged a plan to take advantage of the shelter the gully would afford me. "I will follow this channel up till I can get a good shot at the Indians. When I fire, you do the same."

"Don't be rash, Phil," said Morgan, who perhaps thought he ought to perform the perilous work of the expedition; but really one place was just as safe as the other.

"I will take care of myself," I replied. "Twenty rods farther up the gully I shall be in position to see behind the trees where the Indians are. I shall bring down one of them then."

"All right, Phil; but the Indians will see you when you leap into the gully," added Morgan.

"I shall run the risk of that. If you will do the same, we can make a sure thing of it."

"I will, for one. I won't have a boy like you get ahead of me; but I thought you wanted us to stay here."

"One of you stay behind the tree, and the other jump into the ditch."

"All right. I'll jump in," said Morgan.

"I will go up the gully; you go down. I will go without noise; you will make a noise, so as to make the Indians think we have both gone down towards the place where we landed. Do you understand me?"

"Like a book."

"And, Plunkett, you must keep both eyes wide open. If an Indian shows his head, shoot him."

"I'll do that."

"But don't show your own head."

"I won't do that."

I leaped into the gully as soon as I had completed my preparations. One of the Indians fired instantly. Morgan promptly followed me, and without drawing the fire of the Indians. I crept carefully up the gully, while my companion took the opposite direction, making plenty of noise. He had gone but a short distance before the discharge of Plunkett's musket assured me the ruse had been successful so far. The savages, thinking we were escaping to the water, had left their trees, and shown themselves to our sentinel.

I hastened on my winding way with all practicable speed, careful not to betray my presence. Every step brought me nearer to the Indians, and, as I crept along, I occasionally stole a glance over the brink of the gully; but as yet I could not see the foe. I continued on my way, not daring to step on a stick or a stone, lest the noise should reveal my presence, until I had reached my objective point. A cautious glance then assured me that I was abreast of the savages. I was exactly at their right hand, and not ten rods from them. I could distinctly see them, with their rifles elevated in readiness to fire, and glancing with one eye, from behind the tree, at the position of Plunkett.

The three positions occupied respectively by Plunkett, the savages, and myself, were at the three angles of an isosceles triangle, the two equal sides of which were about twenty rods, while the other and shortest side was ten rods, the latter being between the Indians and myself. They were straining their eyes to take advantage of any movement where Plunkett stood.

I placed my ammunition so that I could reload with the greatest possible haste after I had fired, and then prepared to make the shot upon which our fate in a great measure depended. Indeed, it was necessary to do something to end my own suspense and anxiety, for my nerves were so strained up that I thought they would crack. This holding of one's breath, and moving in absolute silence on penalty of death for failure, is a terrible trial to a boy, whatever it may be to a man inured to peril and hardship.

Having completed my preparations, and considered where and how I should retreat in case of failure, I took careful aim at the Indian nearest to me, and fired. The savage uttered a howl, and clapped his hand upon the back of his head. I had wounded him, but evidently had not disabled him. I loaded my rifle again, regarding my first shot as an unfortunate one. I could hear the enemy talking earnestly together, and I realized that they were not satisfied with the situation. The report of a musket below assured me the Indians had changed their position. Another shot from our side told me that Morgan was improving his opportunities.

These bullets from the front, although they appeared not to have done any harm, compelled the savages to resume their first position, which again opened them to my fire. I aimed a second time, and fired at the mark as before. The discharge was followed by a fearful howl, and the savage raised his hand to his face. He was not killed, but by this time he was badly demoralized. He turned his head to see where the ball had come from. His face was covered with blood.

I stooped to load my rifle again. While doing so, I could hear the savages chattering violently. They had evidently discovered the insecurity of their position, and felt that, if they staid there long enough, they would certainly be shot. I did not deem it prudent to remain where I was any longer, lest the enemy should take it into their heads to charge upon the gully. I retreated a few rods towards the house. While I was doing so, the reports of the two muskets of the soldiers assured me the Indians were making a movement. I raised my head, and saw that they were running with all speed towards the north side of the island, where they had landed the preceding day.

Morgan and Plunkett had come out of their hiding-places, and were already in hot pursuit. I followed their example, and being nearer the enemy than they, I fired. This time an Indian dropped: but his fall did not delay the flight of the others. I paused to load, and presently heard the shots of both the soldiers. They also halted to load again, and I ran ahead of them; but the savages were more fleet of foot than we, and gaining rapidly upon us, reached their boat without further loss or damage.



THE WOUNDED INDIAN.
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"We are lucky," said I, as we gave up the chase, and gazed at the dugout, half way across the river.

"That's so. Was any one hit?" added Morgan.

"No; and of all the shots we have fired, we have brought down but one Indian."

"If we had been as near as you were, Phil, we should have dropped one every time," replied Plunkett. "However, I knocked over that one that fell."

"You did!" I exclaimed.

"Why, yes; didn't you see him fall?"

"I did; but he fell the instant I fired," I replied.

"You are a little fast, Phil. You haven't hit anything to-day," said Plunkett.

"I hit every time I fired."

"You! Nonsense!"

"I fired the first shot after the Indians started to run, and this one dropped before you had fired at all," I persisted, indignant that Plunkett, who had wished to run away in the beginning should claim to have done all the execution that had been accomplished.

"Keep cool, Phil," laughed Plunkett. "That redskin dropped when I fired."

"We will settle that matter another time," I answered, leading the way towards the house.

We passed the Indian who had fallen. He was not dead, and I saw Plunkett fixing his bayonet, evidently with the intention of finishing the work I had begun. I protested, and so did Morgan, against his course. The savage reclined on one side, resting upon his elbow. He had torn away his blanket, so that we could see where the ball had struck him in the hip.

"You didn't fire that ball, Plunkett," said Morgan. "You couldn't have hit him there from the place where you fired."

"What's the reason I couldn't?" demanded the braggart.

"Because the Indian was running ahead of you, and you couldn't have hit him on the side of the hip. Phil was up by the house, and his shot did it. Half his nose is gone, and he has a wound on the back of the head."

"He turned round when I fired; but I will finish him," said Plunkett, approaching the Indian with his bayonet pointed at

him.

"No!" I shouted, earnestly. "It is murder."

The Indian, who had watched us with savage dignity, apparently regardless of the pain his three wounds must have given him, suddenly grasped his tomahawk, and raised himself as far as his injured hip would permit. He looked ugly and defiant, and Plunkett paused.

CHAPTER XIX.

IN WHICH PHIL CONDUCTS THE RAFT TO THE LANDING, AND MORGAN FIRES THE BIG GUN.

"Let him alone, Plunkett," said Morgan.

"He will throw his tomahawk at you," I added.

"I can shoot him," replied the coward, retreating backwards with more haste than dignity.

"If you do, I'll report you to Lieutenant Jackson," continued Morgan.

"I don't believe in leaving your work to be done over again," growled Plunkett. "What's to prevent this Indian from killing some of us, when he gets a chance?"

"We are not Indians, and we don't kill the wounded," replied Morgan. "Come along; we are fooling away our time."

We went up to Mr. Gracewood's house, and entered it. The Indians had been there before us. In the middle of the floor was a pile of goods, which they had intended to carry down to the boat. They had done no injury to the building, though they would doubtless have burned it if we had not disturbed them. The gun for which we had come was in the rear chamber, limbered up and ready for use. The recluse of the island had brought it as a weapon of defence. It could be discharged from any door or window; and, loaded with canister and fired into an invading horde of savages, it would produce fearful havoc among them.

I attached a rope to the carriage, and we rolled it out of the house. When I realized how heavy it was, my confidence in my ability to convey it to the main shore was a little shaken. However, it was down hill all the way to the point where we had landed, and we had no difficulty in moving it so far; but we had to return a second time for the ammunition.

"Here we are," said Plunkett, "and here we are likely to be, unless we go over without the gun. It won't swim over there."

"Of course it won't," I replied, impatiently; "but we are going to take it over there. Now we must make a raft."

"A raft!" exclaimed the croaker. "The lieutenant ought to have sent a whole section over here."

"That's the idea! We can make a raft in less than an hour. There is no end of logs here," added Morgan, glancing along the shore, where there were plenty of sticks of timber, of all sorts and sizes.

Plunkett growled; but he assisted Morgan, who went to work in earnest. While they were rolling the logs to a convenient position in the water, I went back to the house. Mr. Gracewood had a wheelbarrow. I broke up some large boxes, and wheeled the boards, with a supply of nails, down to the river. By this time the soldiers had placed half a dozen logs, from fifteen to twenty feet long, in the water, side by side. They had been obliged to use the axes a little, but generally the sticks had been deprived of their branches by being tossed about on the shore. The boards I had brought were nailed across them, so as to hold them together.

Above this foundation shorter and dryer sticks, from the woods, were placed crosswise, and while my companions were laying them down I returned to the house with the wheelbarrow. I could take only a small portion of the ammunition at a load, and I repeated the journey several times before the raft was finished. I did not bring the whole of it, but I thought I had enough to kill all the Indians within twenty miles of the Castle.

The raft was built up a foot above the water, so as to furnish the necessary floating power, and the parts were securely bound together with board battens. We rolled the gun upon the structure, and were delighted to find that everything was a perfect success. We placed logs on each side of the wheels, and lashed the carriage down to the raft. Loading the ammunition, which I had put into several boxes in order to trim the raft, we pushed it off from the shore.

"Now we are all ready," said Morgan, as he leaped into the boat, with the rope attached to the raft in his hand.

"What is to be done with that Indian up by the house?" asked Plunkett.

"Nothing," replied Morgan.

"Don't you think it is more humane to kill him than to let him starve to death?"

"He won't starve to death," I added. "He will crawl up to Mr. Gracewood's house, where there is enough to feed an

army for a short time."

"Don't you suppose the two Indians that escaped are watching us now?" asked Morgan.

"Very likely they are."

"And as soon as we are gone, they will come back."

"We can't help it," I answered.

"They will burn the house, and destroy that Chickering's grand piano."

"It would break Mr. Gracewood's heart to have that destroyed, for it was his best friend for years; but I don't see that we can do anything to preserve it. We might save some of his property."

"I think we ought to do so," added Morgan. "It will not delay us fifteen minutes."

We decided to do so; and, fastening the rope attached to the raft to a tree, we hastened up to the house. Loading the wheelbarrow with the most valuable articles, and carrying as many as we could in our hands, we returned to the raft. Putting the goods into the boat, we were again ready for a start. The barge was so crowded with Mr. Gracewood's effects that the two soldiers decided to go on the raft, leaving me to row the boat, which was not a difficult task, down the river. The two men were provided with poles to assist in steering it, and getting it off from the shore.

"Push her off!" I shouted, when all was ready.

I pulled at the oars, and my companions on the raft tugged at the poles. We cleared the shore, and in a few minutes the action of the current gave us a good headway.

"We are all right. We could go down to St. Louis on this craft," said Morgan.

"We could, but I think we won't," I replied. "We must be sure and not let the current carry us beyond Fish River. If we do, we can never get back again."

Fortunately the current set towards the landing-place, which was our destination, and I pulled well towards the north shore.

"Indians!" shouted Plunkett, after we had gone a short distance.

"Where are they?" I asked, unable to see them.

"Just coming out from the north shore, above the island," replied Morgan.

Standing up in the barge, so that I could see over the gun on the raft, I discovered the dugout. It contained the two Indians who had escaped from the island. They were paddling towards us with all their might; and the soldiers picked up their muskets. I could not believe that the savages intended to attack us upon the open river, after the repeated defeats they had sustained; but I was convinced of my error when they opened fire upon us. However, they did not come near enough to render their own or our fire effectual.

"Phil, didn't I see some round shot among the ammunition you brought down?" called Morgan to me.

"Yes; I brought down a few cannon balls. I didn't know there were any there before," I replied.

"Do you happen to know where they are now?"

"I put them on the raft."

He and Plunkett overhauled the boxes, and found the shot. Morgan intended to use the gun, which would make short work of the enemy. The dugout had followed us at a safe distance till we were half way to the landing. The Indians had evidently come to the conclusion that they were wasting their powder, and were now paddling down nearer to the raft. It was a long time before the soldiers had the gun in condition for use, for they were obliged to alter the lashings, so that they could elevate or depress it, and we were within a quarter of a mile of our destination before it was ready. Although the Indians quickened their speed, they did not fire again, and I soon discovered that they were headed to the north shore.

"Hurry up, Morgan!" I shouted. "I see what they are going to do."

"What?"

"They are headed to the shore."

"I see they are," replied he, as he rammed home the shot.

"They are going into the woods to fire at us from behind the trees when we land," I answered.

"I'll soon block that game. Stand by the lock-string, Plunkett."

The dugout was now going at a right angle with the course of the raft, and was about sixty yards from the shore.

"Pull as hard as you can, Phil, so as to keep the raft steady!" called Morgan, as he sighted along the gun.

I applied all my strength to the oars.

"Out from the shore a little more, Phil," added the gunner, as he depressed the muzzle of the piece. "Fire!" shouted he.

I stood up in the barge to note the effect of the shot. A yell of dismay rose from the Indians, and I saw that the dugout was splintered in pieces. One side of it was broken in, and the savages, leaping into the water, swam for the shore.

"I have made one good shot to-day, any how," said Morgan.

"Didn't I fire that gun?" cried Plunkett.

"Yes, sir! You are the organ-blower that played the tune," replied Morgan, taking no pains to conceal his disgust.

"Mind the raft," I interposed, finding that it was swinging off from the shore.

I used the oars vigorously to counteract this tendency; but the soldiers could not reach bottom with their poles, and were unable to help me much. The raft was heavy and the current very strong. We were within a few rods of the Fish River.

"We shall be carried down the river, if we don't look out!" I called, anxiously.

"What shall we do? We can't reach bottom with the poles," replied Morgan.

"Clear away a long rope," I added. "When the current of Fish River strikes us, we shall be carried down in spite of all we can do, if we don't get a check on her."

"Here's your rope."

"Cast off the drag-line, and make fast to it."

Morgan did as I directed, and taking the line into the boat, I carried it to the point on the Fish opposite the landing. I succeeded in catching a turn around a tree. The rope strained, and I was obliged to ease it off to prevent it from snapping; but the raft was checked.

"We are all right now," said Morgan.

"Not quite," I replied. "If we let her go again, the current will carry it down the river."

I jumped into the barge, and pulled across the river, where I had plenty of rope in the shanty. I carried a line to the raft, and having made it fast, I conveyed the two soldiers to the shore. Crossing the river, I eased off the line which was secured to the tree, while the men on the other side pulled the raft up to the landing.

"That's very well done, Phil," said Morgan, after my return.

"Any fool could have done it," added Plunkett.

"Of course they could--you could have done it," retorted Morgan.

"It is just the plan I was going to propose----"

"But didn't."

I backed the wagon into the two trenches I had dug to load the flour, and rolling the gun upon the platform, where we also placed the ammunition, we started for the line of defence.

CHAPTER XX.

IN WHICH PHIL WITNESSES THE OPENING OF THE BATTLE WITH THE INDIANS.

"Did you fire the gun, Phil?" asked Mr. Gracewood, as we halted for a moment at the Castle to inform him that his goods were at the landing.

"Yes, sir; Morgan fired one shot at the Indians in the dugout, who would not let us alone. He used a solid shot, and smashed the boat so that the redskins had to swim ashore. We left an Indian wounded in the hip on your island."

"Is he badly wounded?"

"I don't know how badly, but I don't think he will be able to get away from there very soon. He will not be likely to do any mischief at present. We brought over a boat-load of your things, but we hadn't time to bring them up here."

"I will go to the landing and attend to them."

"How is Ella, sir?"

"She is doing very well."

"Glad of it; but we must hurry on to the camp."

"I suppose you will not remain there long, Phil Farringford?"

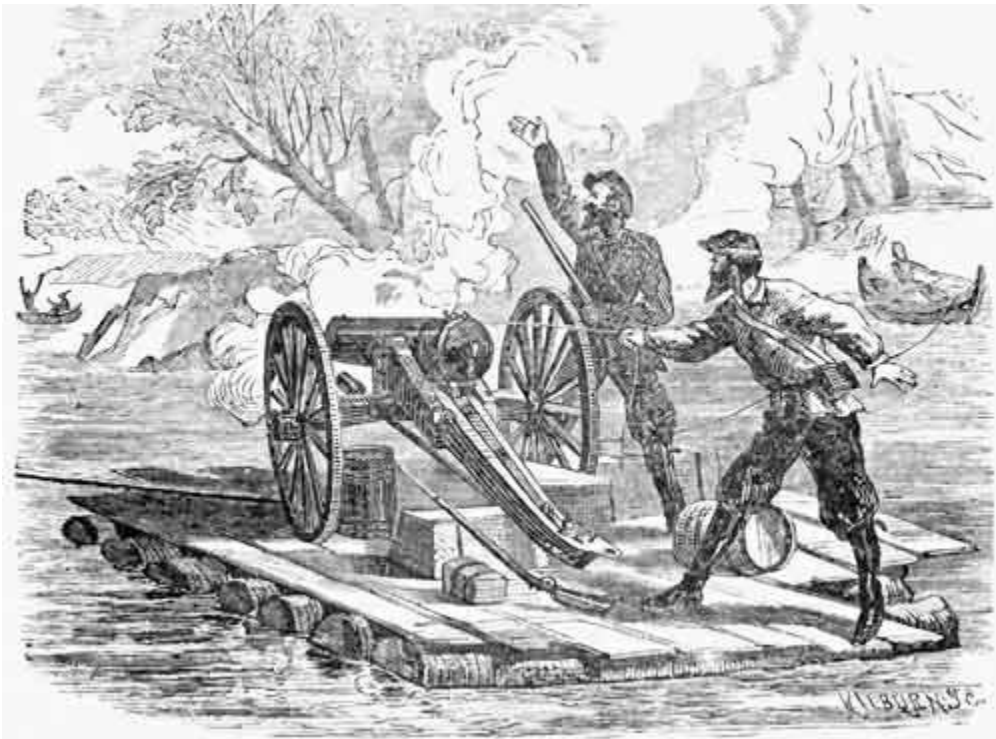
"I shall have to come back to feed my horses before night."

"Better come back immediately. I want to talk with you, and arrange our plans for the future."

"If there is a fight going on up in the woods, I shall want to know how it is coming out."

"I can tell you that beforehand. The Indians will be defeated, utterly routed, and perhaps annihilated. That is always the case when the savages fight with the white man, unless they surprise him in the night. I hope you will not expose yourself, Phil Farringford. Ella is very much concerned about you, and afraid that some harm will befall you."

"I will return as soon as I can, sir," I replied, pleased that Ella should think of me at all, though I felt that I had earned a claim upon her regard.



THE TWELVE-POUNDER ON THE RAFT.
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I drove on, and we soon came in sight of the works of the soldiers. They had nearly completed their breastworks, which consisted merely of an embankment of logs and earth, which would shelter the men from the fire of the Indians. It extended from the river across the path, and some distance into the forest.

"You are just in time, Phil," said Lieutenant Jackson, as I stopped my horses.

"Why? Have you seen the Indians?"

"No; but our scouts have just come in, and report a large body of savages moving this way. We are all ready for them, or we shall be as soon as we have planted this gun. You were gone longer than I expected you would be."

"The gun was heavier than I thought it was, and we had to fight the Indians before we could do anything."

While Morgan and a squad of men were unloading the gun, I told the officer the adventures of the morning, and described the means by which we had transported the gun.

"Did my men behave well?" he asked.

"Morgan did, and is a first-rate fellow. Plunkett did all he was asked to do, but I would rather have another man next time I go on an expedition."

"I should have sent more men if you had not said it was a light job."

"I thought so myself."

"We might have known that those Indians were lurking somewhere in the vicinity."

"I don't think they will give us much more trouble."

"They will continue to annoy you as long as they have the power. You smashed their dugout, but they have another up the river where we went yesterday."

I had forgotten all about the other dugout, and thought it was a great pity it had not been secured or destroyed, for the neglect might cost Mr. Gracewood his house and other property on the island. The two Indians had swum ashore not three miles from the point where the dugout had been left. They knew that our party had left the island, and the rich plunder there would be too great a temptation to be resisted. I begged the lieutenant to send a couple of men with me to protect the property of my good friend.

"This gun is a great reinforcement to me, Phil, and I can spare three men—more if you need them," replied the officer.

"Three will do very well. Let Morgan be one of them," I added.

"You might take two of the men left at the clearing; for, in attacking the Indians, you will be defending the Castle, as you call it."

"They are coming," said one of the scouts, approaching the spot where the officer stood.

"How far off are they?"

"Not a mile by this time."

I drove my horses off into the woods, where they could not be injured by any flying bullets; but I was not willing to depart from the exciting scene which impended, and I hastened back to the breastwork. The lieutenant had posted his men behind their defence, and I could distinctly hear the tramp of horses' feet in the distance. The cannon had been placed at the opening in the works prepared for it. The men lay upon the ground behind the defence, with their muskets ready for use. The forest was as silent as at midnight, for the lieutenant had ordered his men not to show themselves till the order to do so was given.

I lay upon the ground, looking through a loophole. The officer in command was near me, watching his opportunity. But the savages were wary; and instead of seeing the whole band, as we had expected, a couple of mounted scouts only appeared. They discovered the formidable obstacle in their path, and halting, unslung their guns.

"I hope they don't mean to assault us alone," said Mr. Jackson.

"They seem to be examining the works," I added.

"I don't want to fire till the main body appears."

"They are going back to report."

The two Indians turned their horses, and were soon out of sight. We did not see any of the enemy again for half an hour. They came the next time in a swarm, with shouting and yelling, sounding their war-cry as though they were thoroughly in earnest, as we had no doubt they were. Without attempting to count them, I judged that they numbered two hundred. Though the greater portion of them moved in the path, they were scattered through the woods in a column longer than our breastworks. They had left their horses behind. As soon as they came in sight of the works, they broke into a run, and, increasing their savage yells, rushed forward with the evident intention of carrying our line by storm.

"Ready!" shouted Lieutenant Jackson, with a coolness and self-possession which astonished me.

The men all levelled their muskets at the approaching foe, pointing them through the loopholes, which had been left for the purpose. Their bayonets were all fixed, in readiness to repel an assault, if the first fire did not check the advance of the Indians. Morgan was sighting the twelve-pounder. On rushed the enemy, as it seemed to me, to certain destruction. I could not believe that they were aware of the presence of the soldiers, and perhaps supposed they were attacking a fort manned by half a dozen persons. None of the Indians who had come down Crooked River had been able to return to afford them any information. Lieutenant Pope's force must be in their rear, and if they had known that he was near them, they would not have come down the river.

Lieutenant Jackson permitted the savages to come within fifty yards of the works before he gave the order to fire. The cannon was pointed so as to cover the path on the bank of the river, where a dense mass of Indians was moving.

"Fire!" shouted the officer, when the decisive moment came.

Almost at the same instant every musket was discharged, and the twelve-pounder awoke the echoes of the forest at the same time. I fired with the rest. It was a yell of terror and despair which followed the volley; and, as soon as the smoke rolled away, I saw that the ground was covered with the dead and wounded. So dense was the column in front of the fort, that it was not possible for any man in it to fire without hitting an Indian, while the scattered missiles from the cannon shot probably did as much execution as a dozen muskets.

The men were prepared to repel an assault with the bayonets; but no attack was made, for the Indians fled with the utmost precipitation from the deadly spot. The soldiers promptly reloaded their muskets, and the cannon was ready for another discharge.

"You can go now, Phil," said Lieutenant Jackson. "The battle is fought for the present. They will not renew it."

"Where do you suppose the rest of the soldiers are--those who went up the river yesterday?"

"Probably they have been holding back, so as not to alarm the enemy. The noise of that twelve-pounder will inform them that the work has commenced. Now, Phil, is it possible for these Indians to escape by any other route than this by this river?"

"Not with their horses. They can cross over to the brook, and follow that, which will lead them to their village, eight miles from here."

"Very well; I think we shall be able to capture a good portion of them as soon as the other force closes upon them."

"I will go over to the island now, though I should like to stay and see how the thing is coming out."

"Of course there can be no doubt of the result. I think we have already convinced them that it is not safe to shoot down white men."

I glanced at the ground in front of the works, where many of the savages were still writhing in the agony of their wounds. It was a sickening sight, and I turned away from it. The soldiers were standing up, and gazing at the bloody field. I walked down the road towards the place where I had left the horses.

"Hyer, boy!" shouted a voice on the other side of the river, which I at once recognized as that of Kit Cruncher, though I could not understand how he happened to be here.

"Hallo, Kit! Is that you?" I responded.

"'Tain't nobody else. Hev you nary a boat over thar?"

"I have not."

"Who's that, Phil?" asked Mr. Jackson, calling to me from the fort.

"Kit Cruncher; the man who guided the other force."

"Tell the lieutenant I want to speak to him, boy. I hev a message from t'other officer."

I went back to the fort, and delivered the message of Kit. The soldiers had some rubber army boats, which they carried with them to use in crossing streams. A couple of men were sent to prepare one of them, which was launched, and I paddled it across the river.

"I heerd the firin', boy, and the battle has begun," said Kit, as he seated himself in the bottom of the boat.

"We fired only one volley at them, and that was all they would stop to receive."

"You hev a big gun here."

"Yes, Mr. Gracewood's twelve-pounder. It knocks down everything before it."

"I see it does. I was on t'other side of the Fish when the job was done, and I see it all. I did my part, too; for I shot one Indian I know."

"But where is the other party of soldiers?" I asked.

"They ain't more'n three miles from here; and I cal'late, when they heerd that big gun, they begun to hurry up."

We landed, and I conducted Kit to Mr. Jackson, to whom the hunter delivered a written order.

CHAPTER XXI.

IN WHICH PHIL SEES THE CONCLUSION OF THE WAR.

"We expected this fight earlier in the day," said Lieutenant Jackson, as Kit and I appeared before him.

"The Injuns stopped to fish on the way, and to feed their stock," replied Kit, as he delivered the order of Lieutenant Pope. "The cap'n sent me down to see if everything was all right on this side."

"And he orders me to send part of my force up the brook on our right."

"That's Kit's Brook," I added.

"I shall want a guide, then."

"I'm your man," interposed Kit. "And now's the right time to start, for the fight will begin on t'other side in a few minutes."

A sergeant and ten men were detailed to move up Kit's Brook, in order to prevent the Indians from escaping in that direction. Kit led the party towards the stream, but they had hardly disappeared in the forest before we heard the rattle of musketry in front of us. Lieutenant Pope's force had come up with the Indians, and had attacked them. We listened to the warlike sounds which came to us, and that was all we could do. I was too much excited to leave the scene of conflict until the battle had been decided.

The din of the strife gradually became more distinct as the combatants approached, the Indians being driven before the soldiers. By this time the sergeant and his party, who had gone up the brook with Kit, were taking the enemy on the flank. Presently we saw a few of the Indians rushing wildly through the woods, and occasionally a riderless horse came into view. We realized that the savages had been routed, scattered, and dispersed. We saw them swimming across the river, and skulking into the woods. Lieutenant Jackson ordered his men to form in front of the breastwork, for by this time the firing had ceased. Leading them forward, they captured a few prisoners, who were sent to the rear. As the two columns approached each other, the retreat of about twenty of the savages was cut off, and they were surrounded. It appeared that nearly fifty prisoners had been taken by both parties, and not less than twenty horses, while as many more were running loose in the forest.

"How are you, Jackson?" said Lieutenant Pope, as the two officers met.

"Very well, thank you. How is it with you?"

"I am all right. We have done our work thoroughly."

"We have, indeed."

"After it became nothing but butchery, I ordered my men to cease firing," added Lieutenant Pope. "The enemy were badly cut up when we came upon them. Didn't I hear a heavy gun here?"

"Yes, we have a twelve-pounder on our battery. We fired it but once, loaded with canister;" and Mr. Jackson proceeded to explain how he had obtained the gun.

"What shall we do with these prisoners?" continued Lieutenant Pope. "They will be a nuisance to us, and I don't wish to feed them a great while."

"We had better take them down to the clearing."

"There is feed enough for the horses down on Bear River," said I.

"We will send them down there," added Lieutenant Pope. "I have no idea that these Indians will assemble again."

"No: they are completely scattered, and they will make their way back to their village."

"But they may cause some trouble."

"Very true; and, Phil, you must hurry to the island. If you have boats enough, you may take half a dozen men."

"We have three boats," I replied.

I went for my team, and Lieutenant Pope ordered the men who had come with him to remain at the breastwork, while those under Mr. Jackson conducted the prisoners and the horses to the clearing. The senior officer rode down with me, and on the way I told him all that had occurred since I left him the night before. He informed me that his force had followed the band of Indians, three or four miles in their rear, till they heard the firing in front, when they had pressed forward with all speed, and intercepted the enemy, as they retreated, not more than a mile from the breastwork.

"I don't think you will have any more trouble with the Indians," said he, in conclusion. "They have been severely punished for the murder they committed. If I can find the man who shot your father, I shall make an example of him."

"I think he was the first Indian that fell," I replied. "Kit Cruncher dropped a redskin as soon as Matt Rockwood was hit. I don't think they will need any more punishing."

"I hope not."

When we reached the Castle, we found that two of the guard had gone over to the island to protect Mr. Gracewood's property. Dinner was ready, and as we were now in no haste, we sat down with the reunited family. Ella was up, and had been improving rapidly. The news of the total defeat of the Indians seemed to quiet her fears in regard to the future.

"She does not wish to go upon Paradise Island again," said her father.

"She need not go there," I added; "though your house is much better than the Castle."

"I have been thinking the matter over for some time, Phil. I have concluded that we had better move my house over to the clearing, if you will let us locate on your land."

"On my land?"

"I believe in squatter sovereignty, Phil Farringford, and I regard this as your farm. The house is put up with screws, and can be readily taken down."

"What will you do with your piano, sir?" I inquired.

"I must get some passing steamer to transport that. The box in which it was brought up from St. Louis is still on the island."

"Our men shall assist you in moving the house," said Lieutenant Pope.

"It can be done in a couple of days, with force enough," added Mr. Gracewood.

"We will go to work upon it to-morrow."

After dinner, Morgan and I went over to the island, where we found the two soldiers domiciled in the house. The wounded Indian was there with them. He had crawled into the front room before their arrival, and I was pleased to learn that they had fed him, and done what they could for his wounds. They had put a big plaster on his nose, and bound up the back of his head. An assistant surgeon belonged to the detachment, but he was attending the wounded soldiers and Indians above the breastwork. None of the troops had been killed; one was severely and two slightly wounded.

Probably the presence of the two soldiers on the island had prevented the Indians from returning. Leaving Morgan at the house, I returned to the clearing. On my arrival I found that Lieutenant Pope, after serving out rations to his prisoners, which they had greedily devoured, had assembled them in the field, for the purpose of having a "big talk" with them. Two or three of them spoke English enough to act as interpreters.

"Why have you done this?" asked Mr. Pope. "Why did you come down here, steal the horses, and then murder the owner of them?"

The spokesman charged us with stealing the Indian horses and killing one of their chiefs.

"How's that, Phil?" asked the officer.

"They stole our horses, and when we found them, we took two other horses belonging to the thieves," I replied. "But we returned them when they came for them, the next day. They demanded more horses, besides corn, meat, and whiskey, which we refused to give them, and they threatened us. Then about a dozen Indians came on horseback; but we had taken up the bridge, so that they could not cross over the brook. When old Matt came down, they shot him dead, without a word of talk. Then Kit Cruncher fired, and brought down the foremost Indian. The rest of them ran away. We defended ourselves in the block-house, and they did not dare to come near us, for Kit was sure of his man every time he fired. Then some more of them came down to the island, and when we drove them away from the house, they carried off Miss Ella. That's the whole story. Mr. Gracewood was here all the time, and he will tell you the same thing."

Lieutenant Pope repeated my statement to the Indians, and insisted that it was the whole truth.

"These people have been your friends," said he. "They have often given you meat and corn when you were hungry, and have lived in peace with you for many years. Our great father the president will not permit his children in the forest to be murdered. If you kill one white man, or steal his property, you shall be punished as you have been to-day. We bought your lands in fair bargain, and we give you every year money, blankets, food, and all you need. If the white man wrongs you, he shall be punished."

"No!" exclaimed the Indian, whose experience, perhaps, did not verify this statement.

"If you complain of him, and we can find him, he shall be punished," repeated the officer.

He proceeded to show that the Indians had been the aggressors in the present difficulty; that they had murdered one of the settlers without provocation. He enlarged upon the terrible consequences which would follow if the Indians persisted in waging war upon the white man. If the lieutenant had proved that he was powerful on the war-path, he also demonstrated that he was equally potent in an argument, and the savages were as completely overwhelmed by his logic as by his arms.

"Will you have peace or war?" demanded he, sternly.

"We make peace," replied the spokesman.

"Then bring your chiefs to me, and we will smoke the pipe of peace. We wish you well, and will be friends if you are willing; if not, we will go to your country, and destroy you with fire and sword. You may go; take your horses, and all that belongs to you."

The savages seemed to be astonished at this unexpected decree. Their spirit was broken by the heavy losses they had sustained. Their horses, some of which were fine animals, were driven up, and a detachment of the troops conducted them to the fort in the forest, where they were sent on their way. Probably those who had escaped were already on their way to the north. As it was no longer necessary to maintain the camp in the forest, it was removed to the clearing. A portion of the breastwork near the river was taken away to open the road, the dead Indians were buried, and the war was practically ended. From what I had heard of these Indians, I was confident that we should have no further trouble, though Lieutenant Pope intended to visit the Indian village, and have a talk with the chiefs before he returned to the fort.

The next morning our three boats conveyed twelve soldiers to the island to commence the removal of Mr. Gracewood's house. The wounded Indian was placed on a bed under a tree, and the soldiers commenced their task. After they had gone to work with knives and screw-drivers to take down the house, I returned to the clearing for Lieutenant Jackson, who was to superintend the operation.

CHAPTER XXII.

IN WHICH PHIL UNDERTAKES A HEAVY JOB.

"How big is this house, Phil?" asked Lieutenant Jackson, as I rowed him up to Paradise Island.

"It is thirty feet long and fifteen wide."

"I haven't heard anything said about the manner of transporting it," added the officer.

"We must raft it down. We have taken up all the ropes we have. Mr. Gracewood told me how to handle the grand piano."

"The grand piano," laughed Mr. Jackson. "That's a pretty plaything to have away back here in the woods."

"Mr. Gracewood sets his life by that piano. He used to smoke and play upon it by the hour together. He is very fond of music."

"I should think he must be, to bring a grand piano out here. How heavy is it?"

"It weighs about eight hundred pounds. Mr. Gracewood told me to have it put in the box, and leave it here till some steamer can be hired to bring it down."

"Tho rain and dampness will spoil it."

"He told me to wrap it up in the oil-cloth that belongs with it; but, if you are willing, Lieutenant Jackson, we will astonish him by taking it down with us."

"I think it would astonish me as much as him to see it done."

"We can do it."

"I hear that you are an engineer, Phil," added my passenger. "Morgan says you engineered the job of transporting the gun."

"The grand piano is not more than two or three hundred pounds heavier than the twelve-pounder."

"That is adding a third, and the gun was on wheels."

"No matter for that; we had but three to do that, and now we have a dozen."

"How will you do it, Phil?"

I explained my plan, and Mr. Jackson thought it was practicable.

"I suppose Mr. Gracewood and his family intend to remain at the clearing after we have moved the house," continued my companion in the barge.

"I don't know. I don't believe his wife and daughter will be content to stay a great while in this lonely place. They may live here during the summer; but in winter we don't see anybody or anything for months."

"What do you do in winter?"

"I have been studying for several years."

"I thought you talked very well for a boy brought up in the woods."

"I don't have anything to do for six months in the year but take care of the horses, and do the housework. I read and study about twelve hours a day in winter. I took up Latin and French last season."

"Indeed! You will make a learned man if you keep on. Have you no desire to see more of the world?"

"Sometimes I have. I don't think I shall stay here many years longer."

"I shouldn't think you would. Why do you study Latin and French?"

"Only because I like them. It is a very great pleasure to me to puzzle out the sentences. Mr. Gracewood is a great scholar, and has plenty of books on the island. I believe I have read them all, except the dictionaries. He had given me a lot of books, which he sent to St. Louis for."

"I should think you would want to know something about your family--your father and mother," added the lieutenant, to whom Mr. Gracewood had related the substance of my history.

"I do, sometimes; but I am almost sure I should learn that one or both of them were lost in the steamer."

"Perhaps not. Mr. Gracewood thinks your foster-father did very wrong in not causing some inquiries to be made for your parents."

"I think so myself; but I can excuse him when I consider how much he did for me, and the reason why he kept still," I replied, as I ran the barge upon the shore at the lower end of the island.

"Have you any of the clothing, or other articles, found upon you?"

"I don't know of any."

"Almost every little child has a necklace, a ring, or some other ornament upon it, especially when travelling."

"Matt Rockwood never said anything to me about such matters. He has a chest at the Castle, which he always kept locked, and I don't know what there is in it."

"Didn't you open it after he was killed?"

"No; the key was buried with him, and I did not exactly like to break it open yet. Besides, I have been so driven about since we buried him that I haven't had much time to think about it."

"I would open it, if I were you."

"I shall," I replied, as we walked up the slope towards the house.

"Perhaps there is something valuable in it."

"I know there is money in it, for we have sold a great deal of wood, and he always put the gold into that chest."

"You may be a rich man yet, Phil."

"I don't know that the money belongs to me. I suppose Matt had friends and relatives somewhere, though I don't know where they are."

"You have done as much as Matt, of late years, to earn this money, and it would be a hard case to have it taken from you by his relations."

"I think it would. Matt did most of the chopping, and I did all the hauling. But I meant to be honest, and the money shall go wherever it belongs."



PHIL AND LIEUTENANT JACKSON GO TO PARADISE ISLAND.
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"Have you any idea how much there is?"

"Not the least; but I don't suppose there is a great deal," I replied, as we reached the house.

"If I can help you, Phil, call upon me at any time. I shall be at the fort above for a year or two, probably."

"Thank you, Mr. Jackson. You have been very kind to me. I shall always remember you."

The soldiers had removed most of the boards on the sides of the house, and were now taking off the roof. The lieutenant ordered some of his men to bring up the piano box, which was in a rude shanty used as a storehouse for supplies. All the force that could get hold of the piano then placed it sidewise upon four chairs, and we took off the legs. The instrument was then wrapped in the oil-cloth, and placed in the box, where it could not be injured by a falling board or timber. Raising the case upon three rollers, which I had prepared for the purpose, we easily slid it out of the house on a track of boards.

"Now, Mr. Jackson, if you will let Morgan help me, we will move this box down to the river," said I, when it was ready.

"But you want half a dozen men," added he.

"No, sir. Let all the rest of the men take down the house. We can do this alone. It is a long job, and we must have it moving at once."

"Just as you say, Phil," laughed the officer.

The distance to the river was about eighty rods. The forest was open enough, the greater part of the way, to permit the passage of the box, and only near the river should we be obliged to cut away the young trees. We demolished the old shanty, and taking half a dozen of the boards, laid down a track towards the river. The ground was nearly level for a short distance, and we used levers to propel the box forward. As fast as one roller ran out in the rear, we placed it forward, and thus managed to keep both ends of the box up all the time.

"Why couldn't we move the house without taking it to pieces, Phil?" said the lieutenant, laughing, as he watched the operation.

"We could, sir, if the trees were not in the way. It would be more work to cut a track through the woods wide enough for the house than to take it to pieces and put it together."

"Do you really think you could move the house, without taking it to pieces, if the trees were not in the way?"

"I know I could."

"You have a good deal of confidence in yourself."

"I was brought up in the woods, where we have to do our own thinking."

"How would you take it down the river?"

"There are hundreds of cotton-wood sticks, from forty to sixty feet long, on the shore. We could make a raft of them, that would keep the building right side up."

"But, after your raft got started, how could you stop it, and haul it in at the mouth of Fish River? The current here is not less than four miles an hour."

"That would be the greatest difficulty about the job. I should have some sweeps on the raft, and a dozen men could crowd it over against the north shore, where we could send a couple of ropes on shore, and check it by catching a turn around the trees."

"Very likely you would do it, Phil; but it's lucky we haven't the job on our hands."

"I wish we had, for I should enjoy the fun, if I were boss of the job."

We continued to roll the box on its way down to the river, carrying the boards forward as we passed over them, until we came to the downward slope, when the heavy weight was inclined to travel faster than was safe for it. But I had a rope on the case, for I had already provided for the emergency. Making it fast to the rear end of the box, I passed it round a tree, and while Morgan eased it down the slope, I shifted the rollers. When the whole length of the line had been run out, we changed it to another tree.

As the descent increased, we found that the rope canted the box, so that it was in danger of running off the board track. Morgan cut down a tree about thirty foot high, and trimmed off its branches. We placed the stick across the track behind the box, and above two trees. Passing the rope around this timber, we had our purchase in the right place. When we shifted the cross stick down the hill, the box was held by a couple of props. In this manner we descended the slope. It was dinner time then, and we halted in our triumphant progress to refresh ourselves with boiled bacon and johnny-cake.

After dinner we resumed our labor. Taking the axes, we cleared a road through the young wood near the river. We had occasionally been obliged to use the shovels to level off the ground, and the axes to remove a stump, or a small tree. Our course had been rather devious also, in order to obtain the smoothest path. A couple of hours more enabled us to reach the river. We placed the box near a convenient place to embark it. We then prepared a dozen logs for the foundation of the great raft we were to make of the lumber, and returned to the house.

I found the soldiers growling at the idea of lugging all the boards and timbers down to the river.

"Don't do it," said I to Mr. Jackson.

"They must do it, or leave them here."

"No, sir, I think not. There is not a board nor a timber here that is more than twelve feet long. We can make three or four piles of the boards, and roll them down to the river, as we did the grand piano."

"Bully for you, Phil!" said a lazy soldier, in a low tone.

"You may try it, Phil," replied Mr. Jackson.

Morgan and I made a pile of boards eight feet long, three feet wide, and three feet high. We were careful to "break joints" in laying up the pile, and it was a compact mass when finished. We started it for the river, on the rollers.

CHAPTER XXIII.

IN WHICH PHIL'S RECONSTRUCTION PLAN IS FULLY SET FORTH.

In moving the pile of lumber to the river, we followed the path chosen for the piano box, and as the road was all ready, there was no delay. Morgan superintended its progress, having three men to assist him. Another pile was immediately made at the site of the house, and started on its way with four men to handle it. A third and a fourth were piled up, and by the time the last was ready, the first had arrived at its destination. Slowly as the masses of lumber were moved, the transportation was effected much sooner, and certainly with less labor, than the building could have been carried down by the soldiers.

As soon as the last pile had been started, the lieutenant and myself went down to the water. We had placed the dozen logs, intended for the foundation of the raft, in the right place, where there was water enough to float the structure after it was built, and the heavy piano had been placed near it. When the second pile of lumber arrived, the officer ordered the men who had come with it to prepare the timbers. They were placed about a foot apart, and secured by nailing boards across them. By the time the foundation was completed, the rest of the lumber was on the spot, and all our force were ready for the work.

The frame of the house was laid upon the logs, and then the boards were placed upon them, alternate layers crossing each other, so as to bind the whole firmly together. The raft, when completed, was twenty-four feet long, and fifteen wide. The most difficult task was yet to be performed--the loading of the grand piano. We found it necessary to remove the raft to a place where the bank was more shelving, so that the shore side of the structure would rest on the ground, because the weight of the piano on one side would cant it over so that we could not work.

For skids we laid down a couple of smooth, water-soaked sticks of timber, sliding the piano box upon them down to the raft. As soon as the heavy body was on the raft, the side which floated settled down before the box had reached the middle of the platform. The raft was gradually pried off the shore with levers, and as it came to a level, the box was moved farther upon it, till it had been placed in the centre. Then the structure floated in all its parts, and I was glad to see that its equilibrium had been correctly calculated. The piano was not a heavy load for the raft, for it floated well out of water, and had buoyancy enough to sustain the weight of a dozen men.

"What shall we do with that wounded Indian, Phil?" asked Mr. Jackson, when we had completed the loading of the box. "He will starve to death in time, if we leave him here."

"We must take him with us, of course," I replied. "There are a great many things at the house to bring down."

The lieutenant sent his men back, and we followed them. The wheelbarrow was loaded with small articles, and each took all he could carry. They were sent down to the raft, and directed to return. While they were absent, we talked with the wounded Indian, who had been observing all our movements with apparent interest. Though he was in a high fever, and must have suffered severely from his injuries, he exhibited no signs of pain in our presence. I told him that we would take good care of him till he was well, and that we must convey him to the clearing, where the surgeon of the troops would attend to him.

"No hang me--kill me?" he said, with a smile.

"No; that is not the way the Christians serve their enemies," added Mr. Jackson. "We feed them, and cure them if they are sick or wounded."

"Why did you attack us, and murder one of us?" I asked. "We have been friends."

"Indian come back and say white man kill chief. Must kill white man then."

It was the ancient philosophy of the Indians, that one injury must be repaid by another; but he entirely ignored the fact that the savages had been the aggressors. I told him of the battle of the day before; that his people had been routed with severe loss, and that they had fled to their reservation.

"Smoke pipe now; no fight again; peace always," said he.

"I hope so," I added.

"Me no fight. Me white man friend. Hunt for white man, work for white man, fight for white man; good friend always."

I think he was grateful for the favor extended to him. When the soldiers came back from the raft, four of them were directed to convey the camp bedstead on which the Indian lay to the river, and the rest carried down the remainder of Mr. Gracewood's goods. We walked down to the lower end of the island with the bearers of the bedstead. It was placed on the raft, and the other articles were stowed so as to preserve the balance of the structure.

"We are ready for a start," said Morgan. "But we ought to have a steamboat to tow the thing down."

"I think we have men enough to handle it," I replied. "It is almost night, and we must hurry up, though it will not take us long after we get started."

Two of our boats were bateaux, and the other was Mr. Gracewood's barge. Two men were placed in each, and the others upon the raft. I sat in the stern of the barge to tend the drag-rope. Mr. Jackson was in one of the bateaux. The lines were cast off, and the men, with their setting-poles, pushed the raft from the shore. The current soon acted upon it, carrying it over towards the north side of the river. We followed the course taken by the raft on which we had transported the twelve-pounder; and, profiting by the experience gained in that enterprise, we guided our huge structure safely to the landing at the mouth of Fish River. We landed our check-lines in season this time, and everything worked entirely to our satisfaction. It was nearly dark now, and we moored the raft to the shore for the night. The bed of the wounded Indian was removed to the shanty, and the surgeon sent for.

The lieutenant and myself went to the Castle to report progress, while the soldiers sought their camp. Mr. Gracewood staid in the house all the time. He had hardly been out during the day. He was so rejoiced at the reunion of his little family that he was not willing to leave his loved ones even for a moment.

"I hope you left the piano where it will be safe on the island, Phil Farringford," said Mr. Gracewood, when I had told him we had brought over the house.

"No, sir; we did not."

"Did not? You know I love that instrument, and I hope, before the summer is past, to hear Ella play upon it."

"We brought it with us, sir," I replied.

"Impossible!" exclaimed he.

"It is on the raft down at the landing."

"Phil is quite an engineer, and is entitled to all the credit of its removal," added the lieutenant, who explained the means by which the piano had been moved to the river, and floated to the landing.

"I am very glad, indeed, that you have brought it, Phil. We shall be happy here this summer now," said Mr. Gracewood.

"Then you intend to stay here this summer."

"We have concluded to remain as long as Mrs. Gracewood and Ella can be contented."

"I am afraid that will not be long," I added, glancing at Ella, who was seated on Matt's chest.

"I am sure I shall be very happy here among such good friends," she replied; and I could not help realizing how delighted I should be while she was at the clearing.

"I will help you carry on your farm, Phil," continued Mr. Gracewood.

"We shall do well, I know."

I felt that paradise had been transported from the island to the clearing, while, as we ate our supper, Ella told what a beautiful place it was. It was so much pleasanter than the boundless prairies which covered the greater portion of the country. It seemed as if civilization had been transplanted to my field and forest as I looked upon Mrs. Gracewood and her daughter. But I was sad when I thought that the time must come, sooner or later, when they would leave me, and I should be more desolate and lonely than ever before.

I slept in the barn again that night; but I hoped Mr. Gracewood's house would be ready for the accommodation of his family by the next evening, and that we should hear the melodious tones of the grand piano by the following day, which would be Sunday. Ella was rapidly recovering from the fatigues of her forced journey with the Indians; and I pictured to myself the pleasure it would afford me to walk with her through the forest, and sail with her on the river. When I went to sleep, I dreamed that I went a fishing with her, and that a big gray trout pulled her into the water, from which, of course, I had the satisfaction of rescuing her.

The next morning Lieutenant Pope directed all his men to assist in the erection of the house. We landed the big box, loaded it upon the wagon, and hauled it up to the site which had been chosen for the new home of the Gracewoods, not a hundred feet from the Castle. While a portion of the troops carted the lumber, the others prepared the foundation

of the house. A series of posts were set in the ground, and sawed off on a level about a foot above the sod, so as to make the lower floor dry and comfortable. On those were laid the sills, and before noon the building was up and half covered. All the boards and timbers were numbered, and so many men made quick work of it. In the middle of the afternoon the last board had been screwed on, the sides of the house had been banked and sodded, and the structure was ready to receive the furniture.

Mr. Gracewood had used a ladder to reach the attic where he slept; but Mr. Jackson thought he ought to have stairs for his wife and daughter. I had a decided taste for carpenter's work, and promised to build them as soon as possible. However, Mrs. Gracewood and Ella thought they should like the ladder better, as it could be drawn up after them, which would add to their safety in case the Indians should be troublesome again.

The grand piano was taken from the box, and put in the front room. While its owner was tuning it, I put up a couple of rude boxbedsteads in the attic, and filled them with clean hay. The cooking-stove was put up in the rear apartment, and the whole building looked as though it had never been disturbed, for everything had been placed as it was on the island. I had the pleasure of conducting Ella to her new home, where we passed a very pleasant evening.

CHAPTER XXIV.

IN WHICH PHIL AND HIS FRIENDS EXAMINE THE CONTENTS OF THE CHEST.

Lieutenants Pope and Jackson were of the pleasant party in the reconstructed house. Both of them were good singers, and I experienced a new sensation. Ella was able to sit up all day now, and she and her mother sang. To the accompaniment of the grand piano, the party sang what they called old and familiar tunes. I had never heard anything which could be called singing before, and I was more delighted than I can express. The instrument, highly as I had appreciated it before, seemed to have a double power and a double melody.

The tunes were Old Hundred, Peterboro', Hamburg, and others like them, which have since become familiar to me. They raised my soul from earth to heaven, and inspired me with new love and new hope. I had read some of the hymns they sang; but their musical interpretation gave them a purer and loftier sentiment than their words could convey. Ella sang a little song alone; and, as I listened to her sweet voice, I could hardly restrain my tears, the melody was so new and strange, and withal so heavenly. What would earth be if men and women could not sing!

It was a gloomy moment to me when the party separated. It was like coming down from heaven to earth when the music ceased, and I heard only the commonplace sounds which were familiar to me. I left the house with the two officers; but it was still early in the evening, and I invited Mr. Jackson, to whom I had become much attached, to go into the Castle with me. He had taken an interest in me and in my affairs, and I wanted to talk with him about the great world I had never seen. After the raptures of the evening, I could not help shuddering as I thought of the time when the Gracewoods would return to their old home in St. Louis. The thought of a separation was intolerable, and I resolved to abandon Field and Forest when they decided to go.

"Is that the chest of which you spoke, Phil?" said Mr. Jackson, as we entered the Castle, where a bright fire of pitch-wood was burning.

"Yes, sir; it has not been opened since Matt Rockwood was buried," I replied.

"Why don't you open it?" added the officer. "It may afford you some information in regard to yourself."

"I will do it now, if you please, for I don't like to open it alone."

"Very well; but are you sure there is no key to the chest?"

"I only know that Matt carried the key in his pocket, and I suppose it was buried with him."

"No, it won't," said Kit Cruncher, walking in at the open door. "Not if you mean the key to that box."

"That is what we were speaking of, Kit," I replied. "I thought you had gone up to your cabin."

"I've been, and got back. 'Pears like them Injuns is comin' down agin. They've stole all my bacon."

"Probably they did that on their retreat," suggested the lieutenant. "They are short of food, and the wounded one told me they were going down to the buffalo country, after they had revenged themselves for the death of the chief."

"I call 'late some on 'em is in the woods above hyer now."

"Very likely."

"It mought be, but I hain't seen none. I want some supper, boy."

"You shall have it, Kit," I replied. "We have plenty of bacon, and Mrs. Gracewood made some bread to-day, which will be a treat to you."

I went to the store-room, and cut off a large slice of bacon, and put it in the pan on the fire. The white bread, which had been baked in the stove, was a new thing at the Castle, and I put the loaf on the table.

"What was you talkin' about when I kim in?" asked Kit, while he was waiting for his supper.

"We were talking about opening this chest," replied Mr. Jackson. "Perhaps it contains something which will help Phil to find who his parents were."

"I know it do," added Kit. "Leastwise, there used to be, for I've seen the traps myself. Matt Rockwood didn't want to

hev me say nothin' to the boy about 'em, for the old man sort o' doted on that boy, and was afeard o' losin' on him."

"I understood you to say that the key of the chest was not buried with the owner," said the lieutenant.

"No; it wan't. I took it off on him myself. Hyer it is," replied the hunter, handing the key to the officer. "I don't reckon you'll stop hyer a great while now, boy."

"I shall stay through the summer, at any rate."

"I see the house from the island has been fotched over hyer. I callate Mr. Greasewood's folks mean to stop hyer a spell, from that."

"They will spend the summer here; and when they go, I think I shall go too," I answered.

"I reckon, boy, from what I know on't, that you belong to a good family. If you do, your bringin' up won't be no disgrace to you. I don't reckon there's many boys in the towns that know any more'n you do."

"What makes you think he belongs to a good family, Kit?" asked Mr. Jackson.

"From the traps he had on when Matt picked him up. There was sunthin' else, too. What I was go'n to say, boy, was this: I'm gittin' old, and can't run through the woods as I used to. Twenty mile a day rather wears on me. I don't reckon I shall do much more trappin', and when you go, boy, I'll buy your place at a fair price."

"You needn't buy it, Kit. You can take it. I wish you would come down and live with me now."

"Do you wish so, boy?"

"I do, with all my heart. I shouldn't have been alive now if you hadn't stood up against the Indians when they came."

"Don't say nothin', boy; I'll come right off. But when you leave, I'll buy the place, for Matt owned it just as much as any man could own a piece of ground. I callate he took out the gov'ment papers for it."

"You shall have it all, Kit, and be welcome to it, so far as I am concerned," I persisted.

"Had Matt any heirs?"

"He had a brother," replied Kit. "I don't reckon he'll come up hyer."

"Your supper is ready, Kit," I added, putting the frying-pan on a block upon the table, according to our usual custom, though I did not do it while the ladies were my guests.

"You kin open the box, boy," said Kit, as he sat down at the table, and helped himself out of the pan.

Mr. Jackson unlocked the chest, and raised the lid. It contained a very great variety of articles, including a tolerably good suit of clothes, which I had never seen upon the person of the old man. I took these out, and discovered a little dress, musty and mildewed. It was made of fine material, and was elaborately ornamented. There was a complete suit, and also a heavy plaid shawl.

"You was tied up in that blanket when Matt picked you up," said Kit. "Look in the till, in the end of the box."

I opened the till, and found there a locket, attached to a string of beads. There was also a pair of coral bracelets, which the lieutenant said had been used to loop up the sleeves of the child's dress at the shoulders. On them were the initials P. F., which were certainly the first letters of my present name; but I concluded that Matt had made the name to suit the initials. Mr. Jackson opened the locket, and found it contained a miniature of a lady. He passed it to me, and I gazed at it with a thrill of emotion? Was it my mother who looked out upon me from the porcelain? Did she perish in the terrible steamboat calamity from which I had been so providentially saved? I carried the locket to the fire, where I could examine more minutely the features of the person. It was the portrait of a lady not more than twenty-five years of age. If she was not handsome, there was something inexpressibly attractive to me in the gentle look of love and tenderness which she seemed to bestow upon me.

"Do you think this is my mother, Mr. Jackson?" I asked.

"Of course I know nothing about it, but I should suppose it was. Whose portrait but a mother's would a little child be likely to wear?"

"It mought be, and it mought not be, boy," added Kit.

"It must be!" I exclaimed, so tenderly impressed by the picture that I was not willing to believe anything else; and I felt that my instinct was guiding me aright.



UNLOCKING THE CHEST.
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"Let us see what else there is in the chest," said the lieutenant. "We may find something that will give us further light on the subject."

I placed the miniature on the table, and returned to the chest. Mr. Jackson took from it an old time-stained newspaper. He threw it upon the floor, as a matter of no consequence; but I picked it up, for I remembered what I had heard Matt say about a newspaper. But it contained only a brief paragraph, and alluded to another and fuller account of the calamity contained in a previous issue.

There was nothing else in the chest that related to me, but I felt that I had enough. Mr. Jackson said that, if I ever went to St. Louis, I could find a file of the newspaper of which we had a single copy, and could find the number containing the names of the saved and the lost at the burning of the Farringford. The portrait would enable me to identify my mother, if she were still living, and also to establish my own identity.

"Here is Matt Rockwood's money," said the lieutenant, as he took from the bottom of the chest several shot-bags.

"I have some money to add to it," I answered, taking from the store-room the amount I had received for wood since the death of my foster-father.

"The old man did a good business here, I should say," added Mr. Jackson, as he held up the bags in order to estimate their weight.

"We had better count the gold."

Counting the money seemed to have a greater fascination to my friend the officer than to me. He placed the coins upon the table in piles of one hundred dollars each. When he had nearly finished, I counted eight of them. There was not enough, even with the silver, to make another, and the whole amount was eight hundred and ninety-one dollars.

"What will you do with this money, Phil?" asked Mr. Jackson.

"I don't know; keep it, I suppose."

"It is a pity to let it lie idle here. If you invest it, you will have double this amount when you are of age."

"I can only invest it in a mud bank up here," I replied. "But we have nearly a hundred cords of wood at the landing, which ought to bring about four hundred dollars more, as it sells this year. A great many steamers come up here now, and I think we shall sell it all this season."

"Then you will have twelve or thirteen hundred dollars. If Mr. Gracewood goes to St. Louis this fall, I advise you to let him invest it for you."

"I will, sir. Is there anything else in the chest?"

"Here are papers relating to Matt Rockwood. There are names upon them, and if you desire, you can obtain some information in regard to your foster-father."

I did not care to look at the papers; and returning the money and other articles to the chest, I locked it, and put the key in my pocket. Mr. Jackson went to his tent, and Kit and I slept together in the Castle. The picture of my mother, as I insisted upon believing it was, seemed to be before me; and I gazed upon it in imagination till sleep shut it out from my view.

CHAPTER XXV.

IN WHICH PHIL ATTENDS TO THE AFFAIRS OF THE FARM.

The Sabbath sun rose bright and beautiful, and shed its hallowed light upon field and forest. Sunday had always been a day of rest at the clearing since the coming of Mr. Gracewood. Matt Rockwood and I used to spend the day at the island when the weather would permit us to go there. The recluse, on these occasions, invariably read several chapters of the Bible to us, explaining the meaning of the verses as he proceeded, when necessary. After this he read a sermon, or a portion of some religious book.

This had been our Sunday routine for the last three years; and Mr. Gracewood told Matt and me that his religious experience dated no farther back than this period. He declared that he was really worried about me, a child of eight, who had received no religious training. As my education had fallen to him, his conscience troubled him because he confined his instruction to secular branches. He did not feel competent to instruct me in sacred things; but he had devoted himself to a study of the Bible for my sake, that he might be able to teach me. His stock of religious books was very small, but he had sent to St. Louis for a new supply.

The study of the Bible, which he pursued with maps, commentary, and Bible dictionary, soon became very interesting to him. It awakened in his mind a new spirit, and kindled emotions which before had been foreign to him. He was an earnest teacher, while he was an inquiring student. The course of study which he had undertaken for my sake had been even a greater blessing to himself than to me, though I am sure I profited by his instructions. After we had studied together for a year, a prayer was added to our Sunday exercises. Mr. Gracewood told us that he prayed morning and evening, and begged us to do the same. Sometimes Kit Cruncher came down and joined our little class.

On these occasions, which were always very pleasant to me, the grand piano gave forth its deepest and most solemn tones. Mr. Gracewood played only sacred music on the Sabbath; and he performed the pieces with so much interest and feeling, that we were always moved by them. He never sang, declaring that his voice was not adapted to singing.

With this knowledge of Mr. Gracewood's religious views and feelings, I was not surprised when Ella told me, after breakfast, that her father would have a service at his house in the forenoon and in the afternoon. All the soldiers were invited, and all of them came. The familiar hymn, "The morning light is breaking," was sung first, and was followed by a prayer, and the reading of a chapter from the New Testament. The beautiful hymn,—

"When all thy mercies, O my God,
My rising soul surveys,
Transported with the view, I'm lost
In wonder, love, and praise,"—

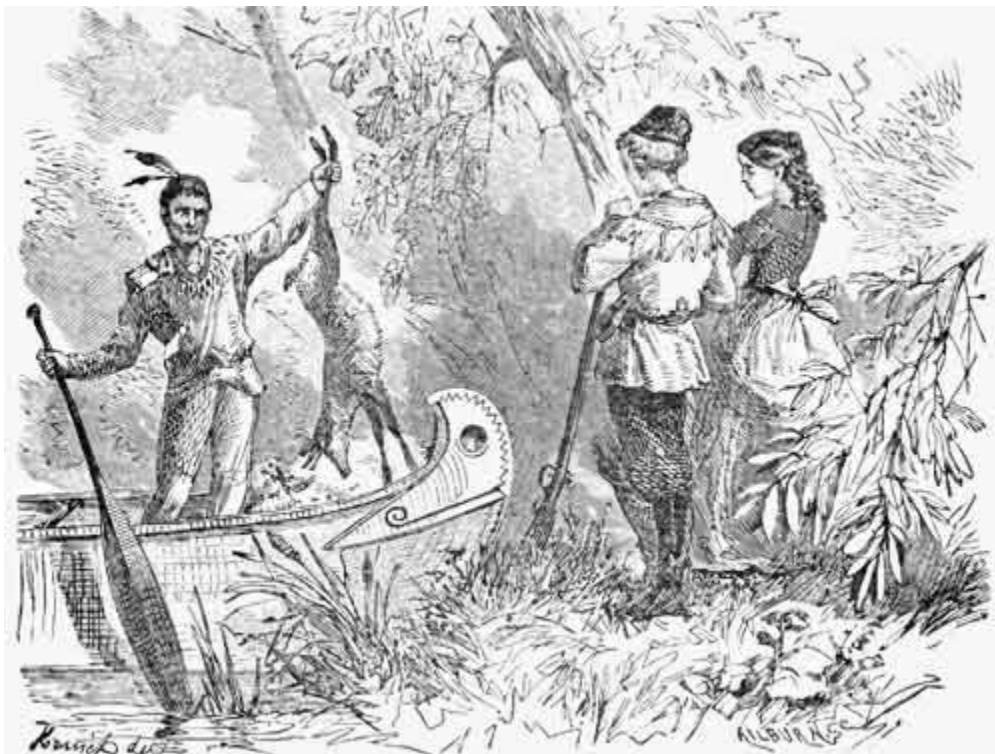
was then sung. Many of the soldiers joined, and I was almost carried away by the strange effect, at once so melodious and so inspiring. The words of the hymn had a peculiar fitness, for the occasion, after we had been spared from the vengeance of the savages. Mr. Gracewood read each verse before it was sung, so as to recall the words to the audience. After the singing, he read a sermon appropriate to the circumstances of the family. At the end of it he spoke of Matt Rockwood, and paid a very pleasant tribute to his memory.

In the afternoon we attended another service. That Sunday was a holy day to me, and the singing had opened a new avenue of inspiration to me. In the evening Ella told me about her Sunday school in St. Louis, and I listened to her description with intense interest. I wished that I could attend one, hear the children sing, and receive the instructions of kind teachers. I was astonished when she told me that many young people did not go to the Sunday school, though all were invited to do so. I could not understand how any were willing to forego such a blessed privilege.

Early on Monday morning the troops marched for the Indian country at the north of us. I loaned them the wagon and horses to convey their baggage, and Kit Cruncher went as guide. I saw the column disappear in the forest. By this time Ella was able to walk about on the farm, and I derived great pleasure from the excursions I made with her about the clearing. I pulled up Little Fish River with her in the barge, and showed her where the battle with the Indians had occurred. We landed, examined the breastwork, and visited the mound which marked the burial-place of the savages who had fallen in the affray.

Later in the week I rowed up to Fish Rapids, and showed her how to catch a trout. She tried her hand, and soon hooked a two-pounder, which would have realized my dream about her, if I had not taken the line in my own hands. We caught half a dozen, and returned to the clearing. This kind of life was delightful to my fair young companion, and, with her, it

was equally so to me. She seemed to have inherited something of her father's fondness for the sports of the wilderness and the prairie.



THE GRATEFUL INDIAN.
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On Saturday the troops arrived from their march to the Indian region. Lieutenant Pope had met some of the principal chiefs, had listened to their grievances,—for they always have some,—and had promised to redress them. They had smoked the pipe of peace together, and the "big Indians" had assured him that they would keep their word. After the severe lesson which had been administered, they were, doubtless, glad enough to make peace on these easy terms. During the rest of my stay at the Castle, they gave us no trouble. Though they came down occasionally to the landing, they were always peaceable and friendly. We took care of the wounded Indian at the shanty till he was able to return to his people, and he left us filled with gratitude. Three months after, he brought us in his canoe, down Crooked River, three antelopes, which he had shot in the region above us, for much of the best game had abandoned the vicinity of our settlement.

The soldiers remained a week at the landing, waiting for a steamer to convey them up to the fort. At the end of that time they departed. I had several long talks with Lieutenant Jackson, who gave me much good advice in regard to the future course he thought I ought to pursue; and when he left I felt that I had parted with a true friend. To the steamer which conveyed the soldiers up the river, I sold twenty cords of wood, and added eighty dollars to the gold in the chest.

Mrs. Gracewood insisted that Kit and myself should take our meals at the house, instead of keeping up a separate mess. Her husband had purchased a supply of table ware of the steamer which had just left, and we found ourselves quite civilized. The old hunter was rather embarrassed and awkward, for he had always been in the habit of eating his bacon out of the pan in which it had been cooked; but he soon accustomed himself to the new order of things, though it was impossible for him to be very graceful at the table, or anywhere else.

As the season advanced we ploughed and planted the field. With Mr. Gracewood, who insisted upon doing his full share of the labor, and Kit to help me, the task was not so hard as it had been. We planted a large piece of ground with corn, potatoes, and vegetables, and by the middle of June, everything was up, and looked finely. The rich soil and the southern slope were favorable to our crops, and we had abundant promises of a rich harvest.

During the preceding year there had been an immense emigration from the eastern states. Kansas and Nebraska were in rapid progress of settlement, and during the season which followed the events I have described, the wave of civilization had almost touched the Castle. We were not out of the reach nor out of the influence of this tide of emigration. Twice as many steamboats went up the river, carrying emigrants and goods on their way to Oregon. In July I had sold all my wood, and after haying we went to work in the forest to obtain a new supply. By September the hot sun of our southern slope had rendered it fit for steamboat use. In the mean time, we managed to obtain a supply of dry

wood sufficient to meet the demand, by obtaining a double-handed saw, and cutting up the logs and drift-wood brought down by the rivers.

During the season we sold wood to the amount of seven hundred dollars, which was equally divided between Kit and me, for Mr. Gracewood refused his share. We all worked hard, but we were very happy. Mrs. Gracewood, lady as she was in the city, was busy all the time, and even Ella declared that she found a new delight in working. I ought to say that, after our corn and potatoes were planted, all the rest of the work in the field was done with the horses. We planted in hills, and covered with the plough. The first weeding was done with the cultivator, and in the light alluvial soil of the clearing it was easy work even for a boy like me to use it alone. Firefly was well trained, and understood his business perfectly.

At the second weeding, I ran the cultivator through the long rows and the cross rows, and then, with the small plough, threw the soil up against the plants. We did not use a hoe except in the vegetable garden. We got along so well that I was only sorry we had not planted twice as many acres.

September and October were busy months to us; but we revelled in the joys of a plentiful harvest. Three hundred bushels of corn, and four hundred of potatoes, rewarded our toil, besides more than we could use of garden vegetables. This was three times as much as we had ever raised in a season before, and we had not room for it in our barn and storehouse. We could not use a quarter of the potatoes, even if we all remained at the farm through winter. We offered them for sale to the steamers and traders, and sold three hundred bushels to a speculator, who doubled his money on them at a settlement, where the people had come too late to make a crop that season.

The cool weather was coming, and, after we had slaughtered our pigs, the hard work of the season was over. The Gracewoods had decided not to remain over winter, and I could not think of parting with them. I was determined to see the world. I heard so much of the country below that I could not resist the temptation to visit it. I stated my intention to Kit Cruncher and the Gracewoods. None of them offered any objections, not even the hunter, who was to be left alone.

CHAPTER XXVI.

IN WHICH PHIL, WITH HIS FORTUNE AS A FARMER, BIDS FAREWELL TO FIELD AND FOREST.

"This place is wuth money, boy," said Kit Cruncher, when I had told him what I intended to do.

"The more it is worth, the better it will be for you, Kit," I replied.

"I'm willin' to pay for the place and the improvements. I've made well on it this year--more'n ever I could trappin'. Then, you see, the settlements is workin' up this way, and another year I shall hev 'em all round me."

"All right; hope you'll make your fortune, Kit."

"But I want to buy you out."

"I don't think I have any rights here which I can sell. You are welcome to everything that belongs to me. But I will leave the whole matter to Mr. Gracewood. I know he will do what is fair."

"Just as you say, Phil. This life jest suits me, now I'm gittin' old, and don't want to tramp through the woods no more. It's a good sitoation for me, and I shall be lucky to get it at any fair price. I shan't want it long, and when I've done with it, yon kin hev it agin, for I hain't no relations to fight over what I leave behind me."

"How long have you lived in the woods, Kit?" I asked; for, though I had known him from my childhood, I had no knowledge of his antecedents.

"Nigh on to thirty years, boy."

"Where did you come from?"

"I was born and raised down in Kaintuck. My father died when I was young, and I took to the river for a livin'. I worked a choppin', a flat boatin', and firin' on a steamboat. I was down in Loosiana one time, on a plantation, when the owner's cub--and he war wus nor any bar's cub I ever see--tied up a black woman who had been sick, because she didn't do all her stent. He wanted me to lick her. I told him I wouldn't do it, no how. This made him mad, and he struck me. I knocked him down with my fist quicker'n you could wink. He got up, and kim at me with a knife. I hit him with a heavy stick on the head. He dropped, and didn't move no more."

"Did yon kill him?" I asked, deeply interested in the narrative.

"I dunno; I don't reckon I did. But I feared I hed; but whether I hed or not, it would have been all the same with me. It mought have cost me my life if they'd cotched me, and I left. I travelled across the country till I came to the Ark'saw River, and thar I went to work agin firin' on a steamer. When I got money enough I bought my rifle, and traps, and went into the woods. I hev tramped all over the pararies, and in the end I fotched up here."

"Have you always lived alone?"

"Allus; I hedn't no 'fection for them pesky half breeds, nor them French Kanucks nuther. They are thick enough all along the river, and I allus kep away from 'em. I reckon I got more bufler hides nor any on 'em; but the critters is druv off now. I sold a good many skins of all sorts, and as I never drunk no liquor, I've got the money now. I fotched it down with me t'other day."

"Shall you ever return to Kentucky?"

"I don't reckon I shall; but I mought."

"What became of your mother?"

"She died long afore I kim off. Now, boy, I kin live jest as I want to here, and I'll buy your farm."

"We will talk with Mr. Gracewood about it. I will do whatever he says is right."

My fortunes as a farmer were certainly very satisfactory, and I had no reason to complain. I was to leave my Field and Forest with about fifteen hundred dollars in my pocket; and I could not but ask myself whether I was not going from a certainty to an uncertainty. Farming, in connection with the wood business, had paid well. But then I wanted to see something of the great world, of which I had heard so much. I had a decided taste for some mechanical calling, and I

was sure that I could make my way in life if I had fair play. Yet, if my prospects had been far less favorable, I could not have endured the separation from the Gracewoods.

Leaving Kit in the Castle, thinking over his future operations, I went to the house of Mr. Gracewood, in order to consult him in regard to the disposal of the farm. I found him with his pipe in his mouth, playing on the grand piano, and lost in the inspiration of the "Gloria." I could not interrupt him, and I waited till he had finished, which, however, was not till his pipe was exhausted.

"Phil, I must take this piano with me; but we have not force enough to put it in the box."

"I think we have, sir," I replied. "If you say it must go, it shall be at the landing when the steamer comes down."

"Two men and a boy cannot put it into the box, to say nothing of loading it upon the wagon."

"I think we can, sir, if we have time enough; for, as you taught me, what is gained in power is lost in time. I will take the job, sir."

"You are very confident, Phil Farringford," added Mr. Gracewood, with a smile.

"I got up the plan by which we brought it over here from the island."

"But you had a dozen men to lift it up and put it in the box."

"As we haven't a dozen now, we can do it with two men and a boy, if we have time. The next boat will not come down for a week. But I wanted to see you about another matter. Kit wants to buy the farm of me, and I don't think I own it. We left the decision to you."

"Legally, you have no rights here."

"That is what I said."

"If Matt Rockwood has any heirs, they can obtain whatever legal rights he had in the premises."

"Matt owns the quarter section, as an actual settler. I found the paper signed by a land agent."

"Then his heirs, if he has any, can claim it, as well as all his property."

"Then you think I have no right to the money found in Matt's chest?"

"So long as no heirs appear, I think you have a moral right to keep it."

"Then Kit can have the place."

"I do not think it would be right for you to sell it. You cannot give him a legal title to it. But it is right for him to pay you for your share of the produce now on the place."

This seemed to me to be a fair and just decision, and I repeated it to Kit, who was, of course, entirely satisfied. It was agreed that he should pay me one hundred dollars for my share, and the business was completed. Mr. Gracewood presented him, as a free gift, the house and all it contained, except the piano, books, and other articles which were strictly personal. The barge was included in the gift, and Kit suddenly became a rich man, in his own estimation.

In a box, which Mr. Gracewood gave me, I packed up all the articles I intended to take with me, including the child's suit and some of Matt's papers. My money, except a reasonable sum for expenses, I placed in the hands of Mr. Gracewood, who gave me a note for the amount. I meant to take my rifle with me, as a memorial of my life in the woods. As Kit took care of the horses and pigs now, I had a great deal of time for idle dreaming. I went to all the familiar localities in the vicinity with Ella. While I was sad at the thought of leaving the haunts of my childhood, I was excited by the prospect of seeing new and strange sights. A new life seemed to be opening upon me, and the indefinite wonders of the civilized world flitted wildly through my mind.

"Well, Phil Farringford, if we are going to move the piano, it is about time to begin," said Mr. Gracewood, one morning.

"I am all ready, sir."

"I do not yet see how it is to be done; but I will leave the job to you."

"We shall be obliged to take down a part of the house--one end and a portion of the floor."

"That can very easily be done."

I sawed four cotton-wood sticks so that they would just reach from the ground to the timbers of the attic floor. We placed them in position to support the frame above, which was to bear the weight of the piano during the process of loading it upon the wagon. I then placed a couple of hewn sticks across the attic floor, after removing the boards. Two

stout ropes were then passed around the piano and over these sticks, drawn tight. The piano-case was protected from chafing by a couple of blankets.

Kit and I then went into the attic, and with a lot of wedges I had made, proceeded to raise the two hewn timbers, over which the rope passed. We drove the wedges between the sticks and the timbers of the frame. As fast as we gained an inch, we put a board under, upon which we drove another series of wedges. The process was slow but it was sure, and in time the piano below hung suspended clear of the floor.

"That's all very good, so far, Phil Farringford," laughed Mr. Gracewood.

"Is it clear of the floor, sir?" I asked.

"Yes, all clear."

"Then we will take off the legs."

When this task was accomplished, we took up the floor and joists under the instrument, and removed the sill on the end of the house. Of course we had to take out the studs below the plate; but the posts I had put in were amply sufficient to support the frame. We levelled down the banking so as to form a smooth road to the ground beneath the piano. I then carefully measured the distance from the bottom of the piano to the earth. It was four feet and one inch, while the body of the wagon, which I intended to back under the instrument, was only two feet and a half high. We laid down some logs crosswise, upon which we placed a track of boards for the wheels of the wagon. The vehicle was then backed beneath the piano, with the box upon the platform. The oil-cloth was placed in the case, so that we could cover the instrument after it had been deposited in the box.

Kit and I had hewn four timbers of the length of the wagon, on opposite sides, like a railroad sleeper. Raising the vehicle with levers, we placed these sticks under the wheels. As we lifted up the wagon, the box was elevated so as to enclose the instrument. The timbers under the wheels were each about six inches thick, and when we had them in position, the bottom of the piano was not an inch from the bottom of the case. We then drove our wedges between the two timbers, on each of which rested two of the wheels, securely blocked. The wagon rose till the ropes which supported the piano were slackened, and we untied and removed them. The instrument rested on heavy pads in the bottom of the box, so that we had no trouble in pulling out the ropes. Covering the piano with the oil-cloth, we screwed on the lid of the case. By this time it was dark, though we had begun early in the morning.

The next day we made an inclined plane of cotton-wood sticks, upon which to run the wagon down upon level ground. This we did by hand, and then we were ready to hitch on the horses. We did not intend to haul it down to the landing till we heard the whistle of the steamer, for the boat would wait a whole day for half a ton of freight on her down trip. But it was three days more before we heard any whistle.

After we had restored the house to its former condition, Ella and I wandered in the woods and along the banks of the river, waiting impatiently for the expected signal. I had dressed myself in my best clothes, discarding forever my hunting-frock and skin cap. I thought I was a pretty good-looking fellow, and Ella said as much as this to me.

At last we heard the whistle, and Kit and I hastened to hitch on the horses. We placed all the baggage on the wagon with the piano-case, and for the last time I drove old Firefly and Cracker down to the landing. A dozen men lifted the piano from the wagon, and placed it on the deck of the steamer. The trunks and other baggage were carried on board; and, after the deck hands had taken in twenty cords of wood, the whistle sounded again.

"Good by, Kit," said I, as I grasped his rough hand. "May God bless and keep you. I hope I shall see you again."

"It mought be, and it mought not; leastwise I don't reckon you will, if you don't come here. But good by, boy. I hope everything will allus go well with you; and if you kin, just kim up here and see me. Good by, boy."

Kit displayed more emotion than I had ever seen him exhibit before, and I found it difficult to suppress a rising tear. Mr. Gracewood and his family shook hands with him, and left their best wishes for his future prosperity and happiness.

"Good by, Mr. Greasewood. You are a good man, and you will allus be happy. Don't forget old Kit."

"I never shall," protested Mr. Gracewood, as the old hunter stepped on shore; and that was the sentiment in all our hearts.

The bell rang, the boat started, and we waved our adieus to the old man on shore, who stood gazing solemnly and sadly at us. The wheels of the steamer were turning, and as I gazed upon the familiar shore, I realized that I was departing, perhaps forever, from my FIELD AND FOREST.