

FICTION

David Cory

Hawk Eye

A PUBLIC DOMAIN BOOK

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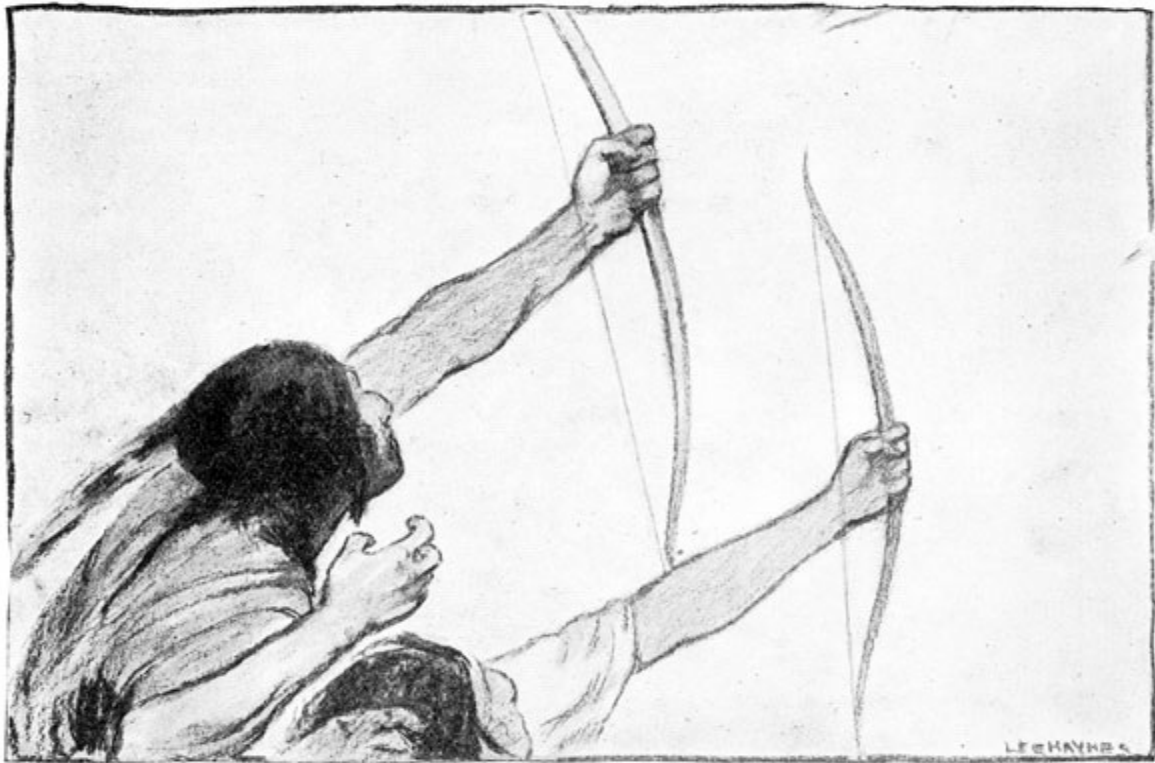
by DAVID CORY



The Little Indian Series







THE SHAFTS SPED TO THEIR MARKS AND TWO BIRDS FLUTTERED AND FELL TO EARTH.

HAWK EYE

BY

DAVID CORY

Author of

"LITTLE INDIAN," and others



GROSSET & DUNLAP

PUBLISHERS NEW YORK

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Printed in the United States of America

FOREWORD

There is a secure immortality and a depth of intuition in the utterance of Wordsworth, the peer of nature's poets, when from his pastoral reed he strikes the notes:

"The child is father of the man."

Nothing could be more insistently and persistently true of the Indian child--the girl to be the mother of warriors, the boy to become a hero and the father of future "braves."

It goes back, all of it, to a heredity born of three vital and vitalizing forces. The Indian holds with steadfastness and devotion to his many and weird ceremonies, but these all lead him back to the supreme, piloting force of his life, his unfailing faith in the Great Mystery.

The altar stairs to the spirit world are hills, buttressed by granite; trees that talk with the winds--whispers from the spirit world; the thunder of the waterfall--the voice of the Great Mystery; stars--the footprints of warriors treading the highways of the Happy Hunting Ground. In all of these he sees God.

Falling into communion with this happy philosophy of life, the glory of Indian motherhood crosses our path--and there are few things more beautiful. When the day of expectation dawns upon her, she seeks the solitude of all the majesty in which from childhood she has seen the footprints of God--revels, communes, rehearses to herself the heroism of the greatest hero of her tribe, and all that the impress of it may be felt upon the master man, the miracle of whose life has been entrusted to her to work out.

For the first two full years of his life, a spiritual hand guides his steps. There, in struggle and patience and self-denial, he must learn all of nature's glad story.

His grandparents then take him into their school. He learns to ride before he can walk; he is taught the use of the bow and arrow, which means hitting the mark, keenness of vision, a steady aim, precision, so that when the crisis comes he is ready--an ample reason for the brave, effective and self-reliant conduct of the Indian soldier on the fields of France in the World War.

Deep breathing in the open air, giving full lung power; self-denial, giving strength of limb and endurance in the race; fellowship with all of nature's winsome and wild moods; a discerning will power; a steadfast reliance upon the guiding hand of the Great Spirit, empower the Indian boy to stand on all the high hills of history and challenge any militant force that may confront him.

The sphere is complete; Boy: Mother: God.



Leader of the Rodman Wanamaker Historical
Expeditions to the North American Indian

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Any writer who adds to the number of books on that ever fascinating subject, the American Indian, must owe thanks to many authors who have written about the Indians. My special thanks, for information concerning the customs and legends of the Sioux, are given to:

Joseph Kossuth Dixon, author of *The Vanishing Race*,

George Bird Grinnell, author of *When Buffalo Ran*,

Charles A. Eastman, author of *Indian Boyhood*,

Lewis Spence, author of *The Myths of the North American Indians*.

Grateful acknowledgment is made, also, of valuable information found in the *Thirty-Second Report of the Bureau of American Ethnology*.

DAVID CORY

CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I WILD GEESE	13
II PLANS AND PELTS	20
III LOADING THE CANOES	28
IV JEALOUS SLOW DOG	34
V HAWK EYE'S OFFERING	40
VI THE BEAR	47
VII THE KILL	51
VIII THE PELT IS REMOVED	57
IX THE RAPIDS	61
X THE BEAVER DAM	67
XI TOEPRINTS IN THE SAND	76
XII ACROSS THE PRAIRIE	83
XIII THE BOYS ARE TAKEN PRISONERS	89
XIV HAWK EYE'S REVENGE	96
XV TWO GOOD SHOTS	102
XVI OHITKA IS WOUNDED	108
XVII THE TRADING POST	113
XVIII JOURNEY'S END	120

HAWK EYE

CHAPTER I

WILD GEESE

Slow Dog, Medicine Man, looked out of his lodge. Wild geese were honking overhead. To the Indian it meant the return of spring.

"I must be the first to kill one," muttered Slow Dog. Entering his lodge, he presently came out with bow and arrows. Hastening toward a bend in the river which formed a sheltered cove, he hid among a clump of willow bushes and waited in the hope that the birds might come down to feed.

Slow Dog was not the only one to notice the geese, however. Two boys, one about fifteen years of age, the other, close to thirteen, had also heard the honking.

"Get your bow and arrows," cried Hawk Eye, the elder, darting into his tepee. The younger boy, Raven Wing, ran to his lodge for his weapons. In a few minutes both were hurrying to the river.

"There's Slow Dog hiding in the bushes," whispered Raven Wing. "He wishes to be the first to bring one to earth."

"Leave him there," answered Hawk Eye, noticing that the flock, headed by an old gander, had slightly altered its course. "The geese are making for the lake." Breaking into a run, the boys headed for Big Stone Lake, from whose southern boundary issued the "sky-tinted waters" of the Minnesota River.

As they hurried through the timber belt that bordered the river's edge, Raven Wing remarked, "they may come down in the marsh."

Ice still lay thick upon the lake, but on the shallower waters it had begun to melt under the increasing warmth of the sun.

"Can they see us?" asked Hawk Eye as Raven Wing, who was in the lead, stopped at the further end of the grove.

"No. We have yet time to run across this open space," answered the younger boy.

On reaching a thicket of willows, the boys halted; then crept in to almost the edge of a frozen stretch of swamp.

"Here they come!" whispered Raven Wing. As the flock settled on the marshland, Hawk Eye fitted an arrow to his bow. "I'll take the one close to the leader," he said. Almost simultaneously Raven Wing let fly his arrow. The feathered ash wood shafts sped to their marks and two birds fluttered and fell to earth. Alarmed at the fall of their comrades, the flock rose in the air, but before they could get beyond arrow range, two more birds dropped to earth.

"We've outwitted Slow Dog," chuckled Hawk Eye, as he made his way over the half-frozen ground to pick up his birds.

"He must return empty-handed," laughed Raven Wing, retrieving his arrows from the birds he had slain. "What do you intend to do with your first kill?" he asked.

"Give it to Old Smoky Wolf," answered Hawk Eye. "The goose first slain in the Spring is always made the occasion for a feast."

"I will give mine to my stepfather, Black Eagle," said Raven Wing. "He will be our chief when Old Smoky Wolf takes the trail of departed warriors."

"Because you have outwitted him, Slow Dog will now bear another grudge against you," went on Hawk Eye.

"Perhaps it were better had I not seen the geese," sighed Raven Wing. "I would not be the cause for further trouble between him and my stepfather."

"Slow Dog would find one if it suited his fancy," said Hawk Eye. "He has a tongue with two ends, like a serpent's. But he has no need to look for an excuse. He has not forgotten that it was you who discovered the buffalo herd during the great blizzard and so saved us all from starvation. Had you not done so, he would have succeeded in convincing many that the famine had been sent by the gods to punish us all for allowing your mother to hunt with the men. You, he hates. But for you, he might have persuaded the tribe to elect him chief in place of Old Smoky Wolf."

"He hates Black Eagle," said Raven Wing, sadly.

"Because he knows our warriors will choose Black Eagle to succeed Old Smoky Wolf," added Hawk Eye.

As the boys neared camp, Slow Dog came out of the bushes by the river bank. A scowl spread over his face on seeing the dead geese. "He is a great hunter when the birds fly down to be killed," he sneered.



SLOW DOG CAME OUT OF THE BUSHES BY THE RIVER BANK.

"Had they not changed their course, your arrow would have slain one," answered Raven Wing, quietly.

Slow Dog turned on his heel and walked to his tepee. The two boys continued on their way. Presently they halted beside Old Smoky Wolf's lodge. At the sound of approaching footsteps, the aged chief had bade his wife go out to greet whoever the visitors might be.

Hawk Eye handed her one of the birds he had slain. "Tis the first goose brought to earth. Hawk Eye would present it to our chief," explained the boy. As he and Raven Wing were about to turn away, Old Smoky Wolf appeared in the doorway of the lodge. He gravely thanked Hawk Eye on learning of the gift.

"You both shall come to the feast," he added kindly. The boys thanked him and as they turned away, a smile spread over Old Smoky Wolf's wrinkled face.

"My tribe are not women. A brave is no stranger in my village. These boys will become great hunters. At the sound of their moccasins the beaver will lie down to be killed," grunted the old chief.



CHAPTER II

PLANS AND PELTS

The sun grew warmer. The snow melted and trickled in little rivulets down to the river. Crocuses bloomed and red-winged blackbirds cried amid the yellowing willows in the bottoms. At last the ice broke in the river and the waters rushed madly along between its banks.

The hunters, who had been industrious all winter, gathered together the pelts of the animals they had killed. Buffalo robes and deer skins, together with pelts of minks, martins, foxes, wolves, beavers, bears, fishers, otters and raccoons. Thousands of muskrat skins were also made up into bundles.

The packs were loaded into canoes and the hunters set off down stream for the trading post at Mendota.

Raven Wing and Hawk Eye watched the canoes for some time. When the last frail craft had turned the bend in the river, Raven Wing said to Hawk Eye, "Let us make the trip also, and take our pelts to the trading post."



RAVEN WING AND HAWK EYE WATCHED THE CANOES FOR SOME TIME.

"Will your stepfather allow you to go on so long a trip?" asked Hawk Eye.

"I can but ask him," answered Raven Wing.

"We will go, you and I, if he agrees," said Hawk Eye. "I have no father to ask permission of. Besides, I am two years older than you. My mother I know will give her consent."

Presently both boys were on their way to their lodges. Bending Willow, Raven Wing's mother, looked up as her son stood before her.

"I would like to take the pelts I have cured from my winter's hunting to the trading post. Hawk Eye plans to go also and we can make the journey together," he announced in a low voice.

Bending Willow regarded the tall, strong boy for several minutes before she answered him.

"I have no objection, son," she answered quietly. "But you must receive permission from your stepfather."

"Will you speak a good word for me?" said Raven Wing.

"I will, my son," answered Bending Willow. "I know that you will be careful. You are strong and tall for your years. You are a fine hunter; you know the river; your canoe is well made."

As she finished speaking, Black Eagle strode up.

"The hunters are well on their way," he said. "The last canoe is now out of sight."

"Raven Wing wishes to take his pelts to the trading post," announced Bending Willow.

Black Eagle turned to his stepson. "You wish to go?" he asked.

"Yes," replied the boy. "Hawk Eye will go with me. He has many fine skins, also."

"You have had no experience as a trader," said Black Eagle. "The pale faces at the post will offer you foolish trinkets for your good pelts. They may even make you dull and foolish with their minne wauken, (firewater) and when your eyes are heavy-lidded and your mind falters, strip you of your pack."

"I will learn by watching our hunters when they offer their pelts," answered Raven Wing. "I will not be deceived by trinkets, nor will I taste the firewater."

"I see no reason why he should not go," said Black Eagle after a silence of several minutes. "How does his mother look upon this adventure?" he added, turning to Bending Willow.

"He must go some time. I am willing," she answered simply.

"Hawk Eye goes with you?" asked Black Eagle.

"He is now asking permission of his mother," replied Raven Wing.



"When do you plan to go?" inquired Bending Willow.

"At once," said Raven Wing.

"That is wise," said Black Eagle. "The boys will easily catch up to the hunters if they ply their paddles with vigor." He did not add that there was safety in numbers, not wishing to needlessly alarm Bending Willow. He could see that she was concerned over the adventure, although she tried to hide her feelings.

The matter being settled, Raven Wing strode over to Hawk Eye's lodge. Since the death of Running Deer, Hawk Eye had taken his father's place with credit. Being two years older than Raven Wing, he naturally had had more experience. Notwithstanding his advantage, in age he was no taller nor stronger than the younger boy.

As Raven Wing neared the tepee, he heard Hawk Eye's mother, Light Between Clouds, say in a low voice;

"You are my only support since the death of Running Deer."

"Sure, Mother," answered Hawk Eye, "but you would not have me always remain in our village. Hawk Eye is now a man; he has a mother in his wigwam, but he need not ask her permission to go on the hunt."

"'Tis a long journey to the trading post," answered Light Between Clouds. "You have had no experience at bargaining with the palefaces. Why not wait and go with the next band of trappers? There will be another party setting out soon."

"They will merely trade in my pelts with their own and I shall have nothing to say," cried Hawk Eye. "Besides, I would like to gain experience first-hand. I am strong. I can handle my father's gun with the best of the hunters. I am a boy no longer. Comes another snow and I shall be a warrior."



CHAPTER III

LOADING THE CANOES

"You are my only son," sighed Light Between Clouds, gazing lovingly upon the stalwart form of Hawk Eye. "You are the main support of your sister and me. I am loath to give my consent. It is a long journey to the trading post at Mendota."

"Black Eagle, my stepfather, is willing that I should go," broke in Raven Wing.

"And what does Bending Willow say?" inquired Light Between Clouds.

"She agrees with my stepfather," answered Raven Wing.

"Then you have my permission to go," said Light Between Clouds, turning to Hawk Eye. "And may the Great Spirit look kindly upon your adventure." Without further words, she turned on her heel and walked toward a nearby lodge.

"So your mother is willing that you should go," said Raven Wing.

"Yes, she has given her consent, as you have heard," answered Hawk Eye.

"Why did she leave us so suddenly?" asked Raven Wing, doubtfully.

"She has gone for moccasins, I think," replied Hawk Eye. "My grandmother is skilful at making them; she always keeps a supply on hand."

"You have more pelts than I have," remarked Raven Wing, lingering a moment to watch Hawk Eye deftly pack the skins in several bundles of convenient size.

"We will need two canoes; yours and mine," said Hawk Eye. "But should one be damaged during the trip, we can get along with one. We must lose no time in starting."

"I will be ready as soon as you are," answered Raven Wing. He returned to his lodge, gathered together his pelts, which were already packed in several bundles, and carried them down to the river. Hawk Eye, having more experience, attended to the loading of the frail vessels.

During the loading and packing, Ohitika, Hawk Eye's favorite dog, watched the proceedings in silence. Except for an occasional wag of his tail, he stood still, showing no impatience.

"I would like to take Ohitika," said Hawk Eye. "He is my favorite dog, my friend. My father found him in a deserted Chippeway village five years ago. He was but a puppy then, his mother and the rest of the litter had been killed by wolves, and father discovered him lying in an old woodchuck hole. Father bundled him in his blanket and brought him home to me. I named him Ohitika because he was so brave even as a pup. At first he was my playmate, but he has become my hunting companion. I hate to leave him behind. But to make room for him it will be necessary to place one of my packs in your canoe."



"That can easily be done," answered Raven Wing. "I have fewer packs than you."

"I shall take my father's gun, also," went on Hawk Eye, as he transferred a bundle of pelts to Raven Wing's canoe. "I am glad that I have learned to use it. It is a fine gun, as Running Deer, my father, often said. He was not given to boast of his prowess as a hunter, but always claimed it was due to his gun that he rarely missed the mark."

"I must have a gun," cried Raven Wing. "A fine gun, like yours. Do you think my stock of pelts will bring me one?"

"If you are clever at trading," answered Hawk Eye with a chuckle. "And if not," he added kindly, "you shall have some of mine to fill in."

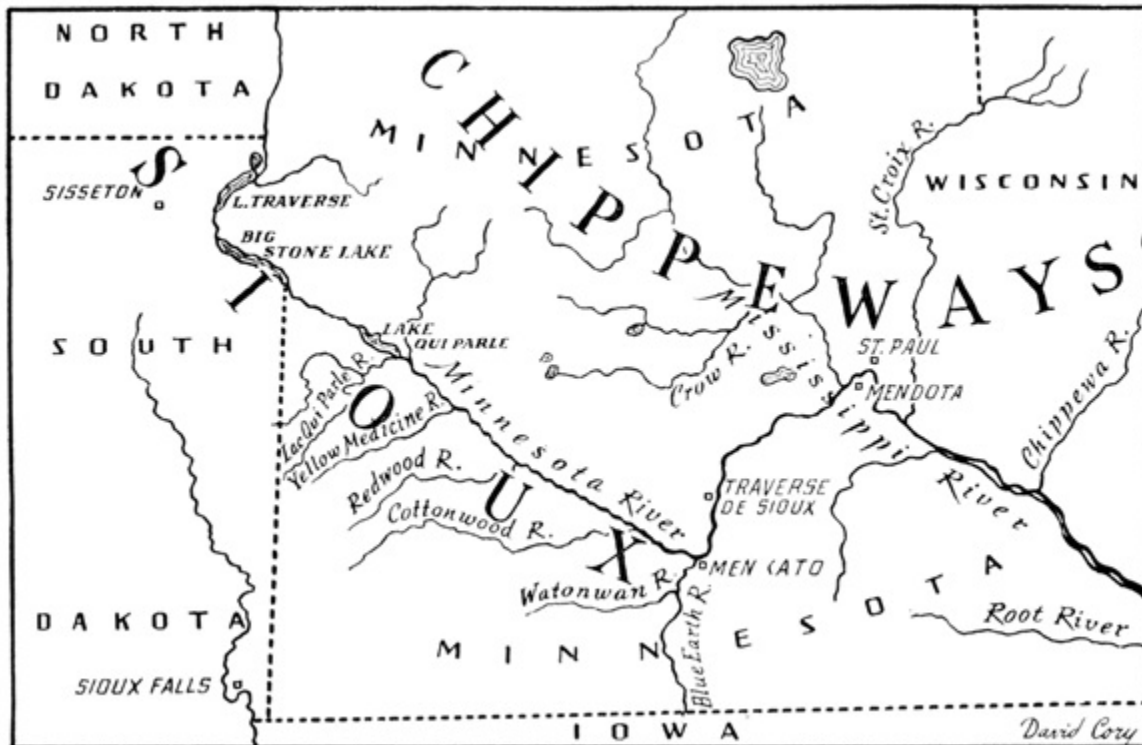
When the last pack had been carefully loaded, Hawk Eye looked critically at his work. "You have displayed much skill," observed Black Eagle, who came up at that moment.

"I took pains to watch the hunters load their craft at sunup," said Hawk Eye.

"Safe carriage depends on good loading as well as skill with the paddles," said Black Eagle. "Be sure you re-load as well after making portage below Lac Qui Parle. You will come to a succession of rapids after leaving the lake behind you."

Black Eagle might have said more had not Bending Willow at that point arrived with a bundle.

"I have brought you maple sugar," she explained, handing the package to Raven Wing. "'Tis some that I had on hand from the sugar camp."



As she finished speaking, Light Between Clouds came running toward them.

"These dried buffalo tongues will come in handy should you not find plenty of game," she cried, giving the bundle to Hawk Eye.

Sensing that the departure was at hand, Ohitika waited no longer, but leaped lightly into his master's craft. Stepping into their canoes, the boys raised their paddles, then dipped them into the water and made for the middle of the river.

CHAPTER IV

JEALOUS SLOW DOG

From his tepee Slow Dog gloomily watched the departure of Raven Wing and Hawk Eye, and his roving eye fell on the graceful figure of Bending Willow, who was waving a brave farewell to her only son, now fast becoming a young brave.

Bending Willow was the daughter of a haughty chief of the Spirit Lake and Leaf Dweller Sioux, and was considered the most beautiful woman in the tribe. When widowed at the age of twenty, she had bravely assumed the care and bringing up of her son.

Slow Dog had early realized that if he married her his influence in the tribe would be greatly increased, and resenting her preference to cherish in widowhood the memory of her husband, had been a persistent although an unsuccessful suitor.

The day had come, however, when Slow Dog's tepee grew lonely, and many hours had been spent near that of Taopee, whose fat daughter did beadwork while Slow Dog played on a reed flute. In due course of time a pony, two guns and some blankets had secured the bride, who, veiled with a blanket was taken to her lover's lodge and left there by a friend.

From then on Slow Dog was busy with practical things, for the father-in-law's family must be provided with game for a year, or until a little papoose should swing from a lodge pole. Notwithstanding that his lodge was no longer lonely, the heart of Slow Dog still yearned for the beautiful Bending Willow.

In the early part of the previous autumn Bending Willow had returned from the wild rice fields where she and the women of the tribe had reaped a goodly harvest. Assisted by a young squaw named Wadutah, she had pitched her tepee in one of the villages of the Sisseton Sioux along the southern shore of Big Stone Lake.

Black Eagle, a great warrior and a wise counsellor, was generally regarded as the successor to Old Smoky Wolf when the aged chief should take the trail of departed warriors. Out of deference to the memory of his friend, Lone Star, Black Eagle had long refrained from approaching Bending Willow, whom he had always admired. But just before the winter season had set in, he had pressed his suit and Bending Willow had consented to become his wife, for she, too, had often marked the prowess and wisdom of her husband's companion. A marriage feast had been celebrated and she had entered Black Eagle's lodge.

Slow Dog had long coveted the leadership of the tribe. He had plotted secretly to overthrow the rule of Old Smoky Wolf, but his efforts had been in vain. Black Eagle's popularity had been greatly increased by his marriage, which only added to the jealousy of Slow Dog.



"With Bending Willow in his lodge, Black Eagle will prove a worthy successor to Old Smoky Wolf," Slow Dog had often heard old squaws remark, nodding their gray heads over their beadwork.

Slow Dog had not joined the braves, women and children who had gathered at the river bank to speed the departure of the boys. His long-nursed jealousy kept him away from the crowd of well-wishers. But his keen eyes noted as Hawk Eye and Raven Wing rounded a bend in the river and were lost to sight, that Black Eagle had stepped into his canoe and paddled northward.

Was Black Eagle merely going to fish in Big Stone Lake, from whose southern boundary flowed the Minnesota River, he wondered, or was he bound for the Red River of the North, which flowed from the upper end of the lake to Hudson

Bay?

Presently Bending Willow returned to her tepee which stood on a point of high ground overlooking the river. From his lodge Slow Dog could see her slender form as she busied herself preparing food. Wild thoughts filled his mind. Some dark night it might be possible to seize her, place her in his canoe and glide down the river. He pictured her in the frail craft as he swiftly paddled downstream, past the tepees of the Warpeton Sioux. He knew every twist and turn of the river. At Mankate, meaning "Blue Earth" in his language, it turned sharply to the north and east. Bending Willow should see Mendota, "the meeting of the waters," for there the beautiful Minnesota completed its long journey of four hundred miles and mingled its "sky-tinted waters" with those of the Mich-e-see-be, "Father of Running Waters."

Not there, however, would he beach his canoe. He would go further; past the high white cliffs along the shore to Kaposia, and down the Mich-e-see-be, upon whose western bank dwelt the Medawakantens. Then up the Canon River to its head waters where stood the villages of the Wahpekutes, the fourth tribe of the Minnesota Sioux. There he would dwell with Bending Willow, the Fawn of the Dakotas, the most beautiful woman of the Sioux nation.



FROM HIS LODGE SLOW DOG COULD SEE HER SLENDER FORM AS SHE BUSIED HERSELF PREPARING FOOD.

CHAPTER V

HAWK EYE'S OFFERING

Hawk Eye and Raven Wing pointed their canoes to the middle of the river and bent to their paddles. In spite of its many twists and turns and the menace of fallen trees floating in the channel, they made good progress.

The river ran through a narrow valley, with hillsides covered with white flowers and bottom lands dotted with yellow cowslips. Birds, busy with their nesting, winged their way through the balmy air. Willows, cottonwoods, elms and soft maples made a leafy border along the shore.

Toward late afternoon they came to a widening of the river.

"Lac Qui Parle," Hawk Eye called back, slowing down that Raven Wing might come alongside. "I have heard my father say that in the paleface tongue. It means the 'lake that speaks.'"

"Black Eagle once told me that the Mich-e-see-be has a great widening which is called Lake Pepin by the white man. It is bordered by high bluffs and cliffs so steep that very few cedars can take root," answered Raven Wing.

"I have heard my father tell that only low hills guard the Minnesota until its fringe of trees thickens and it enters the big woods. The hills change to bluffs that creep closer to the water. At the mouth of the Blue Earth River there is but a narrow strip of sand. From there on the Minnesota makes a bend upward toward the land of snow and the rising sun," said Hawk Eye.

"It is a long river," said Raven Wing. "We shall have dipped our paddles many, many times before we come to the trading post."

"Have you fully decided to exchange your pelts for a gun?" inquired Hawk Eye.

"Yes," answered Raven Wing quickly. "I would like one like yours."

"It is a fine weapon, as I have often told you," Hawk Eye said. "My father was proud of it. He kept our lodge well supplied with meat before an Objibway's bullet ended his life."

"Let us make camp," Raven Wing suggested after a time. "I see a sandy beach. Up to now the shore has been bordered with great flat rocks."

"It is too early," Hawk Eye said. "The weather is fine. It is better to keep to our paddles until sundown. Take care that your canoe does not grate upon a hidden rock. There are many in the water."

Raven Wing was glad when his elder companion later turned toward shore for he was becoming a little tired. It required skill as well as strength to paddle the heavy laden canoes.

"My father's grandmother was a Wahpeton Sioux. Her tribe, called the People of the Leaves, used to build their movable tepees along the shores of this lake," said Raven Wing.



"That was many, many years ago. We shall have to sleep beneath a tree," answered Hawk Eye.

"My grandfather made his first offering to the Great Spirit here," went on Raven Wing. "He tossed his most beloved possession, a necklace of bear claws, into this very lake."

"It is a beautiful spot for such a ceremony," Hawk Eye said, thoughtfully. "I have not as yet made my offering to the Great Spirit."

Raven Wing made no answer. After his father's death his mother had arranged the ceremony for him. He now wished that she had chosen for that occasion the spot on which his grandfather had stood.

As the canoes scraped bottom, Hawk Eye said; "I will here offer my most valued possession to the Great Spirit." Stepping on shore, he opened a doeskin pouch that was fastened to his belt.

"Your necklace of panther claws!" exclaimed Raven Wing as Hawk Eye drew forth his prize trophy.

"Yes," Hawk Eye answered, quietly. For a moment he held it in his open palm for a last look. Close by rose a great boulder of granite. Clenching his fist about his most beloved possession, he climbed to the top of the rock and stood facing the lake for some little time. Then, holding the necklace in his right hand, he cried;

"O Great Spirit, I implore you to command the Sun, Moon and Stars to make my path smooth that I may reach the brow of the first hill.



HE CLIMBED TO THE TOP OF THE ROCK AND STOOD FACING THE LAKE FOR SOME LITTLE TIME.

"O Great Spirit, I implore you to command the Winds, Clouds, Rain and Snow to make smooth my path that I may reach the brow of the second hill.

"O Great Spirit, I implore you to command the Hills, Valleys, Rivers, Lakes, Trees and Grasses to make smooth my path that I may reach the brow of the third hill.

"O Great Spirit, I implore you to command the Birds, Animals and Insects to make smooth my path that I may reach the brow of the fourth hill.

"O Great Spirit, make me strong in heart and limb to reach the brow of the fifth hill, upon whose summit are the Happy Hunting Grounds.

"O Great Spirit, receive my most precious offering," and he flung the necklace far out into the lake.



CHAPTER VI

THE BEAR

On awakening the next morning after a restful night, Hawk Eye said:

"Fresh meat tastes better than pemmican. I will take my bow and arrows and see what game I can find. In the meantime you might gather some dry wood and start a fire."

After a plunge in the cool waters of the lake, he set out. For some distance he traveled to the north, and on emerging from the timber, he came upon a hillside covered with low bushes. He had set an arrow against the bowstring in readiness for whatever kind of game might suddenly start up. As he looked about, a rabbit darted across an open space. But before it could reach cover, Hawk Eye's arrow brought it tumbling to the ground.

"Enough for our morning meal," he observed. After retrieving the arrow, he slung the dead rabbit over his shoulder and started on his way back to camp.

As there was no special trail leading toward the water, he followed a course indicated by several landmarks he had made note of when first setting out. After crossing an open space, he paused at the edge of the timber belt that lined the banks of the river. He thought he had heard a slight noise in the underbrush. As the sound was not repeated, he strode in among the trees, setting an arrow against the bowstring. Presently he heard a pounding noise followed by a wheeze, and as he peered among the tree trunks, he made out the form of a huge black bear.

Surprised for a moment, the bear halted; then with a grunt took a step forward. Unprepared for such big game, Hawk Eye dropped into a backward walk, keeping his eyes fixed upon the animal, which now quickened its steps. Raising his bow and continuing to step backwards, he aimed an arrow at the heart of the bear and let fly. With a cry of pain and rage it tore the barbed shaft from its bleeding side and rushed at him. Before he could fit another arrow to the string, his heel caught on a projecting root and he found himself sprawling upon the ground. Springing to his feet, he attempted to recover his bow which had dropped from his hand, but before he could pick it up, the infuriated animal was almost upon him. Avoiding its outstretched paws, he ran toward the river.

As he went crashing through the tangled underbrush, he felt for his hunting knife. Although somewhat relieved at finding it still in his belt, he knew that his strength and skill would be unequal to the task of slaying the ferocious animal. His principal hope lay in reaching the spot where Raven Wing had kindled the fire for their morning meal. Once there ahead of the bear he could rely on Raven Wing and the loaded gun he had left with him.

Soon, however, this hope disappeared. The bear was gaining on him. Due to its great weight it easily crashed through the thick underbrush and tangled vines that impeded his own progress.

Closer came the great lumbering animal and he could almost feel its hot breath upon his neck as he fought his way through a dense thicket toward the river.

Continuing on as best he could he came to an open space, covered with wide flat rocks. A short distance ahead rose a giant boulder. Scattered about its base lay a number of big rocks. Leaping upon one of them, he managed to jump to a narrow ledge upon the almost perpendicular side of the great boulder. From there he worked his way up to its flat-topped surface by clinging to crevices and projecting pieces of granite.



CHAPTER VII

THE KILL

The bear had made straight for the big boulder. Discovering that even by standing on its hind feet it could not reach the ledge upon which Hawk Eye had leaped from the nearby rock, it came down on all fours and began to circle the base of the boulder. On coming to a point where the base extended for some considerable distance, it managed to climb up the steep incline by means of its strong claws. At a point further up, however, the flat surface of the summit projected like the rim of a hat and forced the panting animal to merely cling to its position. At length it managed to get one front paw over the edge. At once Hawk Eye stabbed it with his knife. Roaring with pain, it pulled it down. After a few minutes it worked its way to one side where the rim was less pronounced and getting a firm hold on a shelf of rock with its hind feet, again stretched over a front paw. Before Hawk Eye could use his knife its other paw came above the rim and its head appeared. Growling and showing its teeth, it dug the claws of its hind feet into the slanting rocky side and raised itself.

Hawk Eye had only his knife. No loose rocks lay upon the flat surface. Holding it firmly in his fist he began to maneuver for a fatal plunge at the animal's throat. But the knowing beast kept its head in motion, making it well nigh impossible for him to avoid her gaping jaws. For several minutes he attempted to plunge the sharp blade into its throat. Suddenly the foothold it had managed to maintain with its hind feet gave way, and in order to avoid plunging down the side of the great boulder, the bear desperately pressed its chin upon the top of the rim to keep from falling.

The animal's mouth now being closed by the pull-down of its body, and its head held rigid by its weight, Hawk Eye seized the opportunity he had been waiting for. Advancing cautiously with knife in hand, he came down on his knees and whipped the sharp blade across the side of its throat.

The hold of its front paws weakened, its head slipped off the ledge top, and its heavy body hurtled to the ground. For a short time the mortally wounded animal rolled about, moaning and pawing the ground until, with a final quiver, it lay still.



ITS HEAVY BODY HURTTLED TO THE GROUND.

Hawk Eye climbed down the rock and gazed silently at the huge body.

Then looking up into the sky, he murmured: "O Great Mystery, my heart is glad that you have aided me to gain a necklace of bear claws. My spirit sings because you have looked with favor upon the offering of my most beloved possession."

Squatting down beside the bear's body, he lifted one of the paws and carefully examined the great claws before commencing to remove them one by one with his knife.



When all had been cut away, he placed them in the doeskin pouch that hung at his belt. He also slit the pelt down the belly and cut a number of juicy steaks.

"I will return with Raven Wing for the pelt," he thought, as he retraced his steps to the spot where he had dropped his bow and quiver of arrows. After some little distance he came upon them and the body of the rabbit which he had killed.

As he made his way back to the shore, he noticed that the sun was high in the heavens. Raven Wing by this time must be wondering what had kept him away for so long a time. Quickening his steps into a run, he soon came to their beached canoes. A fire which had been kindled on the sand had burned down to a heap of dead ashes. He looked about for Raven Wing. He was nowhere in sight.



CHAPTER VIII

THE PELT IS REMOVED

Hawk Eye set the package of bear meat in one of the canoes and again looked about. Noticing that his gun had been taken from the canoe in which he had left it, he concluded that Raven Wing had grown tired of waiting for him to return.

Not having tasted food since the previous evening, he took out some pemmican and commenced to eat. His appetite somewhat satisfied, he stood up and again looked about him.

"I may as well go back and skin the bear. Raven Wing may not return for some little time," he thought. The morning had already slipped away and by the time the bear's pelt could be removed he realized that the sun would be low in the sky. So he set off without delay, stopping only at a tiny spring for a cool drink.



On nearing the spot where he had first encountered the bear, his ears caught the sound of some one treading softly. As he slipped behind a tree trunk and fitted an arrow to his bowstring, he heard Raven Wing's voice calling.

"Thought at first you might be the mate of the bear I killed a while ago," cried Hawk Eye, coming out into the open.

"What! You say you have slain a bear?" exclaimed Raven Wing, dropping a couple of prairie chickens which he had shot.

"Come, I will show you my kill," answered Hawk Eye.

"I was following your trail from the hillside when I caught sight of you at the edge of the timber," explained Raven Wing. "From what I now see of the trail I should judge you were being chased by the bear."

"I was," admitted Hawk Eye, with a grin. "But it was no laughing matter at the time, as you will soon see for yourself."

Presently they came to the rocky, flat open space. As Raven Wing advanced and caught sight of the animal's huge form lying close to the base of the giant boulder, he uttered a cry of amazement.

"What a bear!" he cried. "But look! Someone has already removed the claws."

"They are safe in my doeskin pouch," answered Hawk Eye. "I wished to make sure of a necklace of bear claws before leaving the body."

"The Great Spirit has rewarded you for sacrificing the necklace of panther claws," said Raven Wing in an awe-struck voice.

"He has indeed," agreed Hawk Eye. After a moment's silence Hawk Eye said, "Help me remove the pelt."

Without further words both boys set to work. It was no mean job they had undertaken. They found it necessary to cut down two strong young saplings with which to turn over the immense body. At length they were able to tear the hide clear of the carcass.

As Raven Wing bound it up in a neat, tight roll, he remarked, "I see you have already taken the choice cuts."

"They are in my canoe," answered Hawk Eye, wiping his blood-stained hands on the bear's head.

"We have another pelt to trade," chuckled Raven Wing, shouldering the package. "We had better start at once for the river. The sun is low."

"Yes," answered Hawk Eye. "I do not like the idea of leaving our canoes for so long a time. Let us make haste."



CHAPTER IX

THE RAPIDS

"Give me the pack," said Raven Wing, after some little distance. Hawk Eye placed it on the younger boy's shoulder and took the gun which he had been carrying. Examining it to satisfy himself that it was loaded, he dropped the barrel into the curve of his left arm. From the brow of the gentle sloping hill they could see the river bordered by trees through a narrow valley.

Great rocks of granite and limestone cropped out everywhere upon the treeless prairie and were turned a pinkish hue in the glow of the setting sun. As the sun sank lower in the west the boulders took on many fanciful shapes.

"Not so long ago buffaloes roamed this prairie," remarked Hawk Eye. "Now they graze further toward the land of the setting sun."

"We will have plenty of fresh meat for our evening meal," said Raven Wing.

"Yes, we have more than enough with the prairie hens you shot and the bear meat," chuckled Hawk Eye.

"You also killed a rabbit," added Raven Wing.

On arriving at the beach where their canoes lay, Hawk Eye unrolled the bear hide and spread it very carefully from one bow to another.

"At sunrise," he said, "I will scrape it clean with my knife. I think it will dry in the sun as we paddle and make a good pelt."

Raven Wing collected an armful of dry wood and started a fire. Before long both hungry boys were enjoying a hearty meal of prairie hen and rabbit meat. After a drink at the spring nearby, they spread their blankets beneath a tree and went to sleep.

At sunup Hawk Eye set to work on the bear pelt while Raven Wing re-kindled the fire and prepared their morning meal. When this was finished, he covered the smouldering embers with fresh earth and followed Hawk Eye to the beach. Pushing their canoes into the water, they bent to the paddles.



At this point the river was narrow. Again fallen trees blocked the channel. At times the boys found it necessary to push them out of the way. Progress was slow, and the sun was well up in the sky by the time they passed the mouth of a small river called The Last Stream With Trees.

"Fearless Bear told me the Minnesota coils like a snake. He spoke the truth," remarked Hawk Eye. "I have already counted eight turns in less distance than the eye can reach."

"The turns do not bother me," answered Raven Wing. "But I have heard that there are rapids further on. They may cause us trouble."

"We will make a portage," said Hawk Eye. "We cannot trust our pelts to the angry waters."

"Then we must unload the canoes and shoulder the packs," said Raven Wing. "That will not be easy."

"It will be hard work," agreed Hawk Eye.

Instead of going ashore for their midday meal, the boys ate pemmican while paddling. At sundown they ran the canoes ashore and prepared to make camp for the night. After a hearty meal of bear meat which had been well-cooked

the day before, they rolled themselves in their blankets and lay down for the night. For some little time they lay awake listening to the night noises. But they were weary with paddling, and in spite of the persistent calls of the whippoorwills, they at length fell into a sound sleep.

Hawk Eye was the first to awaken. Seeing Raven Wing still asleep, he quietly strode down to the river for a bath. As Raven Wing still slept on, Hawk Eye unpacked some pemmican and ate his morning meal. Presently Raven Wing awoke and seeing that Hawk Eye was about ready to launch the canoes, he hurried down to the river to bathe. He would have launched his own craft had not the elder boy wisely counseled him to first make a hearty meal. Before long they were both out on the river.

On coming to the rapids, Hawk Eye grounded his craft on a narrow strip of sand and unloaded. As soon as Raven Wing had placed his packs upon the sand, Hawk Eye said;

"You and I will shoulder my canoe and carry it beyond the rapids."

Waist-high in the tumbling waters they bore it to quiet water and laid it on the shore. When Raven Wing's canoe had been safely transported, they returned for the packs. One by one these were carried through the rapids without mishap. The canoes were then pushed into the water and reloaded. Once more the boys took their seats and paddled down stream.



CHAPTER X

THE BEAVER DAM

During the next few days the boys made good progress. They passed the Yellow Medicine, Sparrowhawk and Redwood rivers. On the fourth day when but a few miles above the mouth of the Cottonwood, Raven Wing said: "Let us go ashore. It is time we ate."

So they beached the canoes on a sandy shore. Hawk Eye took out pemmican and dried bear meat from a pack and sat down beside Raven Wing. When their hunger was satisfied, Hawk Eye said:

"I think there may be beavers upstream," pointing to a rivulet that emptied into the Minnesota a short distance from them. "If so, and there are many, we can come here later on and get pelts. Shall we see?"

"By all means," agreed Raven Wing. "Let us go at once."

Picking up their bows and arrows, they started off. Following the winding course of the stream for a considerable distance they came to a dam which held back the water and formed a fair-sized lake.

At once the boys knew that it had been built by beavers. The Musquash, sometimes called the muskrat, although it ought to be called the muskbeaver, because it is really a beaver and no rat at all, never builds dams nor digs canals. It has a flat tail like the beaver and not at all resembling the tapering tail of water rat. It builds houses, much like the beaver's, only smaller.

"We will not forget this spot," chuckled Raven Wing. "We will get many pelts on our next visit."

"No one shall learn of its location," added Hawk Eye. "We will get the pelts for ourselves."

"The dam is in fine condition," said Raven Wing, who had climbed up upon it.

Not a beaver was to be seen, however. The wary animals had dived out of sight at hearing the boys approach.



THE WARY ANIMALS HAD DIVED OUT OF SIGHT AT HEARING THE BOYS APPROACH.

"Fearless Bear once told me," remarked Raven Wing, "that hunters rarely see beavers building a dam. He says that they build at night and that it is no easy matter for a hunter to watch them."

"The musquash is easier to hunt," said Hawk Eye. "But he is less than half the size of the beaver; besides, his pelt is not so valuable."

"I've seen a beaver caught that weighed almost eighty pounds," said Raven Wing. "It had beautiful fur and a tail as big as a musquash."

"No fur on its tail," laughed Hawk Eye. "It's covered with rough scales. Beaver uses it to scull its way through the water."

"I wish the dam were larger," said Raven Wing. "Big dam, many beavers."

"There are plenty of beavers here," said Hawk Eye. "Enough for you and me unless some hunter comes across it before another snow."

As Raven Wing stepped off the dam and walked upstream along the bank, he said; "Fearless Bear told the hunters one night when I was in his lodge, that he had seen a beaver dam near a great body of water that measured two hundred and sixty feet long and six feet high."

"Might not have been so many beavers at work on it," said Hawk Eye. "Probably it took a long time to build it."



As the boys strolled along they noted the number of stumps which were all that remained of the trees which the beavers had cut down and divided into short lengths, such as could be carried by mouth when building the dam.

"Sharp teeth to cut these trees," remarked Raven Wing. "Some of these stumps are two feet thick."

"Did Fearless Bear tell you how the beaver works?" asked Hawk Eye.

"He supports himself by his tail when he rears on his hind legs to cut down a tree," answered Raven Wing. "With his teeth he cuts the wood as neatly as a hunter cuts it with his hatchet. No nibbling like a mouse," went on Raven Wing, "he makes a neat job, and can even make the tree fall in the direction he wishes."

"What else did Fearless Bear say?" asked Hawk Eye.

"When the beaver has cut the tree into short lengths he drags the cuttings to the place where he is to build the dam. He brings the branches, too, in his mouth and rolls stones along the shore to pile on them and hold them in place. At first the dam is rough and loose, but the beavers keep constantly at work, smoothing and pressing it down and stopping all the gaps with clay and pebbles from the bank. As time goes on it becomes overgrown with grass and bushes and looks as if it were a natural bank, just like this one," said Raven Wing.

"After a freshet, beaver must make repairs," remarked Hawk Eye.



"Fearless Bear told me he once made holes in a dam and during the night watched the beavers patch up the damaged places," laughed Raven Wing.

"I wouldn't care to be a beaver," said Hawk Eye. "It must be tiresome to live under the ice roof of a pond. I've noticed how the beavers sport and play when the ice breaks up."

Raven Wing turned on his heel and pointed to a beaver lodge. It stood not far from the bank, its roof above the water line. Both boys were well aware that the beaver builds the doorway to his lodge well below the freezing line. As they both stood looking at the deserted lodge, Raven Wing said; "Beaver often has two openings down deep in the water. Through these hidden entrances he drags branches and pieces of bark up to his dining room, which being above the water line, is dry and comfortable."

"Come," said Hawk Eye. "Let us go back to our canoes now. We have seen enough for today."

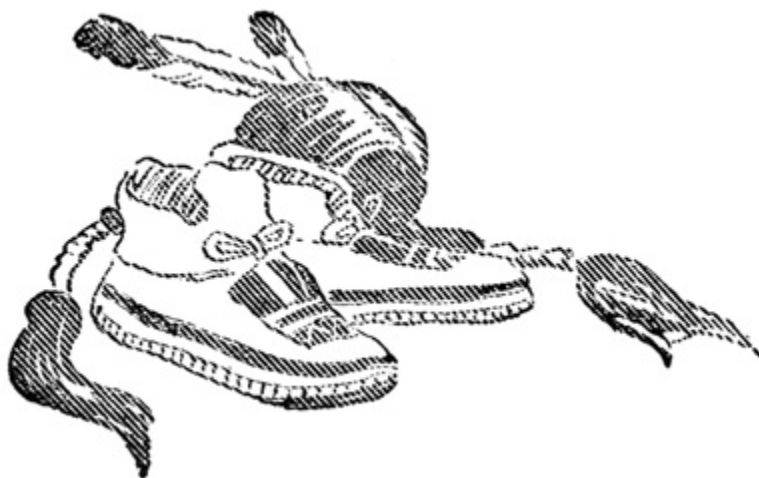
As they strode toward the Minnesota River, Raven Wing said; "I shall trade some of my pelts for steel traps. With these we can catch the beaver more easily than by spears."

"I will, too," said Hawk Eye.

"We will not have to bait the traps," went on Raven Wing. "Fearless Bear tells me to merely rub them with some odor or essence of which the animals are fond."

"That will be easy," grinned Hawk Eye.

Presently they rounded a bend in the little stream and came to the spot where they had beached their canoes. To their dismay they found that they had disappeared.



CHAPTER XI

TOEPRINTS IN THE SAND

For a moment the boys stood silent and uncertain. Hawk Eye was the first to speak. "Follow me," he cried, and ran down the bank of the little stream. He soon came to a sandy point where its waters mingled with those of the Minnesota.

"Look," he said. "One of our heavy loaded canoes went aground here," and he pointed to deep marks in the sand. "And here are the toeprints of the thief who pushed them off."

"He has gone downstream with them," said Raven Wing. "His canoe was probably caught in the swift current as it rounded the point and was carried downstream before he could tow the canoes into the big river, and his towline tightened across the point and grounded our first canoe here. Then he came back and pushed it off and around the point."

"We must follow," said Hawk Eye. Keeping as close to the river as was possible, the boys set off at an easy lope. Presently they were forced to change their course, for the willows, cottonwoods, elms and soft maples that lined the banks made progress slow and difficult.

Leaving the narrow valley through which the river made continuous twists and turns, they hurried up the slope and soon found themselves on the treeless prairie, which stretched far away to the sky. As far as eye could reach not a tree could be seen. Except for great boulders of granite and limestone which dotted it here and there, the plain was covered with grass.

As they turned to follow a course parallel with that of the river, Raven Wing thoughtfully remarked:

"We are not sure that our canoes are being taken downstream."

"The thief," answered Hawk Eye, "would have to pass many Sioux villages on the banks of the river if he did otherwise. He will take the pelts to the trading post at Mendota."

"Yes, you are right," answered Raven Wing. "Why should he tow our heavy laden canoes upstream? And how would he account for their possession should he meet with any of our own people? We are two birds with broken wings. Paddles and current will carry the canoes faster than we can hope to run for any length of time."

"But we must get back our canoes," answered Hawk Eye.

Raven Wing made no answer. He slowly loosened the leather thong about his neck and opened a small doeskin bag that hung by a leather thong about his neck. Squatting down he took out the wing of a crow.

"I will make medicine," he said. After some little time he replaced the crow's wing in the doeskin bag and fastened the leather thong about his neck.

"The Great Mystery bids me remember how the river runs," he said.



"THE GREAT MYSTERY BIDS ME REMEMBER HOW THE RIVER RUNS," HE SAID.

"And how does it run?" asked Hawk Eye.

Tightening its string until the bow was shaped like a half moon, Raven Wing laid it upon the ground. Placing an arrow, pointed outward, at the center of the curved ash wood, he said, "This arrow points to the Ever Summer Land."

Setting another arrow, with feathered end against the bowstring at a point half way between the tips, he dropped a pebble beside it and said; "This arrow points to the Land of Snows."

When a third arrow, pointed outward, with two pebbles beside it, had been placed at one tip of the bow, he said;

"Thither lies the Land of the Rising Sun."

The fourth and last arrow he laid with stone head pointing outward, at the other tip of the bow. Then, having placed three pebbles beside it, he said;

"Thither lies the Land of the Setting Sun."

"The Great Mystery is kind," remarked Hawk Eye.

"He has bid me remember my stepfather's description of the Minnesota's course," answered Raven Wing.

"And now what do you propose to do?" asked Hawk Eye.

"We will make a trail across the prairie towards the rising sun straight as the flight of an arrow. Come; let us start,"

answered Raven Wing.

At once both boys set off at an easy lope. Ohitika bounded ahead, flushing a flock of ground sparrows which chattered loudly at the interruption to their grassy nest building. But to the clamor of their voices and whirring wings the dog failed to see a badger which was burrowing in the sod.

As the boys pressed on, larks and blue birds filled the air with song; prairie wolves skulked away to grove and swale, and rattlesnakes glided over moist places to rocky shelter.

High up in the sky a sand-hill crane, northward bound in lonely flight, sounded a far off call.

"'Tis a good omen," cried Hawk Eye.



CHAPTER XII

ACROSS THE PRAIRIE

As the sun rode slowly down the sky and passed the barriers of the low-hanging clouds, a herd of tiny prong-horned antelopes scampered near for a closer view of the boys and dog.

"Down, Ohitika!" Hawk Eye commanded. "We need fresh meat," he added, turning to Raven Wing.

"But they are beyond arrow flight," answered the younger boy.

"They are inquisitive animals," said Hawk Eye. "I will try to bring them nearer. Let us lie down and see if I cannot attract their attention."

Both boys dropped to the ground. Hawk Eye fastened a moccasin to one end of his bow and slowly waved it to and fro. In a few minutes an antelope came slowly toward them. Pausing now and again, it gradually came within range. In the meantime Raven Wing had set the head of an arrow against the string. At length he let it fly. The stricken animal gave a leap into the air and fell to the ground. Its frightened comrades galloped away and were out of range before Raven Wing could send out another arrow.



HAWK EYE FASTENED A MOCCASIN TO ONE END OF HIS BOW AND SLOWLY WAVED IT TO AND FRO.

The sun was now near its setting, so the boys decided to make camp close to a great boulder. From a clump of low bushes Raven Wing gathered enough dry twigs and leaves to make a small fire, and before long strips of antelope meat were roasting over the flames. The bushes grew around a tiny spring, at which they drank and satisfied their thirst before they sat down to eat.

When the meal was ended, Hawk Eye said: "Let us cut up the choice parts of the antelope into thin strips. These can be hung from a strip of hide and allowed to dry in the sun as we journey on."

For some little time before darkness came down the boys were busy preparing the meat for drying.

"We will get up with the sun," said Hawk Eye, as he stretched himself on the ground.

At the first pale tint of dawn the boys awoke. After drinking and bathing at the spring they ate heartily of the portion of well cooked meat that remained from their evening meal. Taking another long drink at the spring, they hung their bows from their shoulders and lifted the leather thong with the strips of meat from the bush tops.

"The wind and the sun will soon dry the meat," remarked Hawk Eye, taking hold of one end. Raven Wing grasped the other and they set off over the short, light green, hair-like grass of the upland. Dew glittered on stem and flower as the sun rose higher. Now and again the peep of the prairie chick or the call of the plover came to their ears. As they neared a rocky ridge a badger slipped into his den.

At length Raven Wing remarked, "Very soon we should come across a trail to the river."

"The trail of the paleface trader Renville?" inquired Hawk Eye.

"Yes; 'tis wide and well worn by the wheels of his carts and the hoofs of his oxen," answered Raven Wing.

As the sun reached the middle of the sky, Hawk Eye stopped. Dropping his end of the leather thong, he said;

"We have not yet found the trail. Let us spread apart. I will follow a line running between the land of Snows and the Rising Sun. You go forward slantingly toward the Ever Summer Land. But neither of us may go far without again setting face toward the Rising Sun. By so doing, one of us may come upon the trail as we journey toward the upward bend of the river."

"We must keep within the sound of each other's voice," cautioned Raven Wing.

"Yes," agreed Hawk Eye. "I will shoulder the meat. It is by now quite dry." Making a bundle of the strips, he set off at a slant towards the north. Raven Wing veered towards the south.

Before long he halted at a faint, distant call from Hawk Eye.

"He has come across the trail," said Raven Wing to himself. Turning toward the north, he broke into a run. As he came to the ridge of a low swell of ground, he saw Hawk Eye. In a few minutes he stood beside him.

"You have found the trail," he laughed, perceiving the sunken track made by cart wheels.

"Yes, but we must go fast to catch the thief," answered Hawk Eye. "We must gain a point of vantage on the bank ahead of him. Once there, we can lay plans to recover our stolen canoes."



CHAPTER XIII

THE BOYS ARE TAKEN PRISONERS

The sun set and it set again. Raven Wing and Hawk Eye pushed on across the prairie toward the Minnesota River. They had left the trail and were veering toward the north.

"It would not be wise to make the great ford called by the white men Sioux," Hawk Eye had said. "We must come at a fair distance from there down the river to a point where the banks are high and the timber heavy."

"We will continue to journey through the night until the river is in sight," answered Raven Wing.

Hawk Eye grunted in assent. Once only did they pause for water at a spring in the midst of a clump of cottonwood trees.

As the sun rose they neared the river and soon after they were camping not far from a bluff, eating their breakfast beside a small fire, which sent so thin a column of smoke into the air that it was almost dissipated before it reached the treetops.

When the meal was over, Raven Wing said:

"I will take Ohitika and keep watch over the river while you get some sleep." Armed with his bow and arrows, he strode off toward the brow of the bluff.

Hawk Eye loaded his gun and placed it against a tree, together with powder horn and bullet pouch. Then, throwing himself at full length on the green moss beneath the tree, he fell into a sound sleep.

Scarcely a quarter of an hour had passed when he was startled by the report of a gun, which was followed by a war cry from Raven Wing and a series of war whoops. At the same instant, and before he could attempt to rise, his legs and arms were pinioned to the ground by two Indians. For a minute Hawk Eye was paralyzed. Then the terrible reality of his position, the cry of warning from Raven Wing, and the sight of the thong with which his captors were about to bind him, brought him to his senses. With a display of strength that surprised his captors, he hurled them right and left. As one of them struggled to his feet, he received a blow from Hawk Eye's tomahawk that felled him; the other, fearing for his life, dodged behind a tree.

As Hawk Eye glanced quickly around in search of his gun which no longer rested against the tree, he saw Raven Wing between the tree trunks being hurried away by two other Indians. As the arrow leaps from the bow Hawk Eye sprang forward in pursuit. The Indians saw him coming, but having dropped their guns in the scuffle with Raven Wing, they were unable to fire at Hawk Eye as he approached. At this point the Indian who had hidden behind the tree threw a heavy stick which struck Hawk Eye on the back of the head with such force that he fell, bleeding and insensible, upon the ground.



AS THE ARROW LEAPS FROM THE BOW HAWK EYE SPRANG FORWARD IN PURSUIT.

When Hawk Eye recovered from the effects of the blow, he found himself lying on the cold earth in total darkness, and firmly bound hand and foot.

In vain he tried to break the leather thongs. He called loudly for Raven Wing, hoping his friend had somehow escaped and would come to his aid. But only echoes of his own voice answered him. The dreadful thought now flashed across his mind that the enemy had buried him alive in some dark cave. At length the gray dawn shone in upon him and showed that he was in a deep hollow in the bluff overhanging the river.

Again he called to Raven Wing. Scarcely had the echoes of his voice died away, when a man's figure darkened the mouth of the cave.

"Raven Wing!" cried Hawk Eye.

"Slow Dog has heard your call," answered a sneering voice. Bending over the helpless boy the Medicine Man drew a scalping knife from his belt and cut the thong that bound his feet and hands, and signed for him to rise.



"SLOW DOG HAS HEARD YOUR CALL," ANSWERED A SNEERING VOICE.

With difficulty Hawk Eye stood upon his legs, numbed by long binding. He said nothing, however, observing that the sneer still played about Slow Dog's lips.

"Come," commanded the Medicine Man. Hawk Eye obeyed and followed him to the timber belt where the struggle of the previous night had taken place. Presently they came to an Indian camp. There were no tepees, but the several blankets that lay under the trees indicated where the party had lain during the night. A Chippeway Indian squatted beside a fire, holding Hawk Eye's dog by a leash.



CHAPTER XIV

HAWK EYE'S REVENGE

From the fact that the camp was without tepees or squaws, and the Chippeway's face was daubed with red paint, Hawk Eye knew that he had fallen in with a small party on the warpath, but he could not account for the Medicine Man's presence with the Sioux's hereditary enemy. As he thought over the matter Slow Dog's detaining hand gripped his shoulder.

"Son of Running Deer," said the Medicine Man, "I have no cause to quarrel with you. But between Black Eagle and me there is much bad blood. You shall return to your village. It is mine no longer. Say to Old Smoky Wolf that I have become a Chippeway; that I and my Chippeway brothers will soon pay a visit to his village to take scalps. Say to Black Eagle that I shall hold his stepson a captive."

As he finished, Ohitika gave a sudden spring, whipping the leash from the hand of the Indian beside the fire. Leaping across the ground, he sprang at Slow Dog's throat. As the Medicine Man raised his foot and kicked the animal, Hawk Eye dealt him a blow between the eyes and darted off, followed by the faithful dog.

On coming to a tree against which were propped two guns, with powder horns and bullet pouches, he slowed down to pick them up, then dashed ahead. At a distance of fifty feet or more he saw Raven Wing, bound to a tree. One of the guns he had captured carried a ramrod sharpened at one end, and on coming up to Raven Wing, he began to sever the thongs that bound him with the sharpened point. Before he could finish, however, Slow Dog, who had followed, sprang upon him. Staggering forward, Hawk Eye fell to the ground, carrying the Medicine Man with him.

As Slow Dog attempted to rise, Hawk Eye raised his foot and struck him so heavily upon the stomach that he fell with a groan and lay writhing upon the ground. In the meantime, the Chippeway had come up and springing like an infuriated tiger toward Raven Wing, drove a knife at the boy's throat.

Fortunately, Raven Wing's arms were tied in front of him, so that by raising them he was enabled to ward off the blow. The knife fortunately merely scratched the fleshy part of his left arm, but in doing so severed the thong that bound them. With a mighty wrench Raven Wing burst the thong that Hawk Eye had all but severed, and slipped around behind the tree. As the Chippeway again rushed after him, Hawk Eye felled him with the butt of his gun.

"Follow me!" shouted Hawk Eye, and bounded toward the cave in the bluff, which was not more than fifty yards distant. A couple of arrows from the bows of two Chippeway Indians who were returning to camp from an early hunting trip followed him. The suddenness of his flight, however, had rendered their hasty aim uncertain, and in another moment he was around and behind the sheltering cliff. With wild yells the Indians darted forward in pursuit.



A COUPLE OF ARROWS ... FOLLOWED HIM.

About thirty paces beyond the point of the cliff that hid him for a few moments from view, was the cave in which he had spent the night. Quick as thought he sprang up the steep trail to its entrance and darted in. Crouching behind a ledge of rock close to the entrance, he waited for the two Indians to appear. Presently he saw one of them peering around the bend in the cliff wall. Raising his gun to his shoulder, he fired. The Indian's face disappeared from sight, but whether the bullet had hit the mark, Hawk Eye could not determine.

In the meantime Raven Wing, not daring to run into range of the arrows from the two Indians, had darted into the bushes and made for the rocky ground in the rear of the camp. In doing so he happened to pass the tree against which Slow Dog had rested Hawk Eye's gun, with shot-belt and powder horn. Picking them up, he climbed over the rocks and up to a wooded ridge that overlooked the cave in which Hawk Eye had sought shelter.

From this high point Raven Wing noticed that the bed of dried up water course led through the bushes towards the cave. Without further delay he hurried down to it, and sped swiftly along between its high bush-bordered banks. But, on drawing near to the cave, he was disappointed to find an open space, without tree or shrub, between it and the edge of the bushes.



CHAPTER XV

TWO GOOD SHOTS

Peering cautiously out between the heavy undergrowth, Raven Wing saw the two Indians, who had pursued Hawk Eye, crouching behind a boulder on the opposite side of the open space. He realized that it would be impossible for him to cross the open ground without being hit by an arrow, and he also felt reasonably certain that as soon as they were joined by Slow Dog, they would set off to find him, leaving the Medicine Man to prevent Hawk Eye's escape from the cave.

While debating as to what might be the best thing to do, he looked towards the cave and to his surprise saw Hawk Eye signing to him from behind a ledge of rock that screened him completely from the view of the enemy.

Answering the sign to assure his friend that he had seen him, Raven Wing made a series of signs which were finally understood by Hawk Eye to mean that he was to come out and expose himself to the view of the Indians.

Stepping out of the cave, he uttered a piercing war whoop and darted back. Slow Dog and his comrades answered with a volley of arrows. This was just what Raven Wing had expected, and before they could again fit arrows to their bows, he dashed across the open space and slipped into the cave, followed by Ohitika.

Angered at being outwitted by a boy, Slow Dog and the Chippeways rushed forward across the open space, but before they had covered half its distance, a bullet from Hawk Eye's gun brought one of the Chippeways tumbling to earth. Without waiting to pick him up, Slow Dog and his comrade sought the shelter of the bushes, where they lay concealed. From the mouth of the cave the boys could see four canoes drawn up on the beach. As Hawk Eye reloaded his gun, Raven Wing caught sight of an Indian stealing down towards the canoes. Lifting the gun to his shoulder, Raven Wing fired and the Chippeway fell face downward on the sand.

"Good!" grunted Hawk Eye. "The odds are now with us. However, Slow Dog's craftiness more than equals ours. If he sees he cannot get us, he will try to make off with our canoes."

"But if he ventures on the beach, he knows he will be shot," remarked Raven Wing.

"He will wait for darkness," said Hawk Eye.

"Darkness protects the rabbit as well as the fox," cried Raven Wing. As he finished, a low exclamation burst from Hawk Eye's lips. "Look!" he said. "Someone is stealing through the bushes!"

"The bodies of the two braves still lie upon the ground," said Raven Wing. "Perhaps the brave we left for dead in the camp has recovered."



For some time the boys kept their gaze directed toward the canoes, but no second brave dared to venture toward

them, although they lay only a few yards distant from the edge of the timber. Slow Dog and his companion were held at bay by the watchful eyes of the two boys. A bullet would be their answer to any attempt to reach the canoes.

The canoes now became the chief object of interest to all concerned. Slow Dog realized that if the boys should succeed in reaching the canoes they could escape. This, of course, they could not hope to do as long as daylight lasted nor even when night should arrive, unless it were a very dark one, since he and his comrade were armed with bow and arrows. On the other hand, he knew, now that the boys had possession of the guns, that it would be almost certain death to venture on the beach so long as there was sufficient light to enable Hawk Eye to aim with his gun.

"Let them make the first move," thought the crafty Medicine Man.

In the meantime Hawk Eye and Raven Wing were making plans for the coming of darkness. As the sun's last rays faded away and the night began to deepen, Hawk Eye moved close to the entrance of the cave. Adjusting his gun to his satisfaction, he marked its position exactly on the rock so that, when the canoes should be entirely hidden from sight, he could make reasonably certain of hitting any object directly in front of them. And in order to show Slow Dog that he and Raven Wing were still on the alert, he shortly aimed at the canoes, which were now invisible, and fired.



CHAPTER XVI

OHITIKA IS WOUNDED

Almost instantaneously a death cry rent the air, proving that the bullet had hit either Slow Dog or his companion.

"Ugh!" grunted Hawk Eye. "Slow Dog's trick has failed him. The odds are two to one in our favor." Hardly had he finished speaking when an arrow struck the ledge of rocks behind which they were crouching.

"Slow Dog is no mean marksman," said Raven Wing. "We must not be careless."

As Hawk Eye reloaded his gun, he noticed, in spite of the gathering gloom, blood stains upon the stock. For several moments he regarded them in silence. Then turned to Raven Wing.

"I think I have a plan that will work well," he said. "Come here, Ohitika," he cried, squatting down on the floor of the cave. The faithful dog came fawning to his feet.

"Smell, smell!" he commanded, placing the blood stained gunstock close to the dog's nose.

Ohitika answered with a growl. It was enemy smell to him. He had not forgotten that Slow Dog had kicked him.

"Take your gun and hold the dog by the collar," said Hawk Eye to Raven Wing. Again resting his gun on the ledge of rock, he fired. Before the echoes of the report had died away, a second arrow entered the cave's mouth and struck the rock wall in the rear.

"Come, follow me, before Slow Dog finds time to fit another arrow to his bow," said Hawk Eye.

Raven Wing obeyed. When out of the cave, and to one side of the opening, Hawk Eye seized Raven Wing's loaded gun and gave him his. "Load it," he said in a low voice, grasping the leather thong about Ohitika's neck to give Raven Wing the free use of both hands. Then, like three shadows, the two boys and the dog, glided into the dense darkness. Almost immediately Hawk Eye released his hold upon the dog and whispered, "Go get him! Go get him!"

As Ohitika darted off in the murky darkness, Raven Wing all but tripped over the body of the Chippeway he had killed. Forgetting the urgent need to reach the canoes, he felt with his hand for the Chippeway's scalp lock. Grasping it tightly in his left hand, he deftly circled it at its base with his knife and tore it away.

"You are now a warrior," whispered Hawk Eye.

Groping their way toward the beach, they made as much speed as safety would permit. Hawk Eye's course proved straight and true and in a few minutes they heard the river water lapping at the sand. Suddenly, from a distance, came a series of yaps and barks. Confident that Ohitika aided by the darkness would be able to hold Slow Dog at bay for a reasonable length of time, Hawk Eye whispered, "I must find the body of the Chippeway I killed!" Hardly were the words out of his mouth when he came upon it stretched over the bow of one of the canoes.

As he bent over to obtain the highly prized scalp, Raven Wing noiselessly launched the two enemy canoes and gave them a push to set them in the current. The paddles, which he had removed before launching, he laid in his own canoe, but as he was about to set it afloat, Hawk Eye said;

"We can't leave the dog."

"It is the only way out," answered Raven Wing. "Come, push off your canoe."

"No," said Hawk Eye. "I will not leave Ohitika."

For a moment Raven Wing paused. Then, seizing hold of Hawk Eye's canoe, he dragged it off the beach. As the yelps and barks drew nearer, he climbed into his. Hawk Eye, stepping slowly into his craft, sat down and raised his gun to his shoulder.

Suddenly the barking changed to a yell of pain.

"Ohitika has been hit by an arrow," cried Hawk Eye, and he fired his gun into the air.

"'Twill warn Slow Dog to halt and also enable Ohitika to lay a straight course to us," went on Hawk Eye.

As the canoes began to drift away from shore, the sound of a sudden splash caused Hawk Eye to exclaim in a low voice, "Ohitika is swimming toward us."

Laying down his gun, he picked up his paddle and noiselessly dipped it in the water to check the canoe's progress.



CHAPTER XVII

THE TRADING POST

There being neither moon nor stars, Hawk Eye could no longer make out the shore line, but as he softly dipped his paddle, his ears caught the sound of a faint wheeze close at hand, followed by a muffled bark. Dropping the paddle, he leaned over the side of the canoe and lifted in his faithful dog. As he laid the animal down, the feathered end of an arrow brushed his cheek. Gently feeling with his fingers, he found that the barb had only slantingly penetrated the fleshy part of the dog's thigh. A short, deft stroke of his knife made it easy to pull out the arrow. Picking up his paddle, he turned the canoe midstream, and after a few strokes came alongside Raven Wing who had been holding his canoe from floating away with the current.

"Come in with me," said Hawk Eye in a low voice. "We must keep together or we may become separated in the darkness."

Raven Wing climbed into Hawk Eye's canoe and held on to his own while Hawk Eye bent to his paddle. In a short time they were far down stream.

At early dawn they came across the two Chippeway canoes. Fastening to each a long strip of buffalo hide, they easily towed them down the river.

It was pleasant paddling as the beautiful Minnesota twisted and turned in its broad and sunny valley. Cottonwood and willow bordered its banks, which rolled back in gentle slopes of pale green, dotted with tree clumps, to the broad prairie. Blooming wild rose vines crept close to the water which sparkled in the sunshine or reflected the tints of the sky.

At its mouth, where it emptied into the Mississippi, the Minnesota spread out around a great flat island.

"We will not beach our canoes here," said Hawk Eye. "Fearless Bear advised me to see the trader on that little island yonder. He is known to deal justly with the red men. The Sioux call him Walking Wind."

Running their own canoes gently up on the sandy beach, they pulled the empty Chippeway canoes a little further up on shore and looked about them.

"Come, we will go to the post," said Hawk Eye, pointing to a building made of native limestone, with shutters and doorways of wood painted white.

As the boys drew near, they noticed groups of Indians with their squaws and Canadian boatmen with pipes in their mouths, gathered in front of a great wing, which on entering they found to be the company store. Blankets, traps, sleigh bells, scarlet cloth, beads, silk handkerchiefs and earbobs lay spread upon long counters. On others, already sorted and packed for shipment, lay pelts of muskrat, fox, wolf, beaver and mink, together with skins of deer and hides of buffalo.

"You need not look for a gun," said Hawk Eye in a low voice, noticing that Raven Wing paid little attention to the display on the counters. "You already have Slow Dog's gun; it is a fine one. But you are in need of powder and bullets, as I am."

As he finished speaking, a white man of about thirty, tall and muscular, came forward and asked them in the Sioux language what they wanted.

Both boys held up their guns and answered that they wished ammunition for their weapons.

"What have you in exchange?" asked the trader.



"WHAT HAVE YOU IN EXCHANGE?" ASKED THE TRADER.

"We have pelts; they are in our canoes on the beach," said Hawk Eye.

"Bring them here and we will trade," smiled the trader.

As the boys turned to go back to the river, the trader asked; "How came you by the fresh scalps at your belts?"

"We killed two thieving Chippeways," answered Hawk Eye. Here he paused, thinking it best not to mention Slow Dog, for he was a Sioux and the tribe must not be humiliated by the telling of his treachery. "We took their canoes. Will you trade also for canoes?" Hawk Eye continued after a brief silence.

"I will go with you and look at them," answered the trader. Beckoning to three Indians, he accompanied the boys to the river.

"My Indian brothers will help you carry the pelts," he explained as they went along.

On arriving at the shore, the trader's eyes glittered as he looked at the beautifully built Chippeway canoes. "I will take them in trade," he said.

"We would rather part with our own canoes," answered Hawk Eye. "We would be proud to return to our village in our enemy's canoes and with their scalps at our belt."

The trader smiled at the boy's words. "In that case I will be content to take the Sioux-built craft," he said. "The Sioux excels the Chippeway in horsemanship, but does not equal them in canoe building."

In the meantime the three Indians had shouldered most of the cargo. When Hawk Eye and Raven Wing had shouldered the balance, they all set off for the post.

The trader had shown much generosity, agreed the boys as later on they loaded their purchases in the Chippeway canoes. How delighted would be Light Between Clouds with the scarlet cloth, thought Hawk Eye. Bending Willow will appear even more beautiful with the necklace of bright beads at her throat, thought Raven Wing.

CHAPTER XVIII

JOURNEY'S END

Early the following morning Hawk Eye and Raven Wing pushed off from the landing and followed up the twisting course of the river. Paddling was not so easy against the current.

"We have no need to hurry," remarked Hawk Eye. "We will visit on our way," and so they stopped to beach their canoes whenever they saw upon the bluffs the summer houses of poles and leaves which the Sioux erect in place of the winter tepees of dressed buffalo skin.

Black Dog gave them a hearty welcome. For several weeks they enjoyed his hospitality. Further up the river they disembarked at Penichon's village, where an old warrior who had once gone on the warpath with Smoky Wolf, made much of them on learning that they were from the band of his old friend.

"Say to Smoky Wolf," he commanded, as Hawk Eye and Raven Wing took leave of the aged brave, "that I predict you will be great warriors."

Again they beached their canoes on coming to Shakepay's village, the largest of all. And so it went all the way up the sky-tinted water of the curving, twisting river. At Lac Qui Parle, their last stopping place, they visited the village of the Wahpeton Sioux, called the people of the leaves.

Here it was that Raven Wing was reminded of the time, many, many years before, when his grandfather made his first offering to the Great Mystery.

"Red Feather was a great warrior," said an old squaw. "I remember when he was very young that Uncheeda, his grandmother, led him to the top of a high rock from which to fling his most beloved possession into the lake."

"It was a necklace of bear claws, was it not?" asked Raven Wing.

"Yes, my son it was," answered the old squaw.

At length the two boys took leave of the friendly Wahpetons. Indian Summer had come and gone as they rounded the last bend in the river and saw thin smoke rising from their village fires.

Ohitika sensed the nearness of old familiar places and began to bark. The boys bent to their paddles, sending their frail craft along at a faster pace.

The sunshine hung like yellow smoke over Big Stone Lake. Bright-colored leaves, loosed by the wind, scurried along the ground. Only the burr oaks held valiantly to their raiment. A thin crust of ice lay on the quiet waters of slough and marshland, but at warm noon, they again reflected the sky tints of an autumn day. Wild geese honked overhead and wild ducks winged upward from the watery wild rice fields.

On a rise of ground overlooking the river stood two squaws.

"Six moons have waned since our boys left for the trading post," said Light Between Clouds.

"You have counted each moon as I have," sighed Bending Willow. "And since the day Slow Dog disappeared so strangely from our village, my heart has been filled with dread. He has been no friend to me."

"He is jealous of Black Eagle," added Light Between Clouds.

As she finished speaking, Bending Willow started to run down to the river's edge. "I see two canoes rounding the bend," she called back. Light Between Clouds ran swiftly after her.



LIGHT BETWEEN CLOUDS RAN SWIFTLY AFTER HER.

Black Eagle, just returning with a young deer which he had killed upon his back, let it fall upon the ground on seeing Bending Willow running toward the river. He, too, had been worried over the long absence of his stepson. As he passed Smoky Wolf's tepee, the aged chief, who was smoking beside it, looked up.

"I think Raven Wing and Hawk Eye are coming up the river," cried Black Eagle as he ran on.

Old Smoky Wolf slowly rose to his feet. "I, too, must welcome the young braves," he murmured. In a short time all the men, women and children were standing upon the bank to await the boys' arrival.

As the canoes grated upon the sandy beach, Old Smoky Wolf raised his right arm and shouted, "They come in Chippeway canoes with scalps at their belts. My village has two more warriors to send upon the warpath."

THE END

