

**ROBERT
MICHAEL
BALLANTYNE**

THE RED MAN'S REVENGE:
A TALE OF THE RED RIVER
FLOOD

Robert Michael Ballantyne

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R. M. Ballantyne

The Red Man's Revenge: A Tale of The Red River Flood

Chapter One.

A Tale of the Red River Flood. Opens the Ball

If ever there was a man who possessed a gem in the form of a daughter of nineteen, that man was Samuel Ravenshaw; and if ever there was a girl who owned a bluff, jovial, fiery, hot-tempered, irascible old father, that girl was Elsie Ravenshaw.

Although a gem, Elsie was exceedingly imperfect. Had she been the reverse she would not have been worth writing about.

Old Ravenshaw, as his familiars styled him, was a settler, if we may use such a term in reference to one who was, perhaps, among the most unsettled of men. He had settled with his family on the banks of the Red River. The colony on that river is now one of the frontier towns of Canada. At the time we write of, it was a mere oasis in the desert, not even an offshoot of civilisation, for it owed its existence chiefly to the fact that retiring servants of the Hudson's Bay Fur Company congregated there to spend the evening of life, far beyond the Canadian boundary, in the heart of that great wilderness where they had spent their working days, and on the borders of that grand prairie where the red man and the buffalo roamed at will, and the conventionalities of civilised life troubled them not.

To this haven of rest Samuel Ravenshaw had retired, after spending an active life in the service of the fur-traders, somewhat stiffened in the joints by age and a rough career, and a good deal soured in disposition because of promotion having, as he thought, been too long deferred.

Besides Elsie, old Ravenshaw possessed some other gems of inferior lustre. His wife Maggie, a stout, well-favoured lady, with an insufficient intellect and unbounded good humour, was of considerable intrinsic value, but highly unpolished. His second daughter, Cora, was a thin slip of sixteen years, like her mother in some respects—pretty, attractive, and disposed to take life easily. His eldest son, Victor, a well-grown lad of fourteen, was a rough diamond, if a diamond at all, with a soul centred on sport. His second son, Anthony, between five and six, was large and robust, like his father. Not having been polished at that time, it is hard to say what sort of gem Tony was. When engaged in mischief—his besetting foible—his eyes shone like carbuncles with unholy light. He was the plague of the family. Of course, therefore, he was the beloved of his parents.

Such were the chief inmates of Willow Creek, as old Ravenshaw styled his house and property.

It was midwinter. The owner of Willow Creek stood at his parlour window, smoking and gazing. There was not much to look at, for snow had overwhelmed and buried the landscape, fringed every twig of the willows, and obliterated the frozen river.

Elsie was seated by the stove, embroidering a pair of moccasins.

"Victor is bringing down some of the lads to shoot to-day, father," she said, casting a furtive glance at her sire.

"Humph! that boy does nothing but shoot," growled the old man, who was a giant in body if not in spirit. "Who all is he bringing?"

"There's John Flett, and David Mowat, and Sam Hayes, and Herr Winklemann, and Ian Macdonald, and Louis Lambert—all the best shots, I suppose," said Elsie, bending over her work.

"The best shots!" cried Mr Ravenshaw, turning from the window with a sarcastic laugh. "Louis Lambert, indeed, and Winklemann are crack shots, and John Flett is not bad, but the others are poor hands. Mowat can only shoot straight with a crooked gun, and as for that half-cracked schoolmaster,

Jan Macdonald, he would miss a barn door at fifty paces unless he were to shut his eyes and fire at random, in which case he'd have some chance—”

“Here they is; the shooters is comin’. Hooray!” shouted Master Anthony Ravenshaw, as he burst into the room with a scalping-knife in one hand and a wooden gun in the other. “An’ I’s goin’ to shoot too, daddy!”

“So you are, Tony, my boy!” cried the old trader, catching up the pride of his heart in his strong arms and tossing him towards the ceiling. “You shall shoot before long with a real gun.”

Tony knocked the pipe out of his father’s mouth, and was proceeding to operate on his half-bald head with the scalping-knife, when Cora, who entered the room at the moment, sprang forward and wrenched the weapon from his grasp.

“We’ll give them dinner after the shooting is over, shan’t we, father?” asked Cora.

“Of course, my dear, of course,” replied the hospitable old gentleman, giving the pride of his heart a sounding kiss as he put him down. “Set your mother to work on a pie, and get Miss Trim to help you with a lot of those cakes you make so famously.”

As he spoke there was a sudden clattering in the porch. The young men were taking off their snow-shoes and stamping the snow from off their leggings and moccasined feet.

“Here we are, father!” cried a bright, sturdy youth, as he ushered in his followers. “Of course Elsie has prepared you for our sudden invasion. The fact is that we got up the match on the spur of the moment, because I found that Ian had a holiday.”

“No explanation required, Victor. Glad to see you all, boys. Sit down,” said Mr Ravenshaw, shaking hands all round.

The youths who were thus heartily welcomed presented a fine manly appearance. They were clad in the capotes, leggings, fur caps, moccasins, and fingerless mittens usually worn by the men of the settlement in winter.

That tall handsome fellow, with the curly black hair and flashing eyes, who bears himself so confidently as he greets the sisters, is Louis Lambert. The thickset youth behind him, with the shock of flaxen hair and imperceptible moustache, is Herr Winklemann, a German farmer’s son, and a famed buffalo-hunter. The ungainly man, of twenty-four apparently—or thereabouts—with the plain but kindly face, and the frame nearly as strong as that of the host himself, is Ian Macdonald. In appearance he is a rugged backwoodsman. In reality he is the schoolmaster of that part of the widely-scattered colony.

The invitation to sit down was not accepted. Daylight was short-lived in those regions at that season of the year. They sallied forth to the work in hand.

“You’ve had the target put up, Cora?” asked Victor, as he went out.

“Yes, in the old place.”

“Where is Tony?”

“I don’t know,” said Cora, looking round. “He was here just now, trying to scalp father.”

“You’ll find him at the target before you, no doubt,” said Elsie, putting away her moccasins as she rose to aid in the household preparations.

The target was placed against the bank of the river, so that the bullets might find a safe retreat. The competitors stood at about a hundred yards’ distance in front of it. The weapons used were single-barrelled smooth-bores, with flint locks. Percussion locks had not at that time come into fashion, and long ranges had not yet been dreamed of.

“Come, open the ball, Lambert,” said Victor.

The handsome youth at once stepped forward, and old Mr Ravenshaw watched him with an approving smile as he took aim. Puff! went the powder in the pan, but no sound followed save the peal of laughter with which the miss-fire was greeted. The touch-hole was pricked, and next time the ball sped to its mark. It hit the target two inches above the bull’s-eye.

The “well done” with which the shot was hailed was cut short by an appalling yell, and little Tony was seen to tumble from behind the target. Rolling head over heels, he curled himself round in agony, sprang up with a spasmodic bound, dropped upon his haunches, turned over a complete somersault, fell on his back with a fearful shriek, and lay dead upon the snow!

The whole party rushed in consternation towards the boy, but before they had reached him he leaped up and burst into a fit of gleeful laughter, which ended in a cheer and a savage war-whoop as he scampered up the track which led to the house, and disappeared over the brow of the river’s bank.

“The imp was joking!” exclaimed Mr Ravenshaw, as he stopped and wiped the cold perspiration from his brow.

At that moment a Red Indian appeared on the scene, in his blanket robe, paint, and feathers. Attracted by the shot, he had come to look on. Now, the old fur-trader’s nerves had received a tremendous shock, and the practical jest which the pride of his heart had perpetrated had roused the irascibility of his nature, so that an explosion became unavoidable. In these circumstances the arrival of the Indian seemed opportune, for the old gentleman knew that this particular savage was a chief, and had visited the colony for the purpose of making inquiries into the new religion reported to be taught by certain white men in black garments; and Mr Ravenshaw, besides having very little regard for missionaries, had a very strong contempt for those Indians who became their disciples. He therefore relieved himself on the red man.

“What do you want here, Petawanaquat?” he demanded sternly, in the language of the Indian.

“The Little Wolf,” replied the Indian, referring to himself, for such was the interpretation of his name, “wishes to see how his white brothers shoot.”

“Let the Little Wolf put his tail between his legs and be gone,” cried the angry old man. “He is not wanted here. Come, be off!”

The chief looked straight in the eyes of the trader with a dark scowl, then, turning slowly on his heel, stalked solemnly away.

There was an irrepressible laugh at this episode as the group of marksmen returned to their former position. Mr Ravenshaw, however, soon left them and returned home. Here he found Miss Trim in a state of considerable agitation; she had just encountered the redskin! Miss Trim was a poor relation of Mrs Ravenshaw. She had been invited by her brother-in-law to leave England and come to Red River to act as governess to Tony and assistant-companion in the family. She had arrived that autumn in company with a piano, on which she was expected to exercise Elsie and Cora. Petawanaquat, being the first “really wild and painted savage” she had seen, made a deep impression on her.

“Oh, Mr Ravenshaw, I have seen *such* an object in the garden!” she exclaimed, in a gushing torrent—she always spoke in a torrent—“and it was all I could do to stagger into the house without fainting. Such eyes! with black cheeks and a red nose—at least, it looked red, but I was in such a state that I couldn’t make sure whether it was the nose or the chin, and my shoe came off as I ran away, having broken the tie in the morning. And such a yell as it gave!—the creature, not the shoe-tie—but I escaped, and peeped out of the upper window—the one in the gable, you know, with the green blind, where you can see the garden from end to end, and I found it had disappeared, though I can’t understand—”

“Tut, tut, Miss Trim; how you do gallop! Was it a beast?” asked the old trader.

“A beast? No; a man—a savage.”

“Oh! I understand; it was that scoundrel Petawanaquat,” said Sam Ravenshaw, with a laugh; “he’s Little Wolf by name, and a big thief by practice, no doubt. You needn’t fear him, however, he’s not so dangerous as he looks, and I gave him a rebuff just now that will make him shy of Willow Creek.—Ha, Tony, you rascal! Come here, sir.”

Tony came at once, with such a gleeful visage that his father’s intended chastisement for the recent practical joke ended in a parental caress.

Bitterly did Ian Macdonald repent of his agreeing to join the shooting party that day. Owing to some defect in his vision or nervous system, he was a remarkably bad shot, though in everything else he was an expert and stalwart backwoodsman, as well as a good scholar. But when his friend Victor invited him he could not refuse, because it offered him an opportunity of spending some time in the society of Elsie Ravenshaw, and that to him was heaven upon earth! Little of her society, however, did the unfortunate teacher enjoy that day, for handsome Louis Lambert engrossed not only Elsie, but the mother and father as well. He had beaten all his competitors at the target, but, to do him justice, did not boast of that; neither did he make any reference to the fact that Ian had twice missed the target, though he did not spare the bad shooting of some of the other youths; this, no doubt, because he and Ian had been fast friends for many years. Jealousy—at least on the part of Ian—now seemed about to interfere with the old friendship. Moreover, Lambert had brought to Mrs Ravenshaw a gift of a collar made of the claws of a grizzly bear, shot by himself in the Rocky Mountains. Elsie admired the collar with genuine interest, and said she would give anything to possess one like it. Cora, with the coquettishness of sixteen, said, with a laugh and a blush, that she would not accept such a ridiculous thing if it were offered to her. Ian Macdonald groaned in spirit, for, with his incapacity to shoot, he knew that Elsie's wish could never be gratified by *him*.

Seeing that Lambert was bent on keeping Elsie as much as possible to himself, Ian devoted himself to Cora, but Cora was cross. Feeling it up-hill work, he soon rose to say good-bye, and left Willow Creek before the others.

"Don't look so crestfallen, man," said old Mr Ravenshaw heartily, as he shook hands; "it's nobler work to teach the young idea how to shoot than to be able to hit a bull's-eye."

"True, but he who cannot hit a bull's-eye," returned Ian, with a smile, "can scarcely be expected to touch a maiden's—I mean a grizzly's heart."

A shout of laughter from Lambert greeted him as he left the house. His way home lay over the frozen bed of the river. Victor accompanied him part of the way.

"That was a strange slip for an unromantic fellow like you to make about a maiden's heart, Ian," said Victor, looking up at the rugged countenance of his friend.

"Unromantic, eh? Well, I suppose I am."

"Of course you are," said Victor, with the overweening assurance of youth. "Come, let's sit down here for a few minutes and discuss the point."

He sat down on a snowdrift; Ian kicked off his snowshoes and leaned against the bank.

"You're the most grave, sensible, good-natured, matter-of-fact, unsentimental, unselfish fellow I ever met with," resumed Victor. "If you were a romantic goose I wouldn't like you half as much as I do."

"Men are sometimes romantic without being geese," returned Ian; "but I have not time to discuss that point just now. Tell me, for I am anxious about it, have you spoken to your father about selling the field with the knoll to my father?"

"Yes, and he flatly refused to sell it. I'm really sorry, Ian, but you know how determined my father is. Once he says a thing he sticks to it, even though it should be to his own disadvantage."

"That's bad, Victor, very bad. It will raise ill-blood between them, and estrange our families. You think there's no chance?"

"None whatever."

"One more word before we part. Do you know much about that redskin whom your father called Petawanaquat?"

"Not much, except that he has come from a considerable distance to make inquiries, he says, about the Christian religion. He has been prowling about our place for a few days, and father, who has no great love to missionaries, and has strong suspicions of converted Indians, has twice treated him rather roughly."

“I’m sorry to hear that, Victor. These fellows are sometimes very revengeful. If you’ll be advised by me you’ll keep a sharp eye upon Petawanaquat. There, I’ll say no more. You know I’m not an alarmist. Good-bye.”

“Good-bye, old boy.”

“I say.”

“Well?”

“It was an *awfully* bad shot, that last of mine.”

“It was,” admitted Victor, with a laugh, “to miss a thing as big as a door at a hundred yards is only so-so.”

“No chance of improvement, I fear,” said Ian, with a sigh.

“Oh, don’t say that,” replied Victor. “Practice, perseverance, and patience, you know, overcome every—”

“Yes, yes. I know that well. Good-bye.” They shook hands again, and were soon striding over the snow to their respective homes.

Chapter Two.

Conflicting Elements and a Catastrophe

Hoary winter passed away, and genial spring returned to rejoice the land.

In a particularly amiable frame of mind, old Ravenshaw went out one morning to smoke.

Everything had gone well that morning. Breakfast had been punctual; appetite good; rheumatics in abeyance; the girls lively; and Miss Trim less of a torrent than was her wont. Mrs Ravenshaw's intellect had more than once almost risen to the ordinary human average, and Master Tony had been better—perhaps it were more correct to say less wicked—than usual.

Old Ravenshaw was what his friends styled a heavy smoker, so was his kitchen chimney; but then the chimney had the excuse of being compelled to smoke, whereas its owner's insane act was voluntary.

Be not afraid, reader. We have no intention of entering into an argument with smokers. They are a pigheaded generation. We address those who have not yet become monomaniacs as regards tobacco.

In order to the full enjoyment of his pipe, the old gentleman had built on a knoll what Elsie styled a summer-house. Regardless of seasons, however—as he was of most things—her father used this temple at all seasons of the year, and preferred to call it a smoking box. Now, as this smoking-box, with its surroundings, had much to do with the issues of our story, we bring it under particular notice. It resembled a large sentry-box, and the willow-clad knoll on which it stood was close to the river. Being elevated slightly above the rest of the country, a somewhat extended view of river and plain was obtainable therefrom. Samuel Ravenshaw loved to contemplate this view through the medium of smoke. Thus seen it was hazy and in accord with his own idea of most things. The sun shone warmly into the smoking-box. It sparkled on the myriad dew-drops that hung on the willows, and swept in golden glory over the rolling plains. The old gentleman sat down, puffed, and was happy. The narcotic influence operated, and the irascible demon in his breast fell sound asleep.

How often do bright sunshine and profound calm precede a storm? Is not that a truism—if not a newism. The old gentleman had barely reduced himself to quiescence, and the demon had only just begun to snore, when a cloud, no bigger than a man's body, arose on the horizon. Gradually it drew near, partially obscured the sky, and overshadowed the smoking-box in the form of Angus Macdonald, the father of Ian. (The demon ceased snoring!)

“Coot tay to you, sir,” said Angus. “You will pe enchoyin’ your pipe this fine mornin’.”

“Yes, Angus, I am,” replied Ravenshaw, with as much urbanity as he could assume—and it wasn't much, for he suspected the cause of his neighbour's visit—“you'd better sit down and light your own.”

Angus accepted the invitation, and proceeded to load with much deliberation.

Now it must be known that the Highlander loved the view from that knoll as much as did his neighbour. It reminded him of the old country where he had been born and bred on a hill-top. He coveted that willow knoll intensely, desiring to build a house on it, and, being prosperous, was willing to give for it more than its value, for his present dwelling lay somewhat awkwardly in the creek, a little higher up the river, so that the willows on the knoll interfered vexatiously with his view.

“It's a peautiful spote this!” observed Angus, after a few preliminary puffs.

“It is,” answered the old trader curtly, (and the demon awoke).

Angus made no rejoinder for a few minutes, but continued to puff great clouds with considerable emphasis from his compressed lips. Mr Ravenshaw returned the fire with interest.

“It'll no pe for sellin' the knowl, ye are?” said Angus.

The demon was fairly roused now.

“No, Angus Macdonald,” said the trader sternly, “I’ll *not* sell it. I’ve told you already more than once, and it is worse than ill-judged, it is impertinent of you to come bothering me to part with my land.”

“Ho! inteed!” exclaimed Angus, rising in wrath, and cramming his pipe into his vest pocket; “it is herself that will be pothering you no more spout your dirty land, Samyool Ruvnshaw.”

He strode from the spot with a look of ineffable scorn, and the air of an offended chieftain.

Old Ravenshaw tried to resume his tranquillity, but the demon was self-willed, and tobacco had lost its power. There were more clouds, however, in store for him that morning.

It so fell out that Ian Macdonald, unable to bear the suspense of uncertainty any longer, and all ignorant of his father’s visit to the old trader, had made up his mind to bring things to a point that very morning by formally asking permission to pay his addresses to Elsie Ravenshaw. Knowing the old man’s habits, he went straight to the smoking-box. If he had set out half an hour sooner he would have met his own father and saved himself trouble. As it was, they missed each other.

Mr Ravenshaw had only begun to feel slightly calmed when Ian presented himself, with a humble, propitiatory air. The old man hated humility in every form, even its name. He regarded it as a synonym for hypocrisy. The demon actually leaped within him, but the old man had a powerful will. He seized his spiritual enemy, throttled, and held him down.

“Good-morning, Mr Ravenshaw.”

“Good-morning.”

Nothing more was said by either for a few minutes. Ian was embarrassed. He had got up a set speech and forgotten it. He was shy, but he was also resolute. Drawing himself up suddenly he said, with an earnest, honest look, “Mr Ravenshaw, I love your daughter,” (there was only one daughter in Ian’s estimation!) “and I come to ask leave to woo her. If, by earnest devotion and—”

“Ian Macdonald,” interrupted the old gentleman, in a voice of suppressed anger, “you may save yourself and me the trouble of more talk on this subject. Your father has just been here wanting me to sell him this knoll. Now, look here,” (he rose, and stepping out of the smoking-box, pointed to Angus Macdonald’s house, which was full in view), “you see that house, young man. Mark what I say. I will sell this knoll to your father, and give my daughter to you, when you take that house, and with your own unaided hands place it on the top of this knoll!”

This was meant by the old trader as a bitterly facetious way of indicating the absolute hopelessness of the case. Ian accepted it in that light, for he was well aware that Samuel Ravenshaw’s firmness—or obstinacy—was insurmountable. He did not despair, however; true love never does that; but he felt tremendously cast down. Without a word or look of reproach he turned and walked slowly away.

Once again the old trader sought comfort in his pipe, but found none. Besides feeling extremely indignant; with the Macdonalds, father and son, for what he styled their presumption, he was now conscious of having treated both with undue severity. Dashing his pipe on the ground, he thrust both hands into his coat pockets, and returned towards his dwelling. On the way he unfortunately met Petawanaquat in one of his fields, leaning composedly over a gate. That intelligent redskin had not yet finished his inquiries at the missionary village. He had appeared more than once at Willow Creek, and seemed to hover round the old trader like a moth round a candle. The man was innocent of any evil intent on this occasion, but Ravenshaw would have quarrelled with an angel just then.

“What are you doing here? Be off!” he said sternly.

The Indian either did not or would not understand, and the old man, seizing him by the arm, thrust him violently through the gateway.

All the hot blood of the Petawanaquats, from Adam downwards, seemed to leap through the red man’s veins and concentrate in his right hand as he turned fiercely on the trader and drew his scalping-knife. Quick as lightning Ravenshaw hit out with his fist, and knocked the Indian down, then, turning on his heel, walked away.

For a moment Petawanaquat lay stunned. Recovering, he arose, and his dark glittering eyes told of a purpose of deadly revenge. The trader was still in sight. The Indian picked up his gun, glided swiftly behind a tree, and took a long steady aim. Just then little Tony rushed from the house and leaped into his father's arms, where he received an unusually warm embrace, for the trader wanted some sort of relief for his feelings. The Indian's finger was pressing the trigger at the moment. Death was very near Samuel Ravenshaw just then, but the finger relaxed and the gun was lowered. A more terrible form of revenge had flashed into the mind of the savage. Gliding quietly from his position, he entered the willows and disappeared.

Meanwhile Angus Macdonald returned in no very amiable mood to his own house. It was a small house; had been built by its owner, and was, like most of the other houses of the colony at that time, a good solid log structure—a sort of Noah's ark on a small scale. It stood on a flat piece of mother earth, without any special foundation except a massive oblong wooden frame to which all the superstructure was attached. You might, if strong enough, have grasped it by the ridge-pole and carried it bodily away without tearing up any foundation or deranging the fabric. It was kept in order and managed by an elderly sister of Angus, named Martha, for Angus was a widower. His only son Ian dwelt in the school-house, a mile farther up the river.

Martha's strong point was fowls. We are too ignorant of that subject to go into particulars. We can only say that she was an adept at fowls. Martha's chickens were always tender and fat, and their eggs were the largest and freshest in Red River. We introduce these fowls solely because one of them acted a very important part on a very critical occasion. As well might the geese who saved Rome be omitted from history as Martha Macdonald's Cochin-China hen which—well, we won't say what just yet. That hen was frightfully plain. Why Cochin-China hens should have such long legs and wear feather trousers are questions which naturalists must settle among themselves. Being a humorous man, Angus had named her Beauty. She was a very cross hen, and her feather unmentionables fitted badly. Moreover, she was utterly useless, and never laid an egg, which was fortunate, for if she had laid one it would have been an egregious monstrosity. She was obviously tough. If they had slain her for the table they would have had to cut her up with a hand-saw, or grind her into meal to fit her for use. Besides all this, Beauty was a widow. When her husband died—probably of disgust—she took to crowing on her own account. She received Angus with a crow when he entered the house after his interview with Ravenshaw, and appeared to listen intently as he poured his sorrows into his sister's ear.

"It's up at the knowl I've been, Martha, an' I left Samyool Ruvnshaw there in a fery pad temper—fery pad inteed. He'll come oot of it, whatever."

"An' he'll not be for sellin' you the knowl?" asked Martha.

"No, he won't," replied Angus.

From this point they went off into a very long-winded discussion of the pros and cons of the case, which, however, we will spare the reader, and return to Willow Creek. The bed of the creek, near to the point where it joined the Red River, was a favourite resort of Master Tony. Thither he went that same afternoon to play.

Having observed the child's habits, Petawanaquat paddled his canoe to the same point and hid it and himself among the overhanging bushes of the creek. In the course of his gambols Tony approached the place. One stroke of the paddle sent the light birch-bark canoe like an arrow across the stream. The Indian sprang on shore. Tony gave him one scared look and was about to utter an appalling yell, when a red hand covered his mouth and another red hand half throttled him.

Petawanaquat bundled the poor child into the bottom of his canoe, wrapped a leather coat round his head, spread a buffalo robe over him, gave him a smart rap on the head to keep him quiet, and paddled easily out into the stream. Steadily, but not too swiftly, he went down the river, down the rapids, and past the Indian settlement without attracting particular notice. Once the buffalo robe moved; the paddle descended on it with a sounding whack, and it did not move again. Before night closed, the Indian was paddling over the broad bosom of Lake Winnipeg.

Of course, Tony was soon missed; his haunts were well known; Miss Trim traced his footprints to the place where he had been seized, saw evidences of the struggle, the nature of which she correctly guessed, and came shrieking back to the house, where she went off into hysterics, and was unable to tell anything about the matter.

Fortunately, Victor was there; he also traced the footsteps. Instead of returning home he ran straight to the school-house, which he reached out of breath.

“Come, Ian, come!” he gasped. “Tony’s been carried off—Petawanaquat! Bring your canoe and gun; all the ammunition you can lay hands on!”

Ian asked for no explanations; he ran into the house, shouldered a small bag of pemmican, gave his gun and ammunition to Victor, told his assistant to keep the school going till his return, and ran with his friend down to the river, where his own birch canoe lay on the bank.

A few minutes sufficed to launch it. Both Ian and Victor were expert canoe-men. Straining their powers to the utmost, they were soon far down the Red River, in hot pursuit of the fugitive.

Chapter Three.

The Pursuit begins

There is something delightfully exhilarating in a chase, whether it be after man or beast. How the blood careers! How the nerves tingle! But you know all about it, reader. We have said sufficient.

There was enough of righteous indignation in Victor's bosom to have consumed Petawanaquat, and ground enough to justify the fiercest resolves. Was not the kidnapper a redskin—a low, mean, contemptible savage? Was not the kidnapped one his brother—his “own” brother? And such a brother! One of a thousand, with mischief enough in him, if rightly directed, to make half a dozen ordinary men! The nature of the spirit which animated Victor was obvious on his compressed lips, his frowning brows, his gleaming eyes. The strength of his muscles was indicated by the foam that fled from his paddle.

Ian Macdonald was not less excited, but more under self-control than his friend. There was a fixed look in his plain but pleasant face, and a tremendous sweep in his long arms as he plied the paddle, that told of unfathomed energy. The canoe being a mere egg-shell, leaped forward at each quick stroke “like a thing of life.”

There was no time to lose. They knew that, for the Indian had probably got a good start of them, and, being a powerful man, animated by the certainty of pursuit sooner or later, would not only put his strength but his endurance to the test. If they were to overtake him it must be by superhuman exertion. Lake Winnipeg was twenty miles off. They must catch up the Indian before he reached it, as otherwise it would be impossible to tell in which direction he had gone.

They did not pause to make inquiries of the settlers on the banks by the way, but they hailed several canoes, whose occupants said they had seen the Indian going quietly down stream some hours before—alone in his canoe!

“Never mind, Vic, push on,” said Ian; “of course he would make Tony lie flat down.”

The end of the settlement was passed, and they swept on into the wilderness beyond. Warming to their work, they continued to paddle hour after hour—steadily, persistently, with clockwork regularity of stroke, but never decreasing force. To save time they, as it were, cut off corners at the river-bends, and just shaved the points as they went by.

“Have a care, Ian!” exclaimed Victor, at one of these places, as his paddle touched the bottom. “We don't draw much water, to be sure, but a big stone might—hah!”

A roar of dismay burst from the youth and his companion as the canoe rasped over a stone.

We have said that the birch canoe was an egg-shell. The word is scarcely figurative. The slightest touch over a stone has a tendency to rip the bark of such a slender craft, or break off the resinous gum with which the seams are pitched. Water began to pour in.

“Too bad!” exclaimed Victor, flinging his paddle ashore, as he stepped over the side into water not much above his ankles, and pulled the canoe slowly to land.

“An illustration of the proverb, ‘The more haste the less speed,’” sighed Ian, as he stepped into the water and assisted in lifting the canoe tenderly to dry ground.

“Oh, it's all very well for you to take it philosophically, but you know our chance is gone. If it was *your* brother we were after you wouldn't be so cool.”

“He is Elsie's brother,” replied Ian, “and that makes me quite as keen as if he were my own, besides keeping me cool. Come, Vic, don't be cross, but light the fire and get out the gum.”

While he spoke Ian was actively untying a bundle which contained awls and wattape, a small pliable root, with which to repair the injury. The gum had to be melted, so that Victor found some relief to his feelings in kindling a fire. The break was not a bad one. With nimble fingers Ian sewed

a patch of bark over it. While that was being done, Victor struck a light with flint and steel, and soon had a blazing firebrand ready.

“Hand it here, Vic,” said Ian.

He covered the stitches with melted gum, blew the charcoal red-hot, passed it here and there over the old seams where they exhibited signs of leakage, and in little more than half an hour had the canoe as tight as a bottle. Once more they embarked and drove her like an arrow down stream.

But precious time had been lost, and it was dark when they passed from the river and rested on the bosom of the mighty fresh-water sea.

“It’s of no use going on without knowing which shore the redskin has followed,” said Ian, as he suddenly ceased work and rested his paddle on the gunwale.

“It’s of no use to remain where we are,” replied the impatient Victor, looking back at his comrade.

“Yes, it is,” returned Ian, “the moon will rise in an hour or so and enable us to make observations; meanwhile we can rest. Sooner or later we shall be compelled to rest. It will be a wise economy of time to do so now when nothing else can be done.”

Victor was so tired and sleepy by that time that he could scarcely reply. Ian laughed quietly, and shoved the canoe among some reeds, where it lay on a soft bed. At the same time he advised his companion to go to sleep without delay.

More than half asleep already, he obeyed in silence, waded to the shore, and sat down on a bank to take off his moccasins. In this position and act he fell asleep.

“Hallo!” exclaimed Ian, coming up with the paddles and pemmican bag; “too soon, Vic, too soon, lad,” (he tumbled him over on the bank); “come, one mouthful of grub first, then off with the moccasins, and down we go.”

Victor picked himself up with a yawn. On ordinary occasions a backwoodsman pays some little attention to the comforts of his encampment, but our heroes were in no condition to mind such trifles. They pulled off their wet moccasins, indeed, and put on dry ones, but having done that they merely groped in the dark for the flattest piece of ground in the neighbourhood, then each rolled himself in his blanket and lay, or rather fell, down.

“Hah!” gasped Victor.

“Wa’s wrong?” sighed Ian faintly.

“Put m’ shoulder ’n a puddle, ’at’s all,” lisped Victor.

“T’ke’t out o’ the purl, then—oh!” groaned Ian.

“W’as ’e marrer now, eh?” sighed Victor.

“On’y a big stone i’ m’ ribs.”

“Shove’t out o’ y’r ribs ’en an’ ’old y’r tongue.”

Profound slumber stopped the conversation at this point, and the frogs that croaked and whistled in the swamps had it all to themselves.

Deep tranquillity reigned on the shores of Lake Winnipeg during the midnight hours, for the voices of the frogs served rather to accent than to disturb the calm. Stars twinkled at their reflections in the water, which extended like a black mirror to the horizon. They gave out little light, however, and it was not until the upper edge of the full moon arose that surrounding objects became dimly visible. The pale light edged the canoe, silvered the rocks, tipped the rushes, and at last, touching the point of Ian’s upturned nose, awoke him. (See Frontispiece).

He leaped up with a start instantly, conscious of his situation, and afraid lest he had slept too long.

“Hi! lève! lève! awake! up!” he exclaimed in a vigorous undertone.

Victor growled, turned on his other side with a deep sigh, wanted to be let alone, became suddenly conscious, and sprang up in alarm.

“We’re too late!”

“No, we’re not, Vic. The moon is just rising, but we must be stirring. Time’s precious.”

Victor required no urging. He was fully alive to the situation. A few minutes sufficed to get the canoe ready and roll up their blankets, during the performance of which operations they each ate several substantial mouthfuls of pemmican.

Looking carefully round before pushing off the canoe to see that nothing was forgotten, Ian observed some chips of wood on the beach close at hand.

“See, Vic!” he said eagerly; “some one has been here—perhaps the Indian.”

They examined the chips, which had been recently cut. “It’s not easy to make out footprints here,” said Ian, going down on his knees the better to observe the ground; “and so many settlers and Indians pass from time to time, having little boys with them too, that—. I say, look here, Vic, this little footmark might or might not be Tony’s, but moccasins are so much alike that—”

“Out o’ the light, man; if you were made o’ glass the moon *might* get through you. Why, yes, it *is* Tony’s moccasin!” cried Victor, in eager excitement. “I know it by the patch, for I saw Elsie putting it on this very morning. Look, speak, man! don’t you see it? A square patch on the ball of the right foot!”

“Yes, yes; I see it,” said Ian, going down on his knees in a spirit of semi-worship, and putting his nose close to the ground.

He would fain have kissed the spot that had been pressed by a patch put on by Elsie, but he was “unromantic,” and refrained.

“Now,” he said, springing up with alacrity, “that settles the question. At least it shows that there is strong probability of their having taken the left shore of the lake.”

“Come along, then, let’s after them,” cried Victor impatiently, pushing off the canoe.

The moment she floated—which she did in about four inches of water—they stepped swiftly yet gently into her; for bark canoes require tender treatment at all times, even when urgent speed is needful. Gliding into deep water, they once more dipped their paddles, deep and fast, and danced merrily over the moonlit sea—for a sea Lake Winnipeg certainly is, being upwards of three hundred miles long, and a gathering together of many waters from all parts of the vast wilderness of Rupert’s Land.

After two hours of steady work they paused to rest.

“Now, Ian,” said Victor, leaning against the wooden bar at his back, and resting his paddle across the canoe, “Venus tells me that the sun is about to bestir himself, and something within me tells me that empty space is a bad stomachic; so, out with the pemmican bag, and hand over a junk.”

Ian drew his hunting-knife, struck it into the mass of meat, and chipped off a piece the size of his fist, which he handed to his comrade.

Probably our readers are aware that pemmican is made of dried buffalo meat pounded to shreds and mixed with melted fat. Being thus half-cooked in the making, it can be used with or without further cookery. Sewed up in its bag, it will keep good for months, or even years, and is magnificent eating, but requires a strong digestion. Ian and Victor were gifted with that requisite. They fed luxuriously. A draught from the crystal lake went down their unsophisticated throats like nectar, and they resumed their paddles like giants refreshed.

Venus mounted like a miniature moon into the glorious blue. Her perfect image went off in the opposite direction, for there was not the ghost of a zephyr to ruffle the deep. Presently the sun followed in her wake, and scattered the battalions of cloudland with artillery of molten gold. Little white gulls, with red legs and beaks, came dipping over the water, solemnly wondering at the intruders. The morning mists rolling along before the resistless monarch of day confused the visible world for a time, so that between refraction and reflection and buoyant spirits Victor Ravenshaw felt that at last he had found the realms of fairyland, and a feeling of certainty that he should soon rescue his brother filled him with exultation.

But the exultation was premature. Noon found them toiling on, and still no trace of the fugitives was to be seen.

“What if we have overshot them?” said Victor.

“Impossible,” answered Ian, “the shore is too open for that, and I have been keeping a sharp look-out at every bend and bay.”

“That may be true, yet Petawanaquat may have kept a sharper look-out, and concealed himself when he saw us coming. See, here is a creek. He may have gone up that. Let us try. Why! there *is* a canoe in it. Hup! drive along, Ian!”

The canoe seemed to leap out of the water under the double impulse, and next moment almost ran down another canoe which was half hidden among the reeds. In it sat an old Indian named Peegwish, and a lively young French half-breed named Michel Rollin. They were both well known to our adventurers; old Peegwish—whose chief characteristic was owliness—being a frequent and welcome visitor at the house of Ian’s father.

“You ’pears to be in one grand hurray,” exclaimed Rollin, in his broken English.

Ian at once told the cause of their appearance there, and asked if they had seen anything of Petawanaquat.

“Yes, oui, no—dat is to say. Look ’ere!”

Rollin pushed the reeds aside with his paddle, and pointed to a canoe lying bottom up, as if it had been concealed there.

“Ve’s be come ’ere after duck, an’ ve find dat,” said the half-breed.

An immediate investigation showed that Petawanaquat had forsaken his canoe and taken to the woods. Ian looked troubled. Peegwish opened his owl eyes and looked so solemn that Victor could scarce forbear laughing, despite the circumstances. It was immediately resolved to give chase. Peegwish was left in charge of the canoes. The other three soon found the track of the Red Man and followed it up like blood-hounds. At first they had no difficulty in following the trail, being almost as expert as Indians in woodcraft, but soon they came to swampy ground, and then to stony places, in which they utterly lost it. Again and again did they go back to pick up the lost trail, and follow it only to lose it again.

Thus they spent the remainder of that day until night put a stop to their exertions and crushed their hopes. Then, dispirited and weary, they returned to the canoes and encamped beside them.

Peegwish was engaged in roasting a duck when they arrived.

“What a difference between the evening and the morning,” said Victor, as he flung himself down beside the fire.

“Dat is troo, an’ vat I has obsarve oftin,” said Rollin, looking earnestly into a kettle which rested on the fire.

“Never mind, Vic,” said Ian heartily, “we’ll be at it again to-morrow, bright and early. We’re sure to succeed in the long-run. Petawanaquat can’t travel at night in the woods any more than we can.”

Old Peegwish glared at the fire as though he were pondering these sayings deeply. As he understood little or no English, however, it is more probable that his astute mind was concentrated on the roasting duck.

Chapter Four.

A Discovery—The Chase Continued on Foot

To bound from the depths of despair to the pinnacles of hope is by no means an uncommon experience to vigorous youth. When Victor Ravenshaw awoke next morning after a profound and refreshing sleep, and looked up through the branches at the bright sky, despondency fled, and he felt ready for anything. He was early awake, but Peegwish had evidently been up long before him, for that wrinkled old savage had kindled the fire, and was seated on the other side of it wrapped in his blanket, smoking, and watching the preparation of breakfast. When Victor contemplated his solemn eyes glaring at a roasting duck, which suggested the idea that he had been sitting there and glaring all night, he burst into an uncontrollable fit of laughter.

“Come, I say, Vic,” said Ian, roused by this from a comfortable nap, “if you were a hyena there might be some excuse for you, but being only a man—forgive me, a boy—you ought to have more sense than to disturb your friends so.”

“Oui, yes; dat is troo. Vraiment, it is too bad,” growled Rollin, sitting up and stretching himself. “Howsomewhatever, it is time to rise. Oui!”

“I should think it was,” retorted Victor; “the sun is already up, and you may be sure that Petawanaquat has tramped some miles this morning. Come, Peegwish, close your eyes a bit for fear they jump out. What have you got to give us, eh? Robbiboo, ducks, and—no, is it tea? Well, we *are* in luck to have fallen in with you.”

He rested his head on his hand, and lay looking at the savage with a pleased expression, while Rollin rose and went off to cut more firewood.

The robbiboo referred to was a sort of thick soup made of pemmican boiled with flour. Without loss of time the party applied themselves to it. When appetite was partially appeased Ian propounded the question, What was to be done?

“Follow up the trail as fast as we can,” said Victor promptly.

“Dat is bon advise,” observed Rollin. “Hand over de duck, Peegvish, an’ do try for shut your eyes. If you vould only vink it vould seem more comfortabler.”

Peegwish did not smile, but with deepened gravity passed the duck.

“I’m not so sure of the goodness of the advice,” said Ian. “To go scampering into the woods on a chase that may lead us we know not where or how long, with only a small quantity of provisions and ammunition, and but one gun, may seem energetic and daring, but it may not, perhaps, be wise.”

Victor admitted that there was truth in that, and looked perplexed.

“Nevertheless, to give up at this point, and return to the settlement for supplies,” he said, “would be to lose the advantage of our quick start. How are we to get over the difficulty?”

“Moi, I can you git out of de difficulty,” said Rollin, lighting his pipe with a business air. “Dis be de vay. Peegvish et me is out for long hunt vid much pemmican, poodre an’ shote. You make von ’greement vid me et Peegvish. You vill engage me; I vill go vid you. You can take vat you vill of our tings, and send Peegvish back to de settlement for tell fat ye bees do.”

This plan, after brief but earnest consideration, was adopted. The old Indian returned to Willow Creek with pencil notes, written on birch bark, to old Samuel Ravenshaw and Angus Macdonald, and the other three of the party set off at once to renew the chase on foot, with blankets and food strapped to their backs and guns on their shoulders—for Rollin carried his own fowling-piece, and Victor had borrowed that of Peegwish.

As happened the previous day, they failed several times to find the trail of the fugitives, but at last Ian discovered it, and they pushed forward with renewed hope. The faint footmarks at first led them deep into the woods, where it was difficult to force a passage; then the trail disappeared

altogether on the banks of a little stream. But the pursuers were too experienced to be thrown off the scent by such a well-known device as walking up stream in the water. They followed the brook until they came to the place where Petawanaquat had once more betaken himself to dry land. It was a well-chosen spot; hard and rocky ground, on which only slight impressions could be left, and the wily savage had taken care to step so as to leave as slight a trail as possible; but the pursuers had sharp and trained eyes. Ian Macdonald, in particular, having spent much of his time as a hunter before setting up his school, had the eyes of a lynx. He could distinguish marks when his companions could see nothing until they were pointed out, and although frequently at fault, he never failed to recover the trail sooner or later.

Of course they lost much time, and they knew that Petawanaquat must be rapidly increasing the distance between them, but they trusted to his travelling more leisurely when he felt secure from pursuit, and to his being delayed somewhat by Tony, whom it was obvious he had carried for long distances at a stretch.

For several days the pursuers went on with unflagging perseverance and ever-increasing hope, until they at last emerged from the woods, and began to traverse the great prairie. Here the trail diverged for a considerable distance southward, and then turned sharply to the west, in which direction it went in a straight line for many miles, as if Petawanaquat had made up his mind to cross the Rocky Mountains, and throw poor Tony into the Pacific!

The travellers saw plenty of game—ducks, geese, plover, prairie-hens, antelopes, etcetera,—on the march, but they were too eager in the pursuit of the savage to be turned aside by smaller game. They merely shot a few ducks to save their pemmican. At last they came to a point in the prairie which occasioned them great perplexity of mind and depression of spirit.

It was on the evening of a bright and beautiful day—one of those days in which the air seems fresher and the sky bluer, and the sun more brilliant than usual. They had found, that evening, that the trail led them away to the right towards one of the numerous clumps of woodland which rendered that part of the prairie more like a nobleman's park than a wild wilderness.

On entering the bushes they perceived that there was a lakelet embosomed like a gem in the surrounding trees. Passing through the belt of woodland they stood on the margin of the little lake.

"How beautiful!" exclaimed Ian, with a flush of pleasure on his sunburnt face. "Just like a bit of Paradise."

"Did you ever see Paradise, that you know so well what it is like?" asked Victor of his unromantic friend.

"Yes, Vic, I've seen it many a time—in imagination."

"Indeed, and what like was it, and what sort of people were there?"

"It was like—let me see—the most glorious scene ever beheld on earth, but more exquisite, and the sun that lighted it was more brilliant by far than ours."

"Not bad, for an unromantic imagination," said Victor, with much gravity. "Were there any ducks and geese there?"

"Yes, ducks; plenty of them, but no *geese*; and nobler game—even lions were there, so tame that little children could lead them."

"Better and better," said Victor; "and what of the people?"

Ian was on the point of saying that they were all—men, women, and children—the exact counterparts of Elsie Ravenshaw, but he checked himself and said that they were all honest, sincere, kind, gentle, upright, and that there was not a single cynical person there, nor a—

"Hush! what sort of a bird is that?" interrupted Victor, laying his hand on Ian's arm and pointing to a small patch of reeds in the lake.

There were so many birds of various kinds gambolling on the surface, that Ian had difficulty in distinguishing the creature referred to. At last he perceived it, a curious fat-bodied little bird with a pair of preposterously long legs, which stood eyeing its companions as if in contemplative pity.

"I know it not," said Ian; "never saw it before."

"We'll bag it now. Stand back," said Victor, raising his gun.

The above conversation had been carried on in a low tone, for the friends were still concealed by a bush from the various and numerous birds which disported themselves on the lake in fancied security and real felicity.

The crash of Victor's gun sent them screaming over the tree-tops—all save the fat creature with the long legs, which now lay dead on the water.

"Go in for it, Rollin, it's not deep, I think," said Victor.

"Troo, but it may be dangeroose for all dat," replied the half-breed, leaning his gun against a tree. "Howsomewhatever I vill try!"

The place turned out, as he had suspected, to be somewhat treacherous, with a floating bottom. Before he had waded half way to the dead bird the ground began to sink under him. Presently he threw up his arms, went right down, and disappeared.

Both Ian and Victor started forward with the intention of plunging into the water, but they had not reached the edge when Rollin reappeared, blowing like a grampus. They soon saw that he could swim, and allowed him to scramble ashore.

This misadventure did not prevent them from making further attempts to secure the bird, which Victor, having some sort of naturalistic propensities, was eager to possess. It was on going round the margin of the lake for this purpose that they came upon the cause of the perplexities before mentioned. On the other side of a point covered with thick bush they came upon the remains of a large Indian camp, which had evidently been occupied very recently. Indeed, the ashes of some of the fires, Rollin declared, were still warm; but it was probably Rollin's imagination which warmed them. It was found, too, that the trail of Petawanaquat entered this camp, and was there utterly lost in the confusion of tracks made everywhere by many feet, both large and small.

Here, then, was sufficient ground for anxiety. If the savage had joined this band and gone away with it, the pursuers could of course follow him up, but, in the event of their finding him among friends, there seemed little or no probability of their being able to rescue the stolen child. On the other hand, if Petawanaquat had left the Indians and continued his journey alone, the great difficulty that lay before them was to find his point of departure from a band which would naturally send out hunters right and left as they marched along.

"It's a blue look-out any way you take it," remarked poor Victor, with an expression worthy of Peegwish on his countenance.

"I vish it vas blue. It is black," said Rollin.

Ian replied to both remarks by saying that, whether black or blue, they must make the best of it, and set about doing that at once. To do his desponding comrades justice, they were quite ready for vigorous action in any form, notwithstanding their despair.

Accordingly, they followed the broad trail of the Indians into the prairie a short way, and, separating in different directions round its margins, carefully examined and followed up the tracks that diverged from it for considerable distances, but without discovering the print of the little moccasin with Elsie's patch, or the larger footprint of Tony's captor.

"You see, there are so many footprints, some like and some unlike, and they cross and recross each other to such an extent that it seems to me a hopeless case altogether," said Victor.

"You don't propose to give it up, do you?" asked Ian.

"Give it up!" repeated Victor, almost fiercely. "Give up Tony? NO! not as long as I can walk, or even crawl."

"Ve vill crawl before long, perhaps," said Rollin; "ve may even stop crawling an' die at last, but ve must not yet give in."

In the strength of this resolve they returned to the lakelet when the sun went down, and encamped there. It is needless to say that they supped and slept well notwithstanding—or

notwithstanding, as Rollin put it. Rollin was fond of long words, and possessed a few that were his own private property. Victor had a dream that night. He dreamt that he caught sight of an Indian on the plains with Tony on his shoulder; that he gave chase, and almost overtook them, when, to save himself, the Indian dropped his burden; that he, Victor, seized his rescued brother in a tight embrace, and burst into tears of joy; that Tony suddenly turned into Petawanaquat, and that, in the sharp revulsion of feeling, he, Victor, seized the nose of the savage and pulled it out to a length of three yards, twisted it round his neck and choked him, thrust his head down into his chest and tied his arms in a knot over it, and, finally, stuffing him into a mud-puddle, jumped upon him and stamped him down. It was an absurd dream, no doubt, but are not dreams generally absurd?

While engaged in the last mentioned humane operation, Victor was awakened by Ian.

"It's time to be moving," said his comrade with a laugh. "I would have roused you before, but you seemed to be so busily engaged with some friend that I hadn't the heart to part you sooner."

The whole of that day they spent in a fruitless effort to detect the footprints of Petawanaquat, either among the tracks made by the band of Indians or among those diverging from the main line of march. In so doing they wandered far from the camp at the lakelet, and even lost sight of each other. The only result was that Ian and Rollin returned in the evening dispirited and weary, and Victor lost himself.

The ease with which this is done is scarcely comprehensible by those who have not wandered over an unfamiliar and boundless plain, on which the clumps of trees and shrubs have no very distinctive features.

Victor's comrades, however, were alive to the danger. Not finding him in camp, they at once went out in different directions, fired shots until they heard his answering reply, and at last brought him safely in.

That night again they spent on the margin of the little lake, and over the camp-fire discussed their future plans. It was finally assumed that Petawanaquat had joined the Indians, and resolved that they should follow up the trail as fast as they could travel.

This they did during many days without, however, overtaking the Indians. Then the pemmican began to wax low, for in their anxiety to push on they neglected to hunt. At last, one evening, just as it was growing dark, and while they were looking out for a convenient resting-place, they came on the spot where the Indians had encamped, evidently the night before, for the embers of their fires were still smoking.

Here, then, they lay down with the pleasing hope, not unmingled with anxiety, that they should overtake the band on the following day.

Chapter Five.

Tony becomes a Redskin, and the Pursuers change their Game

When Petawanaquat joined the band of Indians, of whom we left Victor Ravenshaw and his comrades in eager pursuit, he deemed it advisable for various reasons to alter the costume and general appearance of his captive, and for that purpose took him to a sequestered spot in the bushes outside the camp.

Poor Tony had at first shrunk from his captor with inexpressible horror, but when he found that the Indian did not eat him his mind was calmed. As time advanced, and he perceived that Petawanaquat, although stern and very silent, took much pains to assist him on his long marches, and, above all, fed him with a liberal hand, his feelings changed considerably, and at last he began to regard the taciturn red man with something like fondness. Petawanaquat made no positive effort to gain the child's affections; he never fondled him, and seldom spoke, save for the purpose of giving a brief command, which Tony always obeyed with miraculous promptitude. The utmost that can be said is that the savage was gentle and supplied his wants. Could a civilised man have done much more?

It may be well to remark in passing that Tony, having associated a good deal with Indian boys in Red River, could speak their language pretty well. The Indian, of course, spoke his own tongue correctly, while Tony spoke it much as he spoke his own—childishly. As the reader probably does not understand the Indian language, we will give its equivalent as spoken by both in English.

On reaching the sequestered spot above referred to, Petawanaquat sat down on a fallen tree and made the wondering child stand up before him.

“The white man's boy must become an Indian,” he said solemnly.

“How zat poss'ble?” demanded the child with equal solemnity.

“By wearing the red man's clothes and painting his face,” returned his captor.

“Zat'll be jolly,” said Tony, with a smile of hearty approval.

How he expressed the word “jolly” in the Indian tongue we cannot tell, but he conveyed it somehow, for the Indian's lips expanded in a grim smile, the first he had indulged in since the day of the abduction.

The process by which Tony was transformed was peculiar. Opening a little bundle, the Indian took therefrom a small coat, or capote, of deer-skin; soft, and of a beautiful yellow, like the skin of the chamois. It was richly ornamented with porcupine-quill-work done in various colours, and had fringes of leather and little locks of hair hanging from it in various places. Causing Tony to strip, he put this coat on him, and fastened it round his waist with a worsted belt of bright scarlet. Next he drew on his little legs a pair of blue cloth leggings, which were ornamented with beads, and clothed his feet in new moccasins, embroidered, like the coat, with quill-work. Tony regarded all this with unconcealed pleasure, but it did not seem to please him so much when the Indian combed his rich curly hair straight down all round, so that his face was quite concealed by it. Taking a pair of large scissors from his bundle, the Indian passed one blade under the hair across the forehead, gave a sharp snip, and the whole mass fell like a curtain to the ground. It was a sublimely simple mode of clearing the way for the countenance—much in vogue among North American savages, from whom it has recently been introduced among civilised nations. The Indian then lifted the clustering curls at the back, and again opened the scissors. For a few moments his fingers played with the locks as he gazed thoughtfully at them; then, apparently changing his mind, he let them drop, and put the scissors away.

But the toilet was not yet complete. The versatile operator drew from his bundle some bright-red, yellow ochre, and blue paint, with a piece of charcoal, and set to work on Tony's countenance with all the force of a Van Dyck and the rich colouring of a Rubens. He began with a streak of scarlet

from the eyebrows to the end of the nose. Skipping the mouth, he continued the streak from the lower lip down the chin, under which it melted into a tender half-tint made by a smudge of yellow ochre and charcoal. This vigorous touch seemed to rouse the painter's spirit in Petawanaquat, for he pushed the boy out at arm's length, drew himself back, frowned, glared, and breathed hard. Three bars of blue from the bridge of the nose over each cheek, with two red circles below, and a black triangle on the forehead, were touched in with consummate skill and breadth. One of the touches was so broad that it covered the whole jaw, and had to be modified. On each closed upper eyelid an intensely black spot was painted, by which simple device Tony, with his azure orbs, was made, as it were, to wink black and gaze blue. The general effect having thus been blocked in, the artist devoted himself to the finishing touches, and at last turned out a piece of work which old Samuel Ravenshaw himself would have failed to recognise as his son.

It should have been remarked that previous to this, Petawanaquat had modified his own costume. His leggings were fringed with scalp-locks; he had painted his face, and stuck a bunch of feathers in his hair, and a gay firebag and a tomahawk were thrust under his belt behind.

"Ho!" he exclaimed, with a look of satisfaction, "now Tony is Tonyquat, and Petawanaquat is his father!"

"When will zoo take me back to my own fadder?" asked Tony, emboldened by the Indian's growing familiarity.

No reply was given to this, but the question seemed to throw the red man into a savage reverie, and a dark frown settled on his painted face, as he muttered, "The Little Wolf meant to take the white man's life, but he was wise: he spared his life and took his *heart*. His revenge is sweeter. Wah!"

Tony failed to catch the meaning of this, but fearing to rouse the anger of his new father, he held his tongue. Meanwhile the Indian put the child on a stump a few yards off in front of him, filled his pipe, lighted it, placed an elbow on each knee, rested his chin on his doubled fists, and glared at his handiwork. Tony was used to glaring by that time, though he did not like it. He sat still for a long time like one fascinated, and returned the stare with interest.

At last the Indian spoke.

"Is Tonyquat a Christian?"

Somewhat surprised but not perplexed by the question Tony answered, "Ho, yis," promptly.

The Indian again looked long and earnestly at the child, as if he were considering how far such a juvenile mind might be capable of going into a theological discussion.

"What *is* a Christian?" asked the Indian abruptly.

"A Kist'n's a dood boy," replied Tony; then, dropping his eyes for a moment in an effort to recall past lessons, he suddenly looked up with an intelligent smile, and said, "Oh, yis, I 'memers now. Elsie teach me a Kist'n boy's one what tries to be like de Lord—dood, kind, gentle, fo'givin', patient, an' heaps more; zat's what a Kist'n is."

The Indian nodded approvingly. This accorded, as far as it went, with what he had learned from the missionaries of Red River, but his mind was evidently perplexed. He smoked, meditated a considerable time, and glared at Tony in silence; then said suddenly—

"Tonyquat, your father is *not* a Christian."

"My fadder would knock zoo down if zoo say dat to hims face," replied the child confidently.

This seemed so palpable a truth that the Indian nodded several times, and grinned fiendishly.

"Do Christians swear, an' drink, and fight, and get angry till the blood makes the face blue, and strike with the fist?" asked Petawanaquat.

"Oh, no—*never*," replied Tony, adopting that shocked tone and look which Elsie was in the habit of using when anything wicked was propounded to her; "dey's always dood, like Josuf an' Abel an' Sam'l, an' Cain, an' David, an' Saul—"

Tony stopped short, with an indistinct idea that he was mixing pattern characters.

“Ho!” muttered the savage, with a gleam of triumph in his eyes, “Petawanaquat has got his heart.”

“Eh, zoo got ’im by heart a’ready? Took me long, long time to git ’em by heart,” said Tony, with a look of admiration, which was sadly marred by the pain. “Me’s not got ’em all off yet. But you’s clever, an’—an’—big.”

The Indian’s smile became a sad one, and his look was again perplexed, as he rose and returned to the camp, followed by his adopted son. It was obvious that no light was to be thrown on his religious difficulties, whatever they were, by Tonyquat.

After leaving the lakelet on the plains, the Indian travelled for several days with his friends; and then parting from them, went towards the west, to rejoin his family. This point of divergence the pursuers had missed, and when they overtook the Indian band, they found, to their intense regret, that the kidnapper had escaped them.

“We will hold on with the redskins,” said Ian Macdonald, while sitting in council with his companions after this discovery. “The chief tells me that buffaloes have been reported in a spot which lies in the direction we must follow to recover the trail. This advantage we now possess, however: we know where Petawanaquat is going—thanks to his so-called friends here, who don’t seem to care much about him—and as he believes he has distanced all pursuers, he will now journey slower than before. Besides, we must help to kill a buffalo or two, our meat being nearly done. What say you, Vic?”

“I say what you say, of course, though I’d rather set off ahead of the band, and push on as fast as we can.”

“Vich means dat youth bees impetuous toujours,” said Rollin.

In pursuance of this plan they journeyed with the Indians for three days, when an event occurred which modified their plans considerably. This was the discovery one afternoon of a broad trail, made by the passage of numerous carts and horsemen over the prairie.

“Buffalo-runners!” exclaimed Rollin, when they came upon the track.

“From Red River!” cried Victor.

“Even so, boys,” said Ian.

The Indian chief, who led the party, held the same opinion, and added that they were evidently journeying in the same direction with themselves. This rendered it necessary that they should make a forced march during the night, it being otherwise impossible for men on foot to overtake a party of horsemen. Towards midnight of the same day they had the satisfaction of seeing their campfires in the distance. Soon afterwards they were within the circle of the camp, where men were still smoking and eating round the fires, and women and children were moving busily about.

“Why, there are John Flett and David Mowat,” exclaimed Victor, as several of the men came forward to meet the party.

“An’ Hayes, an’ Vinklemann,” cried Rollin.

Another minute and they were shaking hands amid a chorus of surprised and hearty questions and replies.

“Is Louis Lambert with you?” asked Victor, after mutual explanations had been given.

“No,” said David Mowat, with a laugh, “he’s got other fish to fry at home.”

Poor Ian winced, for he at once pictured to himself Elsie as the mermaid hinted at.

“Now, boys, I’m going to ask some of you to make a sacrifice,” said Ian. “We had intended to follow up this chase on foot, but of course will be able to accomplish our end sooner on horseback. I want three of you to lend us your horses. You’re sure to be well paid for them by Sam Ravenshaw and my father. I’ll guarantee you that—”

“We want no guarantee,” interrupted John Flett, “and we have spare horses enough in the camp to mount you without giving up our own; so make your mind easy.”

“Zat is troo,” said Herr Winklemann; “ve has goot horse to spare; buff’lo-runners every von. Bot you mus’ stay vid us von day for run ze buff’lo an’ git supply of meat.”

Victor and his friends at once agreed to this, all the more readily that the possession of horses would now enable them easily to overtake the fugitives. Accordingly, they sat down to a splendid supper of robbiboo, and continued to eat, chat, and quaff tea far into the following morning, until nature asserted herself by shutting up their eyelids.

The band with which our adventurers were now associated was composed of a motley crew of Red River half-breeds, out for the great spring buffalo hunt. It consisted of nearly 700 hunters, as many women, more than 400 children, and upwards of 1000 carts, with horses and draught oxen, besides about 700 buffalo-runners, or trained hunting-horses, and more than 500 dogs. These latter, although useless in the spring hunt, were, nevertheless, taken with them, fed, and cared for, because of their valuable qualities as draught animals for light sledges in winter.

Some of the hunters were steady-going and respectable enough; others were idle, thriftless fellows, who could not settle to farming in the colony, and even in the chase were lazy, bad hunters. The women were there for the purpose of attending to camp duties—cooking, dressing the buffalo skins, making bags from the animals' green hides, with the hair left on the outside, and filling the same with pemmican.

This substance, as we have elsewhere remarked, is by no means unpalatable; it is very nutritious, and forms the chief food of the hundreds of voyageurs who traverse Rupert's Land in boats and canoes during the open season of the year. It must be understood, however, that the compost is not attractive in appearance. It is made in the open air by women who are not very particular in their habits. Hence, during windy weather, a modicum of dust is introduced into it. Even stray leaves and twigs may get into it at times, and it is always seasoned more or less profusely with buffalo hairs. But these are trifles to strong and hungry men.

Two trips to the plains were made annually by these hunters. The proceeds of the spring hunt were always sold to supply them with needed clothing, ammunition, etcetera, for the year. The "fall or autumn hunt" furnished them with their winter stock of food, and helped to pay off their debts, most of them being supplied on credit. Sometimes the fall hunt failed, in which case starvation stared the improvident among them in the face, and suffering, more or less severe, was the lot of all.

Little, however, did the reckless, jovial half-breeds care for such considerations on the occasion about which we write. It was the spring hunt. The year was before them. Health rolled in the veins and hope revelled in the breasts of all as they mounted their steeds, and sallied forth to the chase.

Ah! it was a memorable day for Victor, when, at early dawn, he vaulted into the saddle of the horse lent to him, and went off to hunt the buffalo.

The said horse began by standing straight up on its hind legs like a man! Victor held on by the mane. Reversing the process, it pointed its tail to the sky. Victor stood in the stirrups. It swerved to the right, it swerved to the left, but Victor swerved with it accommodately. He was a splendid horseman. Finding that out at last, the steed took the bit in its teeth and ran away. Victor let it run—nay, he whacked its sides and *made* it run. Dozens of wild fellows were curvetting and racing around him. It was his *first* hunt. Mad with excitement, he finally swept away from his comrades with a series of war-whoops that would have done credit to the fiercest redskin on the North American plains.

Chapter Six.

Describes a Great Hunt

The huge bison, or buffalo, of the North American prairie is gregarious; in other words, it loves society and travels in herds. These herds are sometimes so vast as absolutely to blacken the plains for miles around.

The half-breed buffalo-hunters of Red River were also gregarious. From the moment of their quitting the settlements they kept together for mutual help and protection. Although a free, wild, and lawless set, they found it absolutely necessary for hunting purposes to organise themselves, and thus by voluntary submission to restraint, unwittingly did homage to Law! On a level plain at a place called Pembina, three days out from Red River, the whole camp squatted down; the roll was called, and rules and regulations for the journey were agreed upon and settled. Then ten captains were named, the senior being Baptiste Warder, an English half-breed, a fine bold-looking and discreet man of resolute character, who was thus elected the great war chief of the little army. As commander-in-chief Baptiste had various duties to perform, among others to see that lost property picked up about the camp should be restored to its owner through the medium of a public crier, who went his rounds every evening. Each captain had ten stout fellows under him to act as soldiers or policemen. Ten guides were also appointed, each of whom led the camp day about and carried its flag or standard. The hoisting of the flag each morning was the signal for raising the camp. Half an hour was the time allowed to get ready, unless, any one being sick or animals having strayed, delay became necessary. All day the flag remained up; its being lowered each evening was the signal for encamping. Then the captains and their men arranged the order of the camp. The carts as they arrived moved to their appointed places, side by side, with the trains outwards, and formed a circle, inside of which, at one end, the tents were pitched in double and triple rows, the horses, etcetera, being tethered at the other end. Thus they were at all times ready to resist attack from Indians.

Among other rules laid down on this occasion at starting were the following:—

No hunting to be allowed on the Sabbath day. No party to fork off, lag behind, or go before, without permission. No hunter or party to run buffalo before the general order, and every captain in turn to mount guard with his men and patrol the camp. The punishments for offenders were, like themselves, rather wild and wasteful. For a first offence against the laws, a culprit was to have his saddle and bridle cut up! For the second, his coat to be taken and cut up; and for the third he was to be flogged. A person convicted of theft was to be brought to the middle of the camp, and have his or her name loudly proclaimed three times, with the word “thief” added each time.

It was the third week out from the settlement when the hunters met with Victor Ravenshaw and his friends, yet up to that day they had failed to find the buffalo, and were well-nigh starving. The intelligence, therefore, that scouts had at length discovered game, had filled the camp with joy.

After having taken a little of the mettle out of his steed, as related in the last chapter, Victor caused him to make a wide circuit on the plain, and came up behind the line of hunters just as they topped a prairie undulation, or wave, and sighted the buffalo. It was a grand array, the sight of which thrilled the young sportsman to the heart. Full four hundred huntsmen, mounted on fresh and restive steeds, were slowly advancing, waiting eagerly for the word to start. Baptiste Warder, their chief, was in front with his telescope, surveying the game and the ground. Victor pushed in between Ian and Rollin, who rode near the centre of the impatient line. The wild cattle blackened the plain at the distance of about a mile and a half from them.

“Surely they must have seen us by this time,” said Victor, in a voice of suppressed agitation.

“Have you got your powder-horn and bullets handy?” asked Ian.

“Yes; all right.”

“Put ’im in de mout, de mout,” said Rollin quickly.

The half-breed here referred to a habit of the hunters, who carry several bullets in their mouths to facilitate loading while running at full speed. The method is simple. The hunter merely pours powder into his left palm, transfers it to his gun, drops a bullet from his mouth into the muzzle, hits the butt smartly on his pommel, which at once sends the charge home and forces priming into the pan, and thus is ready for another shot.

Victor, having forgotten all about this, immediately put three bullets into his mouth, his gun being already loaded.

“Don’t swallow them!” said Ian.

“Swallow your own advice,” growled Victor.

“Start!” shouted Captain Warder.

The welcome signal sent an electric thrill along the line. It was promptly obeyed, first at a slow trot, then at a hard gallop. The low rumbling thunder of their tramp was in keeping with the wild eager looks of the half-savage hunters. They had approached to within four or five hundred yards before the buffalo-bulls curved their tails into marks of interrogation and began to paw the ground. Another moment, and the mighty herd took to flight. Then the huntsmen let loose their eager steeds. As squadrons of dragoons charge into the thick of battle, these wild fellows bore down with grand momentum on the buffalo bands. The very earth seemed to tremble when they charged, but when the herd sprang away in the frenzy of terror it was as though a shock of earthquake had riven the plains. Right into the careering mass the horsemen rushed. Shots began—here, there, and everywhere, until a rattle of musketry filled the air, while smoke, dust, shouts, and bellowing added to the wild confusion. The fattest animals were selected, and in an incredibly short space of time a thousand of their carcasses strewed the plain.

The men who were best mounted of course darted forward in advance and secured the fattest cows. They seldom dropped a mark to identify their property. These hunters possess a power of distinguishing the animals they have slain during a hot and long ride, which amounts almost to an instinct—even though they may have killed from ten to twelve animals. An experienced hunter on a good horse will perform such a feat during one race. He seldom fires till within three or four yards of his prey, and never misses. A well-trained horse, the moment it hears the shot, springs on one side to avoid stumbling over the buffalo. An awkward or shy horse will not approach nearer than ten or fifteen yards. Badly mounted men think themselves well off if they secure two or three animals during one run.

As the battle continued, the very air was darkened with dust and smoke. Of course such a fight could not rage without casualties. There were, in truth, many hairbreadth and some almost miraculous escapes, for the ground was rocky and full of badger-holes. Twenty-three horses and riders were seen at one moment all sprawling on the ground. One horse was gored by a bull and killed on the spot: two other horses fell over it and were disabled. One rider broke his shoulder-blade, another burst his gun by careless loading, and lost three fingers, while another was struck on the knee by a spent ball. The wonder was, not that so many, but that so few, were hurt, when it is considered that the riders were dashing about in clouds of dust and smoke, crossing and recrossing each other in all directions, with shots firing right and left, before, behind—everywhere—in quick succession. The explanation must be that, every man being a trained marksman, nearly every bullet found its billet in a buffalo’s body.

With his heart in his mouth, as well as his bullets, Victor Ravenshaw entered into the wild *mêlée*, scarce knowing what he was about. Although inexperienced, he knew well what to do, for many a time had he listened to the stories of buffalo-hunters in times past, and had put all their operations in practice with a wooden gun in mimic chase. But it was not easy to keep cool. He saw a fat animal just ahead of him, pushed close alongside; pointed his gun without raising it to his shoulder, and fired. He almost burnt the animal’s hair, so near was he. The buffalo fell and his horse leaped to one side.

Victor had forgotten this part of the programme. He was nearly unseated, but held on by the mane and recovered his seat.

Immediately he poured powder into his palm—spilling a good deal and nearly dropping his gun from under his left arm in the operation—and commenced to reload while at full speed. He spat a ball into the muzzle, just missed knocking out some of his front teeth, forgot to strike the butt on the pommel of the saddle, (which omission would have infallibly resulted in the bursting of the gun had it exploded), pointed at another animal and drew the trigger. It missed fire, of course, for want of priming. He remembered his error; corrected it, pointed again, fired, and dropped another cow.

Elated with success, he was about to reload when a panting bull came up behind him. He seized his bridle, and swerved a little. The bull thundered on, mad with rage; its tail aloft, and pursued by Michel Rollin, who seemed as angry as the bull.

“Hah! I vill stop you!” growled the excited half-breed as he dashed along.

Animals were so numerous and close around them that they seemed in danger, at the moment, of being crushed. Suddenly the bull turned sharp round on its pursuer. To avoid it the horse leaped on one side; the girths gave way and the rider, saddle and all, were thrown on the bull’s horns. With a wild toss of its head, the surprised creature sent the man high into the air. In his fall he alighted on the back of another buffalo—it was scarcely possible to avoid this in the crowd—and slipped to the ground. Strange to say, Rollin was not hurt, but he was effectually thrown out of the running for that time, and Victor saw him no more till evening. We relate no fanciful or exaggerated tale, good reader. Our description is in strict accordance with the account of a credible eye-witness.

For upwards of an hour and a half the wild chase was kept up; the plain was strewn with the dead and dying, and horsemen as well as buffaloes were scattered far and wide.

Victor suddenly came upon Ian while in pursuit of an animal.

“What luck!” he shouted.

“I’ve killed two—by accident, I think,” said Ian, swerving towards his comrade, but not slackening his pace.

“Capital! I’ve killed three. Who’s that big fellow ahead after the old bull?”

“It’s Winklemann. He seems to prefer tough meat.”

As Ian spoke the bull in question turned suddenly round, just as Rollin’s bull had done, and received Winklemann’s horse on its hairy forehead. The poor man shot from the saddle as if he had been thrown from a catapult, turned a complete somersault over the buffalo, and fell on his back beyond. Thrusting the horse to one side, the buffalo turned and seemed to gore the prostrate German as it dashed onward.

Puffing up at once, both Victor and Ian leaped from their horses and hastened to assist their friend. He rose slowly to a sitting posture as they approached, and began to feel his legs with a troubled look.

“Not much hurt, I hope?” said Ian, kneeling beside him. “No bones broken?”

“No, I think not; mine leks are fery vell, but I fear mine lunks are gone,” answered the German, untying his belt.

It was found, however, on examination, that the lungs were all right, the bull’s horn having merely grazed the poor man’s ribs. In a few minutes his horse was caught, and he was able to remount, but the trio were now far behind the tide of war, which had swept away by that time to the horizon. They therefore determined to rest content with what they had accomplished and return to camp.

“What a glorious chase!” exclaimed Victor as they rode slowly back; “I almost wish that white men might have the redskin’s heaven and hunt the buffalo for ever.”

“You’d soon grow tired of your heaven,” said Ian, laughing. “I suspect that the soul requires occupation of a higher kind than the pursuing and slaying of wild animals.”

“No doubt you are right, you learned philosopher; but you can’t deny that this has been a most enjoyable burst.”

“I don’t deny anything. I merely controvert your idea that it would be pleasant to go on with this sort of thing for ever.”

“Hah! de more so, ven your back is almost broke and your lunks are goréd.”

“But your ‘lunks’ are not ‘goréd,’” said Victor. “Come, Winklemann, be thankful that you are alive.—By the way, Ian, where are the animals you killed?”

“We are just coming to one. Here it is. I threw my cap down to mark it, and there is another one, a quarter of a mile behind it. We have plenty of meat, you see, and shall be able to quit the camp to-morrow.”

While the friends were thus jogging onwards, the hunt came to an end, and the hunters, throwing off their coats and turning up their sleeves, drew their scalping-knives, and began the work of skinning and cutting up the animals. While thus engaged their guns and bridles lay handy beside them, for at such times their Indian enemies are apt to pounce on and scalp some of them, should they chance to be in the neighbourhood. At the same time the carts advanced and began to load with meat and marrow-bones. The utmost expedition was used, for all the meat that they should be obliged to leave on the field when night closed in would be lost to them and become the property of the wolves. We know not what the loss amounted to on this occasion. But the gain was eminently satisfactory, no fewer than 1375 tongues, (as tit-bits and trophies), being brought into camp.

Is it to be wondered at that there were sounds of rejoicing that night round the blazing camp-fires? Need we remark that the hissing of juicy steaks sounded like a sweet lullaby far on into the night; that the contents of marrow-bones oiled the fingers, to say nothing of the mouths, cheeks, and noses, of man, woman, and child? Is it surprising that people who had been on short allowance for a considerable time past took advantage of the occasion and ate till they could hardly stand?

Truly they made a night of it. Their Indian visitors, who constituted themselves camp-followers, gorged themselves to perfect satisfaction, and even the dogs, who had a full allowance, licked their lips that night with inexpressible felicity.

Chapter Seven.

Some of the Shadows of a Buffalo-Hunter's Life

In order to give the women time to prepare some pemmican for them, Victor Ravenshaw and his companions agreed to spend another day with the hunters, and again, as a matter of course, followed them to the chase.

The same wild pursuit, accompanied by accidents, serious and serio-comic, took place, and success again attended the hunt, but the day did not end so happily, owing to an event which filled the camp with great anxiety. It happened at the close of the day.

The men were dropping into camp by twos and threes, wearied with hard work, more or less covered with dust and blood, and laden with buffalo tongues. Carts, also, were constantly coming in, filled with meat. The women were busy cutting up and drying the meat in the sun, or over a slow fire, melting down fat, pounding the dried meat with stones, and manufacturing bags out of the raw hides. Chatting and merry laughter resounded on all sides, for pemmican and bales of dried meat meant money, and they were coining it fast.

Towards sunset a band of several hunters appeared on the ridge in front of the camp, and came careering gaily towards it. Baptiste Warder, the mighty captain, led. Victor, Ian, Rollin, Winklemann, Flett, Mowat, and others followed. They dashed into camp like a whirlwind, and sprang from their steeds, evidently well pleased with the success of the day.

"Had splendid sport," said Victor, with glittering eyes, to one of the subordinate captains, who addressed him. "I killed ten animals myself, and Ian Macdonald missed fifteen; Winklemann dropped six, besides dropping himself—"

"Vat is dat you zay?" demanded the big German, who was divesting himself of some of the accoutrements of the chase.

"I say that you tumbled over six buffaloes and then tumbled over yourself," said Victor, laughing.

"Zat is not troo. It vas mine horse vat tumbled. Of course I could not go on riding upon noting after mine horse vas down."

At supper Herr Winklemann was quieter than usual, and rather cross. His propensity to tumble seemed to be a sore subject with him, both as to body and mind. He made more than one cutting remark to Victor during the meal. After supper pipes were of course lighted, and conversation flowed freely. The only two who did not smoke were Ian Macdonald and, strange to say, Winklemann. That worthy German was a brilliant exception to his countrymen in the matter of tobacco. Victor, under the influence of example, was attempting in a quiet way to acquire the art, but with little success. He took to the pipe awkwardly.

"Vat vor you smok?" asked Winklemann, in a tone of contempt to Victor. "It is clear zat you do not loike it."

"How d'you know that I don't like it?" asked Victor, with a blush and a laugh.

"Becowse your face do show it. Ve does not make faces at vat ve loikes."

"That may be," retorted Victor, somewhat sharply. "Nevertheless, I have earned a hunter's right to enjoy my pipe as well as the rest of you."

"Bon, bon, c'est vrai—true," cried Rollin, letting a huge cloud escape from his lips.

"Bah! doos killing buffalo give you right to do voolishness? Do not try for deceive yourself. You loike it not, bot you tink it makes you look loike a *man*. Zat is vat you tink. Nevair vas you more mistouken. I have seen von leetle poy put on a pair of big boots and tink he look very grand, very loike him fadder; bot de boots only makes him look smaller dan before, an' more foolish. So it is vid de pipe in de mout of de beardless poy."

Having thrown this apple of discord into the midst of the party, Winklemann shut his mouth firmly, as if waiting for a belligerent reply. As for Victor, he flushed again, partly from indignation at this attack on his liberty to do as he pleased, and partly from shame at having the real motive of his heart so ruthlessly exposed. Victor was too honest and manly to deny the fact that he had not yet acquired a liking for tobacco, and admitted to himself that, in very truth, his object in smoking was to appear, as he imagined, more like a man, forgetful or ignorant of the fact that men, (even smokers), regard beardless consumers of tobacco as poor imitative monkeys. He soon came to see the habit in its true light, and gave it up, luckily, before he became its slave. He would have been more than mortal, however, had he given in at once. Continuing, therefore, to puff with obstinate vigour, he returned to the charge.

“Smoking is no worse than drinking, Winklemann, and you know that you’re fond of beer.”

“Bon!” said Rollin, nodding approval.

“Vat then?” cried the German, who never declined a challenge of any kind, and who was fond of wordy war; “doos my sin joostify yours? Bot you is wrong. If smoking be not worse dan trinking, it is less excusable, for to trink is natural. I may apuse mine power an’ trink vat is pad for me, but den I may likewise trink vat is coot for me. Vit smoking, no; you cannot smok vat is coot; it is all pad togeder. Von chile is porn; vell, it do trink at vonce, vidout learning. Bot did any von ever hear of a chile vat cry for a pipe ven it was porn?”

The laugh with which this question was greeted was suddenly arrested by the sound of a galloping steed. Every one sprang up and instinctively seized a weapon, for the clatter of hoofs had that unmistakable character which indicates desperate urgency. It was low and dull at first, but became suddenly and sharply distinct as a rider rose over the ridge to the left and bore madly down on the camp, lashing his horse with furious persistency.

“It’s young Vallé,” exclaimed Captain Baptiste, hastening to meet him.

Vallé, who was a mere youth, had gone out with his father, Louison Vallé, and the rest of the hunters in the morning. With glaring eyes, and scarce able to speak, he now reined in his trembling steed, and told the terrible news that his father had been killed by Sioux Indians. A party of half-breeds instantly mounted and dashed away over the plains, led by the poor boy on a fresh horse. On the way he told the tale more fully.

We have already said that when skinning the buffalo late in the evening, or at a distance from camp, the hunters ran considerable risk from savages, and were more or less wary in consequence. It was drawing towards sunset when Louison Vallé perceived that night would descend before he could secure the whole of the animals he had shot, and made up his mind to the sacrifice. While busily engaged on a buffalo, he sent his son, on his own horse, to a neighbouring eminence, to watch and guard against surprise. Even while the father was giving directions to the son, a party of Sioux, armed with bows and arrows, were creeping towards him, snake-like, through the long grass. These suddenly rushed upon him, and he had barely time to shout to his son, “Make for the camp!” when he fell, pierced by a shower of arrows. Of course, the savages made off at once, well knowing that pursuit was certain. The murderers were twelve in number. They made for the bush country. Meanwhile, the avengers reached the murdered man. The body was on its back, just as it had fallen. Death must have relieved the unfortunate hunter before the scalp had been torn from his skull.

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