The Patrol of the Sun Dance Trail

Ralph Connor

Table of Contents

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CHAPTER I. THE TRAIL−RUNNER

High up on the hillside in the midst of a rugged group of jack pines the Union Jack shook out its folds gallantly in the breeze that swept down the Kicking Horse Pass. That gallant flag marked the headquarters of Superintendent Strong, of the North West Mounted Police, whose special duty it was to preserve law and order along the construction line of the Canadian Pacific Railway Company, now pushed west some scores of miles.

Along the tote−road, which ran parallel to the steel, a man, dark of skin, slight but wiry, came running, his hard panting, his streaming face, his open mouth proclaiming his exhaustion. At a little trail that led to the left he paused, noted its course toward the flaunting flag, turned into it, then struggled up the rocky hillside till he came to the wooden shack, with a deep porch running round it, and surrounded by a rustic fence which enclosed a garden whose neatness illustrated a characteristic of the British soldier. The runner passed in through the gate and up the little gravel walk and began to ascend the steps.

"Halt!" A quick sharp voice arrested him. "What do you want here?" From the side of the shack an orderly appeared, neat, trim and dandified in appearance, from his polished boots to his wide cowboy hat.

"Beeg Chief," panted the runner. "Me−−see−−beeg Chief−−queeck."

The orderly looked him over and hesitated.

"What do you want Big Chief for?"

"Me−−want−−say somet'ing," said the little man, fighting to recover his breath, "somet'ing beeg−−sure beeg." He made a step toward the door.

"Halt there!" said the orderly sharply. "Keep out, you half− breed!"

"See−−beeg Chief−−queeck," panted the half−breed, for so he was, with fierce insistence.

The orderly hesitated. A year ago he would have hustled him off the porch in short order. But these days were anxious days. Rumors wild and terrifying were running through the trails of the dark forest. Everywhere were suspicion and unrest. The Indian tribes throughout the western territories and in the eastern part of British Columbia, under cover of an unwonted quiet, were in a state of excitement, and this none knew better than the North West Mounted Police. With stoical unconcern the Police patroled their beats, rode in upon the reserves, careless, cheery, but with eyes vigilant for signs and with ears alert for sounds of the coming storm. Only the Mounted Police, however, and a few old−timers who knew the Indians and their half−breed kindred gave a single moment's thought to the bare possibility of danger. The vast majority of the Canadian people knew nothing of the tempestuous gatherings of French half−breed settlers in little hamlets upon the northern plains along the Saskatchewan. The fiery resolutions reported now and then in the newspapers reciting the wrongs and proclaiming the rights of these remote, ignorant, insignificant, half−tamed pioneers of civilization roused but faint interest in the minds of the people of Canada. Formal resolutions and petitions of rights had been regularly sent during the past two years to Ottawa and there as regularly pigeon−holed above the desks of deputy ministers. The politicians had a somewhat dim notion that there was some sort of row on among the "breeds" about Prince Albert and Battleford, but this concerned them little. The members of the Opposition found in the resolutions and petitions of rights useful ammunition for attack upon the Government. In purple periods the leader arraigned the supineness and the indifference of the Premier and his Government to "the rights and wrongs of our fellow−citizens who, amid the hardships of a pioneer civilization, were laying broad and deep the foundations of Empire." But after the smoke and noise of the explosion had passed both Opposition and Government speedily forgot the half−breed and his tempestuous gatherings in the stores and schoolhouses, at church doors and in open camps, along the banks of the far away Saskatchewan.

There were a few men, however, that could not forget. An Indian agent here and there with a sense of responsibility beyond the pickings of his post, a Hudson Bay factor whose long experience in handling the affairs of half−breeds and Indians instructed him to read as from a printed page what to others were meaningless and incoherent happenings, and above all the officers of the Mounted Police, whose duty it was to preserve the "pax Britannica" over some three hundred thousand square miles of Her Majesty's dominions in this far northwest

reach of Empire, these carried night and day an uneasiness in their minds which found vent from time to time in reports and telegraphic messages to members of Government and other officials at headquarters, who slept on, however, undisturbed. But the word was passed along the line of Police posts over the plains and far out into British Columbia to watch for signs and to be on guard. The Police paid little heed to the high−sounding resolutions of a few angry excitable half−breeds, who, daring though they were and thoroughly able to give a good account of themselves in any trouble that might arise, were quite insignificant in number; but there was another peril, so serious, so terrible, that the oldest officer on the force spoke of it with face growing grave and with lowered voice−−the peril of an Indian uprising.

All this and more made the trim orderly hesitate. A runner with news was not to be kicked unceremoniously off the porch in these days, but to be considered.

"You want to see the Superintendent, eh?"

"Oui, for sure−−queeck−−run ten mile," replied the half−breed with angry impatience.

"All right," said the orderly, "what's your name?"

"Name? Me, Pinault−−Pierre Pinault. Ah, sacr−r−e! Beeg Chief know me−−Pinault." The little man drew himself up.

"All right! Wait!" replied the orderly, and passed into the shack. He had hardly disappeared when he was back again, obviously shaken out of his correct military form.

"Go in!" he said sharply. "Get a move on! What are you waiting for?"

The half−breed threw him a sidelong glance of contempt and passed quickly into the "Beeg Chief's" presence.

Superintendent Strong was a man prompt in decision and prompt in action, a man of courage, too, unquestioned, and with that bulldog spirit that sees things through to a finish. To these qualities it was that he owed his present command, for it was no insignificant business to keep the peace and to make the law run along the line of the Canadian Pacific Railway through the Kicking Horse Pass during construction days.

The half−breed had been but a few minutes with the Chief when the orderly was again startled out of his military decorum by the bursting open of the Superintendent's door and the sharp rattle of the Superintendent's orders.

"Send Sergeant Ferry to me at once and have my horse and his brought round immediately!" The orderly sprang to attention and saluted.

"Yes, sir!" he replied, and swiftly departed.

A few minutes' conference with Sergeant Ferry, a few brief commands to the orderly, and the Superintendent and Sergeant were on their way down the steep hillside toward the tote−road that led eastward through the pass. A half−hour's ride brought them to a trail that led off to the south, into which the Superintendent, followed by the Sergeant, turned his horse. Not a word was spoken by either man. It was not the Superintendent's custom to share his plans with his subordinate officers until it became necessary. "What you keep behind your teeth," was a favorite maxim with the Superintendent, "will harm neither yourself nor any other man." They were on the old Kootenay Trail, for a hundred years and more the ancient pathway of barter and of war for the Indian tribes that hunted the western plains and the foothill country and brought their pelts to the coast by way of the Columbia River. Along the lower levels the old trail ran, avoiding, with the sure instinct of a skilled engineer, nature's obstacles, and taking full advantage of every sloping hillside and every open stretch of woods. Now and then, however, the trail must needs burrow through a deep thicket of spruce and jack pine and scramble up a rocky ridge, where the horses, trained as they were in mountain climbing, had all they could do to keep their feet.

Ten miles and more they followed the tortuous trail, skirting mountain peaks and burrowing through underbrush, scrambling up rocky ridges and sliding down their farther sides, till they came to a park−like country where from the grassy sward the big Douglas firs, trimmed clear of lower growth and standing spaced apart, lifted on red and glistening trunks their lofty crowns of tufted evergreen far above the lesser trees.

As they approached the open country the Superintendent proceeded with greater caution, pausing now and then to listen.

"There ought to be a big powwow going on somewhere near," he said to his Sergeant, "but I can hear nothing. Can you?"

The Sergeant leaned over his horse's ears.

"No, sir, not a sound."

"And yet it can't be far away," growled the Superintendent.

The trail led through the big firs and dipped into a little grassy valley set round with thickets on every side. Into this open glade they rode. The Superintendent was plainly disturbed and irritated; irritated because surprised and puzzled. Where he had expected to find a big Indian powwow he found only a quiet sunny glade in the midst of a silent forest. Sergeant Ferry waited behind him in respectful silence, too wise to offer any observation upon the situation. Hence in the Superintendent grew a deeper irritation.

"Well, I'll be−−!" He paused abruptly. The Superintendent rarely used profanity. He reserved this form of emphasis for supreme moments. He was possessed of a dramatic temperament and appreciated at its full value the effect of a climax. The climax had not yet arrived, hence his self−control.

"Exactly so," said the Sergeant, determined to be agreeable.

"What's that?"

"They don't seem to be here, sir," replied the Sergeant, staring up into the trees.

"Where?" cried the Superintendent, following the direction of the Sergeant's eyes. "Do you suppose they're a lot of confounded monkeys?"

"Exactly−−that is−−no, sir, not at all, sir. But−−"

"They were to have been here," said the Superintendent angrily. "My information was most positive and trustworthy."

"Exactly so, sir," replied the Sergeant. "But they haven't been here at all!" The Superintendent impatiently glared at the Sergeant, as if he were somehow responsible for this inexplicable failure upon the part of the Indians.

"Exactly−−that is−−no, sir. No sign. Not a sign." The Sergeant was most emphatic.

"Well, then, where in−−where−−? The Superintendent felt himself rapidly approaching an emotional climax and took himself back with a jerk. "Well," be continued, with obvious self−control, "let's look about a bit."

With keen and practised eyes they searched the glade, and the forest round about it, and the trails leading to it.

"Not a sign," said the Superintendent emphatically, "and for the first time in my experience Pinault is wrong−−the very first time. He was dead sure."

"Pinault−−generally right, sir," observed the Sergeant.

"Always."

"Exactly so. But this time−−"

"He's been fooled," declared the Superintendent. "A big sun dance was planned for this identical spot. They were all to be here, every tribe represented, the Stonies even had been drawn into it, some of the young bloods I suppose. And, more than that, the Sioux from across the line."

"The Sioux, eh?" said the Sergeant. "I didn't know the Sioux were in this."

"Ah, perhaps not, but I have information that the Sioux−−in fact−−" here the Superintendent dropped his voice and unconsciously glanced about him, "the Sioux are very much in this, and old Copperhead himself is the moving spirit of the whole business."

"Copperhead!" exclaimed the Sergeant in an equally subdued tone.

"Yes, sir, that old devil is taking a hand in the game. My information was that he was to have been here to−day, and, by the Lord Harry! if he had been we would have put him where the dogs wouldn't bite him. The thing is growing serious."

"Serious!" exclaimed the Sergeant in unwonted excitement. "You just bet−−that is exactly so, sir. Why the Sioux must be good for a thousand."

"A thousand!" exclaimed the Superintendent. "I've the most positive information that the Sioux could place in the war path two thousand fighting−men inside of a month. And old Copperhead is at the bottom of it all. We want that old snake, and we want him badly." And the Superintendent swung on to his horse and set off on the return trip.

"Well, sir, we generally get what we want in that way," volunteered the Sergeant, following his chief.

"We do−−in the long run. But in this same old Copperhead we have the acutest Indian brain in all the western country. Sitting Bull was a fighter, Copperhead is a schemer."

They rode in silence, the Sergeant busy with a dozen schemes whereby he might lay old Copperhead by the heels; the Superintendent planning likewise. But in the Superintendent's plans the Sergeant had no place. The capture of the great Sioux schemer must be entrusted to a cooler head than that of the impulsive, daring,

loyal−hearted Sergeant.

CHAPTER II. HIS COUNTRY'S NEED

For full five miles they rode in unbroken silence, the Superintendent going before with head pressed down on his breast and eyes fixed upon the winding trail. A heavy load lay upon him. True, his immediate sphere of duty lay along the line of the Canadian Pacific Railway, but as an officer of Her Majesty's North West Mounted Police he shared with the other officers of that force the full responsibility of holding in steadfast loyalty the tribes of Western Indians. His knowledge of the presence in the country of the arch−plotter of the powerful and warlike Sioux from across the line entailed a new burden. Well he knew that his superior officer would simply expect him to deal with the situation in a satisfactory manner. But how, was the puzzle. A mere handful of men he had under his immediate command and these dispersed in ones and twos along the line of railway, and not one of them fit to cope with the cunning and daring Sioux.

With startling abruptness he gave utterance to his thoughts.

"We must get him−−and quick. Things are moving too rapidly for any delay. The truth is," he continued, with a deepening impatience in his voice, "the truth is we are short−handed. We ought to be able to patrol every trail in this country. That old villain has fooled us to−day and he'll fool us again. And he has fooled Pinault, the smartest breed we've got. He's far too clever to be around loose among our Indians."

Again they rode along in silence, the Superintendent thinking deeply.

"I know where he is!" he exclaimed suddenly, pulling up his horse. "I know where he is−−this blessed minute. He's on the Sun Dance Trail and in the Sun Dance Canyon, and they're having the biggest kind of a powwow."

"The Sun Dance!" echoed the Sergeant. "By Jove, if only Sergeant Cameron were on this job! He knows the Sun Dance inside and out, every foot."

The Superintendent swung his horse sharply round to face his Sergeant.

"Cameron!" he exclaimed thoughtfully. "Cameron! I believe you're right. He's the man−−the very man. But," he added with sudden remembrance, "he's left the Force."

"Left the Force, sir. Yes, sir," echoed the Sergeant with a grin. "He appeared to have a fairly good reason, too."

"Reason!" snorted the Superintendent. "Reason! What in−−? What did he−−? Why did he pull off that fool stunt at this particular time? A kid like him has no business getting married."

"Mighty fine girl, sir," suggested the Sergeant warmly. "Mighty lucky chap. Not many fellows could resist such a sharp attack as he had."

"Fine girl! Oh, of course, of course−−fine girl certainly. Fine girl. But what's that got to do with it?"

"Well, sir," ventured the Sergeant in a tone of surprise, "a good deal, sir, I should say. By Jove, sir, I could have−−if I could have pulled it off myself−−but of course she was an old flame of Cameron's and I'd no chance."

"But the Service, sir!" exclaimed the Superintendent with growing indignation. "The Service! Why! Cameron was right in line for promotion. He had the making of a most useful officer. And with this trouble coming on it was−−it was−−a highly foolish, indeed a highly reprehensible proceeding, sir." The Superintendent was rapidly mounting his pet hobby, which was the Force in which he had the honor to be an officer, the far−famed North West Mounted Police. For the Service he had sacrificed everything in life, ease, wealth, home, yes, even wife and family, to a certain extent. With him the Force was a passion. For it he lived and breathed. That anyone should desert it for any cause soever was to him an act unexplainable. He almost reckoned it treason.

But the question was one that touched the Sergeant as well, and deeply. Hence, though he well knew his Chief's dominant passion, he ventured an argument.

"A mighty fine girl, sir, something very special. She saw me through a mountain fever once, and I know−−"

"Oh, the deuce take it, Sergeant! The girl is all right. I grant you all that. But is that any reason why a man should desert the Force? And now of all times? He's only a kid. So is she. She can't be twenty−five."

"Twenty−five? Good Lord, no!" exclaimed the shocked Sergeant. "She isn't a day over twenty. Why, look at her. She's−−"

"Oh, tut−tut! If she's twenty it makes it all the worse. Why couldn't they wait till this fuss was over? Why, sir, when I was twenty−−" The Superintendent paused abruptly.

"Yes, sir?" The Sergeant's manner was respectful and expectant.

"Never mind," said the Superintendent. "Why rush the thing, I say?"

"Well, sir, I did hear that there was a sudden change in Cameron's home affairs in Scotland, sir. His father died suddenly, I believe. The estate was sold up and his sister, the only other child, was left all alone. Cameron felt it necessary to get a home together−−though I don't suppose he needed any excuse. Never saw a man so hard hit myself."

"Except yourself, Sergeant, eh?" said the Superintendent, relaxing into a grim smile.

"Oh, well, of course, sir, I'm not going to deny it. But you see," continued the Sergeant, his pride being touched, "he had known her down East−−worked on her father's farm−−young gentleman−−fresh from college−−culture, you know, manner−−style and that sort of thing−− rushed her clean off her feet."

"I thought you said it was Cameron who was the one hard hit?"

"So it was, sir. Hadn't seen her for a couple of years or so. Left her a country lass, uncouth, ignorant−−at least so they say."

"Who say?"

"Well, her friends−−Dr. Martin and the nurse at the hospital. But I can't believe them, simply impossible. That this girl two years ago should have been an ignorant, clumsy, uncouth country lass is impossible. However, Cameron came on her here, transfigured, glorified so to speak, consequently fell over neck in love, went quite batty in fact. A secret flame apparently smoldering all these months suddenly burst into a blaze−−a blaze, by Jove!−− regular conflagration. And no wonder, sir, when you look at her, her face, her form, her style−−"

"Oh, come, Sergeant, we'll move on. Let's keep at the business in hand. The question is what's to do. That old snake Copperhead is three hundred miles from here on the Sun Dance, plotting hell for this country, and we want him. As you say, Cameron's our man. I wonder," continued the Superintendent after a pause, "I wonder if we could get him."

"I should say certainly not!" replied the Sergeant promptly. "He's only a few months married, sir."

"He might," mused the Superintendent, "if it were properly put to him. It would be a great thing for the Service. He's the man. By the Lord Harry, he's the only man! In short," with a resounding whack upon his thigh, "he has got to come. The situation is too serious for trifling."

"Trifling?" said the Sergeant to himself in undertone.

"We'll go for him. We'll send for him." The Superintendent turned and glanced at his companion.

"Not me, sir, I hope. You can quite see, sir, I'd be a mighty poor advocate. Couldn't face those blue eyes, sir. They make me grow quite weak. Chills and fever−−in short, temporary delirium."

"Oh, well, Sergeant," replied the Superintendent, "if it's as bad as that−−"

"You don't know her, sir. Those eyes! They can burn in blue flame or melt in−−"

"Oh, yes, yes, I've no doubt." The Superintendent's voice had a touch of pity, if not contempt. "We won't expose you, Sergeant. But all the same we'll make a try for Cameron." His voice grew stern. His lips drew to a line. "And we'll get him."

The Sergeant's horse took a sudden plunge forward.

"Here, you beast!" he cried, with a fierce oath. "Come back here! What's the matter with you?" He threw the animal back on his haunches with a savage jerk, a most unaccustomed thing with the Sergeant.

"Yes," pursued the Superintendent, "the situation demands it. Cameron's the man. It's his old stamping−ground. He knows every twist of its trails. And he's a wonder, a genius for handling just such a business as this."

The Sergeant made no reply. He was apparently having some trouble with his horse.

"Of course," continued the Superintendent, with a glance at his Sergeant's face, "it's hard on her, but−−" dismissing that feature of the case lightly−−"in a situation like this everything must give way. The latest news is exceedingly grave. The trouble along the Saskatchewan looks to me exceedingly serious. These half−breeds there have real grievances. I know them well, excitable, turbulent in their spirits, uncontrollable, but easily handled if decently treated. They've sent their petitions again and again to Ottawa, and here are these Members of Parliament making fool speeches, and the Government pooh−poohing the whole movement, and meantime Riel orating and

organizing."

"Riel? Who's he?" inquired the Sergeant.

"Riel? You don't know Riel? That's what comes of being an island− bred Britisher. You people know nothing outside your own little two by four patch on the world's map. Haven't you heard of Riel?"

"Oh, yes, by the way, I've heard about the Johnny. Mixed up in something before in this country, wasn't he?"

"Well, rather! The rebel leader of 1870. Cost us some considerable trouble, too. There's bound to be mischief where that hair−brained four−flusher gets a crowd to listen to him. For egoist though he is, he possesses a wonderful power over the half−breeds. He knows how to work. And somehow, too, they're suspicious of all Canadians, as they call the new settlers from the East, ready to believe anything they're told, and with plenty of courage to risk a row."

"What's the row about, anyway?" inquired the Sergeant. "I could never quite get it."

"Oh, there are many causes. These half−breeds are squatters, many of them. They have introduced the same system of survey on the Saskatchewan as their ancestors had on the St. Lawrence, and later on the Red, the system of 'Strip Farms.' That is, farms with narrow fronts upon the river and extending back from a mile to four miles, a poor arrangement for farming but mighty fine for social purposes. I tell you, it takes the loneliness and isolation out of pioneer life. I've lived among them, and the strip−farm survey possesses distinct social advantages. You have two rows of houses a few rods apart, and between them the river, affording an ice roadway in the winter and a waterway in the summer. And to see a flotilla of canoes full of young people, with fiddles and concertinas going, paddle down the river on their way to a neighbor's house for a dance, is something to remember. For my part I don't wonder that these people resent the action of the Government in introducing a completely new survey without saying 'by your leave.' There are troubles, too, about their land patents."

"How many of these half−breeds are there anyway?"

"Well, only a few hundreds I should say. But it isn't the half− breeds we fear. The mischief of it is they have been sending runners all through this country to their red−skin friends and relatives, holding out all sorts of promises, the restoration of their hunting grounds to the Indians, the establishing of an empire of the North, from which the white race shall be excluded. I've heard them. Just enough truth and sense in the whole mad scheme to appeal to the Indian mind. The older men, the chiefs, are quiet so far, but the young braves are getting out of hand. You see they have no longer their ancient excitement of war and the chase. Life has grown monotonous, to the young men especially, on the reserves. They are chafing under control, and the prospect of a fight appeals to them. In every tribe sun dances are being held, braves are being made, and from across the other side weapons are being introduced. And now that this old snake Copperhead has crossed the line the thing takes an ugly look. He's undeniably brainy, a fearless fighter, an extraordinary organizer, has great influence with his own people and is greatly respected among our tribes. If an Indian war should break out with Copperhead running it−−well−−! That's why it's important to get this old devil. And it must be done quietly. Any movement in force on our part would set the prairie on fire. The thing has got to be done by one or two men. That's why we must have Cameron."

In spite of his indignation the Sergeant was impressed. Never had he heard his Chief discourse at such length, and never had he heard his Chief use the word "danger." It began to dawn upon his mind that possibly it might not be such a crime as he had at first considered it to lure Cameron away from his newly made home and his newly wedded wife to do this bit of service for his country in an hour of serious if not desperate need.

CHAPTER III. A−FISHING WE WILL GO

But Sergeant Cameron was done with the Service for ever. An accumulating current of events had swept him from his place in the Force, as an unheeding traveler crossing a mountain torrent is swept from his feet by a raging freshet. The sudden blazing of his smoldering love into a consuming flame for the clumsy country girl, for whom two years ago he had cherished a pitying affection, threw up upon the horizon of his life and into startling clearness a new and absorbing objective. In one brief quarter of an hour his life had gathered itself into a single purpose; a purpose, to wit, to make a home to which he might bring this girl he had come to love with such swift and fierce intensity, to make a home for her where she could be his own, and for ever. All the vehement passion of his Highland nature was concentrated upon the accomplishing of this purpose. That he should ever have come to love Mandy Haley, the overworked slattern on her father's Ontario farm, while a thing of wonder, was not the chief wonder to him. His wonder now was that he should ever have been so besottedly dull of wit and so stupidly unseeing as to allow the unlovely exterior of the girl to hide the radiant soul within. That in two brief years she had transformed herself into a woman of such perfectly balanced efficiency in her profession as nurse, and a creature of such fascinating comeliness, was only another proof of his own insensate egotism, and another proof, too, of those rare powers that slumbered in the girl's soul unknown to herself and to her world. Small wonder that with her unfolding Cameron's whole world should become new.

Hard upon this experience the unexpected news of his father's death and of the consequent winding up of the tangled affairs of the estate threw upon Cameron the responsibility of caring for his young sister, now left alone in the Homeland, except for distant kindred of whom they had but slight knowledge.

A home was immediately and imperatively necessary, and hence he must at once, as a preliminary, be married. Cameron fortunately remembered that young Fraser, whom he had known in his Fort Macleod days, was dead keen to get rid of the "Big Horn Ranch." This ranch lay nestling cozily among the foothills and in sight of the towering peaks of the Rockies, and was so well watered with little lakes and streams that when his eyes fell upon it Cameron was conscious of a sharp pang of homesickness, so suggestive was it of the beloved Glen Cuagh Oir of his own Homeland. There would be a thousand pounds or more left from his father's estate. Everybody said it was a safe, indeed a most profitable investment.

A week's leave of absence sufficed for Cameron to close the deal with Fraser, a reckless and gallant young Highlander, whose chivalrous soul, kindling at Cameron's romantic story, prompted a generous reduction in the price of the ranch and its outfit complete. Hence when Mandy's shrewd and experienced head had scanned the contract and cast up the inventory of steers and horses, with pigs and poultry thrown in, and had found nothing amiss with the deal−−indeed it was rather better than she had hoped−−there was no holding of Cameron any longer. Married he would be and without delay.

The only drag in the proceedings had come from the Superintendent, who, on getting wind of Cameron's purpose, had thought, by promptly promoting him from Corporal to Sergeant, to tie him more tightly to the Service and hold him, if only for a few months, "till this trouble should blow over." But Cameron knew of no trouble. The trouble was only in the Superintendent's mind, or indeed was only a shrewd scheme to hold Cameron to his duty. A rancher he would be, and a famous rancher's wife Mandy would make. And as for his sister Moira, had she not highly specialized in pigs and poultry on the old home farm at the Cuagh Oir? There was no stopping the resistless rush of his passionate purpose. Everything combined to urge him on. Even his college mate and one time football comrade of the old Edinburgh days, the wise, cool−headed Dr. Martin, now in charge of the Canadian Pacific Railway Hospital, as also the little nurse who, through those momentous months of Mandy's transforming, had been to her guide, philosopher and friend, both had agreed that there was no good reason for delay. True, Cameron had no means of getting inside the doctor's mind and therefore had no knowledge of the vision that came nightly to torment him in his dreams and the memory that came daily to haunt his waking hours; a vision and a memory of a trim little figure in a blue serge gown, of eyes brown, now sunny with laughing light, now soft with unshed tears, of hair that got itself into a most bewildering perplexity of waves and curls, of lips

curving deliciously, of a voice with a wonderfully soft Highland accent; the vision and memory of Moira, Cameron's sister, as she had appeared to him in the Glen Cuagh Oir at her father's door. Had Cameron known of this tormenting vision and this haunting memory he might have questioned the perfect sincerity of his friend's counsel. But Dr. Martin kept his secret well and none shared with him his visions and his dreams.

So there had been only the Superintendent to oppose.

Hence, because no really valid objection could be offered, the marriage was made. And with much shrieking of engines−−it seemed as if all the engines with their crews within a hundred miles had gathered to the celebration−−with loud thunder of exploding torpedoes, with tumultuous cheering of the construction gangs hauled thither on gravel trains, with congratulations of railroad officials and of the doctor, with the tearful smiles of the little nurse, and with grudging but finally hearty good wishes of the Superintendent, they had ridden off down the Kootenay Trail for their honeymoon, on their way to the Big Horn Ranch some hundreds of miles across the mountains.

There on the Big Horn Ranch through the long summer days together they rode the ranges after the cattle, cooking their food in the open and camping under the stars where night found them, care−free and deeply happy, drinking long full draughts of that mingled wine of life into which health and youth and love and God's sweet sun and air poured their rare vintage. The world was far away and quite forgotten.

Summer deepened into autumn, the fall round−up was approaching, and there came a September day of such limpid light and such nippy sprightly air as to suggest to Mandy nothing less than a holiday.

"Let's strike!" she cried to her husband, as she looked out toward the rolling hills and the overtopping peaks shining clear in the early morning light. "Let's strike and go a−fishing."

Her husband let his eyes wander over the full curves of her strong and supple body and rest upon the face, brown and wholesome, lit with her deep blue eyes and crowned with the red−gold masses of her hair, and exclaimed:

"You need a holiday, Mandy. I can see it in the drooping lines of your figure, and in the paling of your cheeks. In short," moving toward her, "you need some one to care for you."

"Not just at this moment, young man," she cried, darting round the table. "But, come, what do you say to a day's fishing away up the Little Horn?"

"The Little Horn?"

"Yes, you know the little creek running into the Big Horn away up the gulch where we went one day in the spring. You said there were fish there."

"Yes, but why 'Little Horn,' pray? And who calls it so? I suppose you know that the Big Horn gets its name from the Big Horn, the mountain sheep that once roamed the rocks yonder, and in that sense there's no Little Horn."

"Well, 'Little Horn' I call it," said his wife, "and shall. And if the big stream is the Big Horn, surely the little stream should be the Little Horn. But what about the fishing? Is it a go?"

"Well, rather! Get the grub, as your Canadian speech hath it."

"My Canadian speech!" echoed his wife scornfully. "You're just as much Canadian as I am."

"And I shall get the ponies. Half an hour will do for me."

"And less for me," cried Mandy, dancing off to her work.

And she was right. For, clever housekeeper that she was, she stood with her hamper packed and the fishing tackle ready long before her husband appeared with the ponies.

The trail led steadily upward through winding valleys, but for the most part along the Big Horn, till as it neared a scraggy pine−wood it bore sharply to the left, and, clambering round an immense shoulder of rock, it emerged upon a long and comparatively level ridge of land that rolled in gentle undulations down into a wide park−like valley set out with clumps of birch and poplar, with here and there the shimmer of a lake showing between the yellow and brown of the leaves.

"Oh, what a picture!" cried Mandy, reining up her pony. "What a ranch that would make, Allan! Who owns it? Why did we never come this way before?"

"Piegan Reserve," said her husband briefly.

"How beautiful! How did they get this particular bit?"

"They gave up a lot for it," said Cameron drily.

"But think, such a lovely bit of country for a few Indians! How many are there?"

"Some hundreds. Five hundred or so. And a tricky bunch they are. They're over−fond of cattle to be really desirable neighbors."

"Well, I think it rather a pity!"

"Look yonder!" cried her husband, sweeping his arm toward the eastern horizon. From the height on which they stood a wonderful panorama of hill and valley, river, lake and plain lay spread out before them. "All that and for nine hundred miles beyond that line these Indians and their kin gave up to us under persuasion. There was something due them, eh? Let's move on."

For a mile or more the trail ran along the high plateau skirting the Piegan Reserve, where it branched sharply to the right. Cameron paused.

"You see that trail?" pointing to the branch that led to the left and downward into the valley. "That is one of the oldest and most famous of all Indian trails. It strikes down through the Crow's Nest Pass and beyond the pass joins the ancient Sun Dance Trail. That's my old beat. And weird things are a−doing along that same old Sun Dance Trail this blessed minute or I miss my guess. I venture to say that this old trail has often been marked with blood from end to end in the fierce old days."

"Let's go," said Mandy, with a shudder, and, turning her pony to the right, she took the trail that led them down from the plateau, plunged into a valley, wound among rocks and thickets of pine till it reached a tumbling mountain torrent of gray−blue water, fed from glaciers high up between the great peaks beyond.

"My Little Horn!" cried Mandy with delight.

Down by its rushing water they scrambled till they came to a sunny glade where the little fretful torrent pitched itself headlong into a deep shady pool, whence, as if rested in those quiet deeps, it issued at first with gentle murmuring till, out of earshot of the pool, it broke again into turbulent raging, brawling its way to the Big Horn below.

Mandy could hardly wait for the unloading and tethering of the ponies.

"Now," she cried, when all was ready, "for my very first fish. How shall I fling this hook and where?"

"Try a cast yonder, just beside that overhanging willow. Don't splash! Try again−−drop it lightly. That's better. Don't tell me you've never cast a fly before."

"Never in my life."

"Let it float down a bit. Now back. Hold it up and let it dance there. I'll just have a pipe."

But next moment Cameron's pipe was forgotten. With a shout he sprang to his wife's side.

"By Jove, you've got him!"

"No! No! Leave me alone! Just tell me what to do. Go away! Don't touch me! Oh−h−h! He's gone!"

"Not a bit. Reel him up−−reel him up a little."

"Oh, I can't reel the thing! Oh! Oh−h−h! Is he gone?"

"Hold up. Don't haul him too quickly−−keep him playing. Wait till I get the net." He rushed for the landing net.

"Oh, he's gone! He's gone! Oh, I'm so mad!" She stamped savagely on the grass. "He was a monster."

"They always are," said her husband gravely. "The fellows that get off, I mean."

"Now you're just laughing at me, and I won't have it! I could just sit down and cry! My very first fish!"

"Never mind, Mandy, we'll get him or just as good a one again."

"Never! He'll never bite again. He isn't such a fool."

"Well, they do. They're just like the rest of us. They keep nibbling till they get caught; else there would be no fun in fishing or in−− Now try another throw−−same place−−a little farther down. Ah! That was a fine cast. Once more. No, no, not that way. Flip it lightly and if you ever get a bite hold your rod so. See? Press the end against your body so that you can reel your fish in. And don't hurry these big fellows. You lose them and you lose your fun."

"I don't want the fun," cried Mandy, "but I do want that fish and I'm going to get him."

"By Jove, I believe you just will!" The young man's dark eyes flashed an admiring glance over the strong, supple, swaying figure of the girl at his side, whose every move, as she cast her fly, seemed specially designed to reveal some new combination of the graceful curves of her well−knit body.

"Keep flicking there. You'll get him. He's just sulking. If he only knew, he'd hurry up."

"Knew what?"

"Who was fishing for him."

"Oh! Oh! I've got him." The girl was dancing excitedly along the bank. "No! Oh, what a wretch! He's gone. Now if I get him you tell me what to do, but don't touch me."

"All you have to do is to hold him steady at the first. Keep your line fairly tight. If he begins to plunge, give him line. If he slacks, reel in. Keep him nice and steady, just like a horse on the bit."

"Oh, why didn't you tell me before? I know exactly what that means−−just like a colt, eh? I can handle a colt."

"Exactly! Now try lower down−−let your fly float down a bit−− there."

Again there was a wild shriek from the girl.

"Oh, I've got him sure! Now get the net."

"Don't jump about so! Steady now−−steady−−that's better. Fine! Fine work! Let him go a bit−−no, check−−wind him up. Look out! Not too quick! Fine! Oh! Look out! Get him away from that jam! Reel him up! Quick! Now play him! Let me help you."

"Don't you dare touch this rod, Allan Cameron, or there'll be trouble!"

"Quite right−−pardon me−−quite right. Steady! You'll get him sure. And he's a beauty, a perfect Rainbow beauty."

"Keep quiet, now," admonished Mandy. "Don't shout so. Tell me quietly what to do."

"Do as you like. You can handle him. Just watch and wait−−feel him all the time. Ah−h−h! For Heaven's sake don't let him into that jam! There he goes up stream! That's better! Good!"

"Don't get so excited! Don't yell so!" again admonished Mandy. "Tell me quietly."

"Quietly? Who's yelling, I'd like to know? Who's excited? I won't say another word. I'll get the landing−net ready for the final act."

"Don't leave me! Tell me just what to do. He's getting tired, I think."

"Watch him close. Wind him up a bit. Get all the line in you can. Steady! Let go! Let go! Let him run! Now wind him again. Wait, hold him so, just a moment−−a little nearer! Hurrah! Hurrah! I've got him and he's a beauty−−a perfectly typical Rainbow trout."

"Oh, you beauty!" cried Mandy, down on her knees beside the trout that lay flapping on the grass. "What a shame! Oh, what a shame! Oh, put him in again, Allan, I don't want him. Poor dear, what a shame."

"But we must weigh him, you see," remonstrated her husband. "And we need him for tea, you know. He really doesn't feel it much. There are lots more. Try another cast. I'll attend to this chap."

"I feel just like a murderer," said Mandy. "But isn't it glorious? Well, I'll just try one more. Aren't you going to get your rod out too?"

"Well, rather! What a pool, all unspoiled, all unfished!"

"Does no one fish up here?"

"Yes, the Police come at times from the Fort. And Wyckham, our neighbor. And old man Thatcher, a born angler, though he says it's not sport, but murder."

"Why not sport?"

"Why? Old Thatcher said to me one day, 'Them fish would climb a tree to get at your hook. That ain't no sport.'"

But sport, and noble sport, they found it through the long afternoon, so that, when through the scraggy pines the sun began to show red in the western sky, a score or more lusty, glittering, speckled Rainbow trout lay on the grass beside the shady pool.

Tired with their sport, they lay upon the grassy sward, luxuriating in the warm sun.

"Now, Allan," cried Mandy, "I'll make tea ready if you get some wood for the fire. You ought to be thankful I taught you how to use the ax. Do you remember?"

"Thankful? Well, I should say. Do YOU remember that day, Mandy?"

"Remember!" cried the girl, with horror in her tone. "Oh, don't speak of it. It's too awful to think of."

"Awful what?"

"Ugh!" she shuddered, "I can't bear to think of it. I wish you could forget."

"Forget what?"

"What? How can you ask? That awful, horrid, uncouth, sloppy girl." Again Mandy shuddered. "Those hands,

big, coarse, red, ugly."

"Yes," cried Allan savagely, "the badge of slavery for a whole household of folk too ignorant to know the price that was being paid for the service rendered them."

"And the hair," continued Mandy relentlessly, "uncombed, filthy, horrid. And the dress, and−−"

"Stop it!" cried Allan peremptorily.

"No, let me go on. The stupid face, the ignorant mind, the uncouth speech, the vulgar manners. Oh, I loathe the picture, and I wonder you can ever bear to look at her again. And, oh, I wish you could forget."

"Forget!" The young man's lean, swarthy face seemed to light up with the deep glowing fires in his dark eyes. His voice grew vibrant. "Forget! Never while I live. Do you know what _I_ remember?"

"Ah, spare me!" moaned his wife, putting her hands over his mouth.

"Do you know what _I_ remember?" he repeated, pulling her hands away and holding them fast. "A girl with hands, face, hair, form, dress, manners damned to coarseness by a cruel environment? That? No! No! To−day as I look back I remember only two blue eyes, deep, deep as wells, soft, blue, and wonderfully kind. And I remember all through those days−−and hard days they were to a green young fool fresh from the Old Country trying to keep pace with your farm−bred demon−worker Perkins−−I remember all through those days a girl that never was too tired with her own unending toil to think of others, and especially to help out with many a kindness a home− sick, hand−sore, foot−sore stranger who hardly knew a buck−saw from a turnip hoe, and was equally strange to the uses of both, a girl that feared no shame nor harm in showing her kindness. That's what I remember. A girl that made life bearable to a young fool, too proud to recognize his own limitations, too blind to see the gifts the gods were flinging at him. Oh, what a fool I was with my silly pride of family, of superior education and breeding, and with no eye for the pure gold of as true and loyal a soul as ever offered itself in daily unmurmuring sacrifice for others, and without a thought of sacrifice. Fool and dolt! A self−sufficient prig! That's what I remember."

The girl tore her hands away from him.

"Ah, Allan, my boy," she cried with a shrill and scornful laugh that broke at the end, "how foolishly you talk! And yet I love to hear you talk so. I love to hear you. But, oh, let me tell you what else I remember of those days!"

"No, no, I will not listen. It's all nonsense."

"Nonsense! Ah, Allan! Let me tell you this once." She put her hands upon his shoulders and looked steadily into his eyes. "Let me tell you. I've never told you once during these six happy months−−oh, how happy, I fear to think how happy, too much joy, too deep, too wonderful, I'm afraid sometimes−−but let me tell you what I see, looking back into those old days−−how far away they seem already and not yet three years past−−I see a lad so strange, so unlike all I had known, a gallant lad, a very knight for grace and gentleness, strong and patient and brave, not afraid−−ah, that caught me−−nothing could make him afraid, not Perkins, the brutal bully, not big Mack himself. And this young lad, beating them all in the things men love to do, running, the hammer−−and−−and fighting too!−−Oh, laddie, laddie, how often did I hold my hands over my heart for fear it would burst for pride in you! How often did I check back my tears for very joy of loving you! How often did I find myself sick with the agony of fear that you should go away from me forever! And then you went away, oh, so kindly, so kindly pitiful, your pity stabbing my heart with every throb. Why do I tell you this to−day? Let me go through it. But it was this very pity stabbing me that awoke in me the resolve that one day you would not need to pity me. And then, then I fled from the farm and all its dreadful surroundings. And the nurse and Dr. Martin, oh how good they were! And all of them helped me. They taught me. They scolded me. They were never tired telling me. And with that flame burning in my soul all that outer, horrid, awful husk seemed to disappear and I escaped, I became all new."

"You became yourself, yourself, your glorious, splendid, beautiful self!" shouted Allan, throwing his arms around her. "And then I found you again. Thank God, I found you! And found you for keeps, mine forever. Think of that!"

"Forever." Mandy shuddered again. "Oh, Allan, I'm somehow afraid. This joy is too great."

"Yes, forever," said Allan again, but more quietly, "for love will last forever."

Together they sat upon the grass, needing no words to speak the joy that filled their souls to overflowing. Suddenly Mandy sprang to her feet.

"Now, let me go, for within an hour we must be away. Oh, what a day we've had, Allan, one of the very best days in all my life! You know I've never been able to talk of the past to you, but to− day somehow I could not rest

till I had gone through with it all."

"Yes, it's been a great day," said Allan, "a wonderful day, a day we shall always remember." Then after a silence, "Now for a fire and supper. You're right. In an hour we must be gone, for we are a long way from home. But, think of it, Mandy, we're going HOME. I can't quite get used to that!"

And in an hour, riding close as lovers ride, they took the trail to their home ten miles away.

CHAPTER IV. THE BIG CHIEF

When on the return journey they arrived upon the plateau skirting the Piegan Reserve the sun's rays were falling in shafts of slanting light upon the rounded hilltops before them and touching with purple the great peaks behind them. The valleys were full of shadows, deep and blue. The broad plains that opened here and there between the rounded hills were still bathed in the mellow light of the westering sun.

"We will keep out a bit from the Reserve," said Cameron, taking a trail that led off to the left. "These Piegans are none too friendly. I've had to deal with them a few times about my straying steers in a way which they are inclined to resent. This half−breed business is making them all restless and a good deal too impertinent."

"There's not any real danger, is there?" inquired his wife. "The Police can handle them quite well, can't they?"

"If you were a silly hysterical girl, Mandy, I would say 'no danger' of course. But the signs are ominous. I don't fear anything immediately, but any moment a change may come and then we shall need to act quickly."

"What then?"

"We shall ride to the Fort, I can tell you, without waiting to take our stuff with us. I take no chances now."

"Now? Meaning?"

"Meaning my wife, that's all. I never thought to fear an Indian, but, by Jove! since I've got you, Mandy, they make me nervous."

"But these Piegans are such−−"

"The Piegans are Indians, plain Indians, deprived of the privilege of war by our North West Mounted Police regulations and of the excitement of the chase by our ever approaching civilization, and the younger bloods would undoubtedly welcome a 'bit of a divarshun,' as your friend Mike would say. At present the Indians are simply watching and waiting."

"What for?"

"News. To see which way the cat jumps. Then−− Steady, Ginger! What the deuce! Whoa, I say! Hold hard, Mandy."

"What's the matter with them?"

"There's something in the bushes yonder. Coyote, probably. Listen!"

There came from a thick clump of poplars a low, moaning cry.

"What's that?" cried Mandy. "It sounds like a man."

"Stay where you are. I'll ride in."

In a few moments she heard his voice calling.

"Come along! Hurry up!"

A young Indian lad of about seventeen, ghastly under his copper skin and faint from loss of blood, lay with his ankle held in a powerful wolf−trap, a bloody knife at his side. With a cry Mandy was off her horse and beside him, the instincts of the trained nurse rousing her to action.

"Good Heavens! What a mess!" cried Cameron, looking helplessly upon the bloody and mangled leg.

"Get a pail of water and get a fire going, Allan," she cried. "Quick!"

"Well, first this trap ought to be taken off, I should say."

"Quite right," she cried. "Hurry!"

Taking his ax from their camp outfit, he cut down a sapling, and, using it as a lever, soon released the foot.

"How did all this mangling come?" said Mandy, gazing at the limb, the flesh and skin of which were hanging in shreds about the ankle.

"Cutting it off, weren't you?" said Allan.

The Indian nodded.

Mandy lifted the foot up.

"Broken, I should say."

The Indian uttered not a sound.

"Run," she continued. "Bring a pail of water and get a fire going."

Allan was soon back with the pail of water.

"Me−−water," moaned the Indian, pointing to the pail. Allan held it to his lips and he drank long and deep. In a short time the fire was blazing and the tea pail slung over it.

"If I only had my kit here!" said Mandy. "This torn flesh and skin ought to be all cut away."

"Oh, I say, Mandy, you can't do that. We'll get the Police doctor!" said Allan in a tone of horrified disgust.

But Mandy was feeling the edge of the Indian's knife.

"Sharp enough," she said to herself. "These ragged edges are just reeking with poison. Can you stand it if I cut these bits off?" she said to the Indian.

"Huh!" he replied with a grunt of contempt. "No hurt."

"Mandy, you can't do this! It makes me sick to see you," said her husband.

The Indian glanced with scorn at him, caught the knife out of Mandy's hand, took up a flap of lacerated flesh and cut it clean away.

"Huh! No−t'ing."

Mandy took the knife from him, and, after boiling it for a few minutes, proceeded to cut away the ragged, mangled flesh and skin. The Indian never winced. He lay with eyes closed, and so pallid was his face and so perfectly motionless his limbs that he might have been dead. With deft hands she cleansed the wounds.

"Now, Allan, you must help me. We must have splints for this ankle."

"How would birch−bark do?" he suggested.

"No, it's too flimsy."

"The heavy inner rind is fairly stiff." He ran to a tree and hacked off a piece.

"Yes, that will do splendidly. Get some about so long."

Half an hour's work, and the wounded limb lay cleansed, bandaged, packed in soft moss and bound in splints.

"That's great, Mandy!" exclaimed her husband. "Even to my untutored eyes that looks like an artistic bit of work. You're a wonder."

"Huh!" grunted the Indian. "Good!" His piercing black eyes were lifted suddenly to her face with such a look of gratitude as is seen in the eyes of dumb brutes or of men deprived of speech.

"Good!" echoed Allan. "You're just right, my boy. I couldn't have done it, I assure you."

"Huh!" grunted the Indian in eloquent contempt. "No good," pointing to the man. "Good," pointing to the woman. "Me−−no−− forget." He lifted himself upon his elbow, and, pointing to the sun like a red eye glaring in upon them through a vista of woods and hills," said, "Look−−He see−−me no forget."

There was something truly Hebraic in the exultant solemnity of his tone and gesture.

"By Jove! He won't either, I truly believe," said Allan. "You've made a friend for life, Mandy. Now, what's next? We can't carry this chap. It's three miles to their camp. We can't leave him here. There are wolves all around and the brutes always attack anything wounded."

The Indian solved the problem.

"Huh!" he grunted contemptuously. He took up his long hunting− knife. "Wolf−−this!" He drove the knife to the hilt into the ground.

"You go−−my fadder come. T'ree Indian," holding up three fingers. "All right! Good!" He sank back upon the ground exhausted.

"Come on then, Mandy, we shall have to hurry."

"No, you go. I'll wait."

"I won't have that. It will be dark soon and I can't leave you here alone with−−"

"Nonsense! This poor boy is faint with hunger and pain. I'll feed him while you're gone. Get me afresh pail of water and I can do for myself."

"Well," replied her husband dubiously, "I'll get you some wood and−−"

"Come, now," replied Mandy impatiently, "who taught you to cut wood? I can get my own wood. The main thing is to get away and get back. This boy needs shelter. How long have you been here?" she inquired of the Indian.

The boy opened his eyes and swung his arm twice from east to west, indicating the whole sweep of the sky.

"Two days?"

He nodded.

"You must be starving. Want to eat?"

"Good!"

"Hurry, then, Allan, with the water. By the time this lad has been fed you will be back."

It was not long before Allan was back with the water.

"Now, then," he said to the Indian, "where's your camp?"

The Indian with his knife drew a line upon the ground. "River," he said. Another line parallel, "Trail." Then, tracing a branching line from the latter, turning sharply to the right, "Big Hill," he indicated. "Down−−down." Then, running the line a little farther, "Here camp."

"I know the spot," cried Allan. "Well, I'm off. Are you quite sure, Mandy, you don't mind?"

"Run off with you and get back soon. Go−−good−by! Oh! Stop, you foolish boy! Aren't you ashamed of yourself before−−?"

Cameron laughed in happy derision.

"Ashamed? No, nor before his whole tribe." He swung himself on his pony and was off down the trail at a gallop.

"You' man?" inquired the Indian lad.

"Yes," she said, "my man," pride ringing in her voice.

"Huh! Him Big Chief?"

"Oh, no! Yes." She corrected herself hastily. "Big Chief. Ranch, you know−−Big Horn Ranch."

"Huh!" He closed his eyes and sank back again upon the ground.

"You're faint with hunger, poor boy," said Mandy. She hastily cut a large slice of bread, buttered it, laid upon it some bacon and handed it to him.

"Here, take this in the meantime," she said. "I'll have your tea in a jiffy."

The boy took the bread, and, faint though he was with hunger, sternly repressing all sign of haste, he ate it with grave deliberation.

In a few minutes more the tea was ready and Mandy brought him a cup.

"Good!" he said, drinking it slowly.

"Another?" she smiled.

"Good!" he replied, drinking the second cup more rapidly.

"Now, we'll have some fish," cried Mandy cheerily, "and then you'll be fit for your journey home."

In twenty minutes more she brought him a frying pan in which two large beautiful trout lay, browned in butter. Mandy caught the wolf−like look in his eyes as they fell upon the food. She cut several thick slices of bread, laid them in the pan with the fish and turned her back upon him. The Indian seized the bread, and, noting that he was unobserved, tore it apart like a dog and ate ravenously, the fish likewise, ripping the flesh off the bones and devouring it like some wild beast.

"There, now," she said, when he had finished, "you've had enough to keep you going. Indeed, you have had all that's good for you. We don't want any fever, so that will do."

Her gestures, if not her words, he understood, and again as he watched her there gleamed in his eyes that dumb animal look of gratitude.

"Huh!" he grunted, slapping himself on the chest and arms. "Good! Me strong! Me sleep." He lay back upon the ground and in half a dozen breaths was dead asleep, leaving Mandy to her lonely watch in the gathering gloom of the falling night.

The silence of the woods deepened into a stillness so profound that a dead leaf, fluttering from its twig and rustling to the ground, made her start in quick apprehension.

"What a fool I am!" she muttered angrily. She rose to pile wood upon the fire. At her first movement the Indian was broad awake and half on his knees with his knife gleaming in his hand. As his eyes fell upon the girl at the fire, with a grunt, half of pain and half of contempt, he sank back again upon the ground and was fast asleep before the fire was mended, leaving Mandy once more to her lonely watch.

"I wish he would come," she muttered, peering into the darkening woods about her. A long and distant howl seemed to reply to her remark.

It was answered by a series of short, sharp yelps nearer at hand.

"Coyote," she said disdainfully, for she had learned to despise the cowardly prairie wolf.

But again that long distant howl. In spite of herself she shuddered. That was no coyote, but a gray timber wolf.

"I wish Allan would come," she said again, thinking of wakening the Indian. But her nurse's instincts forbade her breaking his heavy sleep.

"Poor boy, he needs the rest! I'll wait a while longer."

She took her ax and went bravely at some dead wood lying near, cutting it for the fire. The Indian never made a sound. He lay dead in sleep. She piled the wood on the fire till the flames leaped high, shining ruddily upon the golden and yellow leaves of the surrounding trees.

But again that long−drawn howl, and quite near, pierced the silence like the thrust of a spear. Before she was aware Mandy was on her feet, determined to waken the sleeping Indian, but she had no more than taken a single step toward him when he was awake and listening keenly. A soft padding upon the dead leaves could be heard like the gentle falling of raindrops. The Indian rolled over on his side, swept away some dead leaves and moss, and drew toward him a fine Winchester rifle.

"Huh! Wolf," he said, with quiet unconcern. "Here," he continued, pointing to a rock beside him. Mandy took the place indicated. As she seated herself he put up his hand with a sharp hiss. Again the pattering feet could be heard. Suddenly the Indian leaned forward, gazing intently into the gloom beyond the rim of the firelight, then with a swift gliding movement he threw his rifle up and fired. There was a sharp yelp, followed by a gurgling snarl. His shot was answered by a loud shout.

"Huh!" said the lad with quiet satisfaction, holding up one finger, "One wolf. Big Chief come."

At the shout Mandy had sprung to her feet, answering with a loud glad halloo. Immediately, as if in response to her call, an Indian swung his pony into the firelight, slipped off and stood looking about him. Straight, tall and sinewy, he stood, with something noble in his face and bearing.

"He looks like a gentleman," was the thought that leaped into Mandy's mind. A swift glance he swept round the circle of the light. Mandy thought she had never seen so piercing an eye.

The Indian lad uttered a low moaning sound. With a single leap the man was at his side, holding him in his arms and kissing him on both cheeks, with eager guttural speech. A few words from the lad and the Indian was on his feet again, his eyes gleaming, but his face immobile as a death mask.

"My boy," he said, pointing to the lad. "My boy−−my papoose." His voice grew soft and tender.

Before Mandy could reply there was another shout and Allan, followed by four Indians, burst into the light. With a glad cry Mandy rushed into his arms and clung to him.

"Hello! What's up? Everything all right?" cried Allan. "I was a deuce of a time, I know. Took the wrong trail. You weren't frightened, eh? What? What's happened?" His voice grew anxious, then stern. "Anything wrong? Did he−−? Did anyone−−?"

"No, no, Allan!" cried his wife, still clinging to him. "It was only a wolf and I was a little frightened."

"A wolf!" echoed her husband aghast.

The Indian lad spoke a few words and pointed to the dark. The Indians glided into the woods and in a few minutes one of them returned, dragging by the leg a big, gray timber wolf. The lad's bullet had gone home.

"And did this brute attack you?" cried Allan in alarm.

"No, no. I heard him howling a long way off, and then−−then−−he came nearer, and−−then−−I could hear his feet pattering." Cameron drew her close to him. "And then he saw him right in the dark. Wasn't it wonderful?"

"In the dark?" said Allan, turning to the lad. "How did you do it?"

"Huh!" grunted the lad in a tone of indifference. "See him eyes."

Already the Indians were preparing a stretcher out of blankets and two saplings. Here Mandy came to their help, directing their efforts so that with the least hurt to the boy he was lifted to his stretcher.

As they were departing the father came close to Mandy, and, holding out his hand, said in fairly good English:

"You−−good to my boy. You save him−−to−day. All alone maybe he die. You give him food−−drink. Sometime−−perhaps soon−−me pay you."

"Oh," cried Mandy, "I want no pay."

"No money−−no!" cried the Indian, with scorn in his voice. "Me save you perhaps−−sometime. Save you−−save you, man. Me Big Chief." He drew himself up his full height. "Much Indian follow me." He shook hands with Mandy again, then with her husband.

"Big Piegan Chief?" inquired her husband.

"Piegan!" said the Indian with hearty contempt. "Me no Piegan−−me Big Chief. Me−−" He paused abruptly, turned on his heel and, flinging himself on to his pony, disappeared in the shadows.

"He's jolly well pleased with himself, isn't he?" said Cameron.

"He's splendid," cried Mandy enthusiastically. "Why, he's just like one of Cooper's Indians. He's certainly like none of the rest I've seen about here."

"That's true enough," replied her husband. "He's no Piegan. Who is he, I wonder? I don't remember seeing him. He thinks no end of himself, at any rate."

"And looks as if he had a right to."

"Right you are! Well, let's away. You must be dog tired and used up."

"Never a bit," cried Mandy. "I'm fresh as a daisy. What a wonderful ending to a wonderful day!"

They extinguished the fire carefully and made their way out to the trail.

But the end of this wonderful day had not yet come.

CHAPTER V. THE ANCIENT SACRIFICE

The moon was riding high in the cloudless blue of the heavens, tricked out with faintly shining stars, when they rode into the "corral" that surrounded the ranch stable. A horse stood tethered at the gate.

"Hello, a visitor!" cried Cameron. "A Police horse!" his eyes falling upon the shining accouterments.

"A Policeman!" echoed Mandy, a sudden foreboding at her heart. "What can he want?"

"Me, likely," replied her husband with a laugh, "though I can't think for which of my crimes it is. It's Inspector Dickson, by his horse. You know him, Mandy, my very best friend."

"What does he want, Allan?" said Mandy, anxiety in her voice.

"Want? Any one of a thousand things. You run in and see while I put up the ponies."

"I don't like it," said Mandy, walking with him toward the stable. "Do you know, I feel there is something−−I have felt all day a kind of dread that−−"

"Nonsense, Mandy! You're not that style of girl. Run away into the house."

But still Mandy waited beside him.

"We've had a great day, Allan," she said again. "Many great days, and this, one of the best. Whatever comes nothing can take those happy days from us." She put her arms about his neck and drew him toward her. "I don't know why, Allan, I know it's foolish, but I'm afraid," she whispered, "I'm afraid."

"Now, Mandy," said her husband, with his arms round about her, "don't say you're going to get like other girls, hysterical and that sort of thing. You are just over−tired. We've had a big day, but an exhausting day, an exciting day. What with that Piegan and the wolf business and all, you are done right up. So am I and−−by Jove! That reminds me, I am dead famished."

No better word could he have spoken.

"You poor boy," she cried. "I'll have supper ready by the time you come in. I am silly, but now it's all over. I shall go in and face the Inspector and dare him to arrest you, no matter what you have done."

"That's more like the thing! That's more like my girl. I shall be with you in a very few minutes. He can't take us both, can he? Run in and smile at him."

Mandy found the Inspector in the cozy ranch kitchen, calmly smoking his pipe, and deep in the London Graphic. As she touched the latch he sprang to his feet and saluted in his best style.

"Never heard you ride up, Mrs. Cameron, I assure you. You must think me rather cool to sit tight here and ignore your coming."

"I am very glad to see you, Inspector Dickson, and Allan will be delighted. He is putting up your horse. You will of course stay the night with us."

"Oh, that's awfully kind, but I really can't, you know. I shall tell Cameron." He took his hat from the peg.

"We should be delighted if you could stay with us. We see very few people and you have not been very neighborly, now confess."

"I have not been, and to my sorrow and loss. If any man had told me that I should have been just five weeks to a day within a few hours' ride of my friend Cameron, not to speak of his charming wife, without visiting him, well I should have−−well, no matter−−to my joy I am here to−night. But I can't stay this trip. We are rather hard worked just now, to tell the truth."

"Hard worked?" she asked.

"Yes. Patrol work rather heavy. But I must stop Cameron in his hospitable design," he added, as he passed out of the door.

It was a full half hour before the men returned, to find supper spread and Mandy waiting. It was a large and cheerful apartment that did both for kitchen and living room. The sides were made of logs hewn smooth, plastered and whitewashed. The oak joists and planking above were stained brown. At one end of the kitchen two doors led to as many rooms, at the other a large stone fireplace, with a great slab for mantelpiece. On this slab stood bits of china bric−a−brac, and what not, relics abandoned by the gallant and chivalrous Fraser for the bride and her house

furnishing. The prints, too, upon the wall, hunting scenes of the old land, sea− scenes, moorland and wild cattle, with many useful and ornamental bits of furniture, had all been handed over with true Highland generosity by the outgoing owner.

In the fireplace, for the night had a touch of frost in it, a log fire blazed and sparked, lending to the whole scene an altogether delightful air of comfort.

"I say, this does look jolly!" cried the Inspector as he entered. "Cameron, you lucky dog, do you really imagine you know how jolly well off you are, coddled thus in the lap of comfort and surrounded with all the enervating luxuries of an effete and forgotten civilization? Come now, own up, you are beginning to take this thing as a matter of course."

But Cameron stood with his back to the light, busying himself with his fishing tackle and fish, and ignoring the Inspector's cheerful chatter. And thus he remained without a word while the Inspector talked on in a voluble flow of small talk quite unusual with him.

Throughout the supper Cameron remained silent, rallying spasmodically with gay banter to the Inspector's chatter, or answering at random, but always falling silent again, and altogether was so unlike himself that Mandy fell to wondering, then became watchful, then anxious. At length the Inspector himself fell silent, as if perceiving the uselessness of further pretense.

"What is it, Allan?" said Mandy quietly, when silence had fallen upon them all. "You might as well let me know."

"Tell her, for God's sake," said her husband to the Inspector.

"What is it?" inquired Mandy.

The Inspector handed her a letter.

"From Superintendent Strong to my Chief," he said.

She took it and as she read her face went now white with fear, now red with indignation. At length she flung the letter down.

"What a man he is to be sure!" she cried scornfully. "And what nonsense is this he writes. With all his men and officers he must come for my husband! What is HE doing? And all the others? It's just his own stupid stubbornness. He always did object to our marriage."

The Inspector was silent. Cameron was silent too. His boyish face, for he was but a lad, seemed to have grown old in those few minutes. The Inspector wore an ashamed look, as if detected in a crime.

"And because he is not clever enough to catch this man they must come for my husband to do it for them. He is not a Policeman. He has nothing to do with the Force."

And still the Inspector sat silent, as if convicted of both crime and folly.

At length Cameron spoke.

"It is quite impossible, Inspector. I can't do it. You quite see how impossible it is."

"Most certainly you can't," eagerly agreed the Inspector. "I knew from the first it was a piece of−−sheer absurdity−−in fact brutal inhumanity. I told the Commissioner so."

"It isn't as if I was really needed, you know. The Superintendent's idea is, as you say, quite absurd."

The Inspector gravely nodded.

"You don't think for a moment," continued Cameron, "there is any need−−any real need I mean−−for me to−−" Cameron's voice died away.

The Inspector hesitated and cleared his throat. "Well−−of course, we are desperately short−handed, you know. Every man is overworked. Every reserve has to be closely patroled. Every trail ought to be watched. Runners are coming in every day. We ought to have a thousand men instead of five hundred, this very minute. Of course one can never tell. The chances are this will all blow over."

"Certainly," said Cameron. "We've heard these rumors for the past year."

"Of course," agreed the Inspector cheerfully.

"But if it does not," asked Mandy, suddenly facing the Inspector, "what then?"

"If it does not?"

"If it does not?" she insisted.

The Inspector appeared to turn the matter over in his mind.

"Well," he said slowly and thoughtfully, "if it does not there will be a deuce of an ugly time."

"What do you mean?"

The Inspector shrugged his shoulders. But Mandy waited, her eyes fixed on his face demanding answer.

"Well, there are some hundreds of settlers and their families scattered over this country, and we can hardly protect them all. But," he added cheerfully, as if dismissing the subject, "we have a trick of worrying through."

Mandy shuddered. One phrase in the Superintendent's letter to the Commissioner which she had just read kept hammering upon her brain, "Cameron is the man and the only man for the job."

They turned the talk to other things, but the subject would not be dismissed. Like the ghost at the feast it kept ever returning. The Inspector retailed the most recent rumors, and together he and his host weighed their worth. The Inspector disclosed the Commissioner's plans as far as he knew them. These, too, were discussed with approval or condemnation. The consequences of an Indian uprising were hinted at, but quickly dropped. The probabilities of such an uprising were touched upon and pronounced somewhat slight.

But somehow to the woman listening as in a maze this pronouncement and all the reassuring talk rang hollow. She sat staring at the Inspector with eyes that saw him not. What she did see was a picture out of an old book of Indian war days which she had read when a child, a smoking cabin, with mangled forms of women and children lying in the blackened embers. By degrees, slow, painful, but relentlessly progressive, certain impressions, at first vague and passionately resisted, were wrought into convictions in her soul. First, the Inspector, in spite of his light talk, was undeniably anxious, and in this anxiety her husband shared. Then, the Force was clearly inadequate to the duty required of it. At this her indignation burned. Why should it be that a Government should ask of brave men what they must know to be impossible? Hard upon this conviction came the words of the Superintendent, "Cameron is the man and the only man for the job." Finally, the Inspector was apologizing for her husband. It roused a hot resentment in her to hear him. That thing she could not and would not bear. Never should it be said that her husband had needed a friend to apologize for him.

As these convictions grew in clearness she found herself brought suddenly and sharply to face the issue. With a swift contraction of the heart she realized that she must send her husband on this perilous duty. Ah! Could she do it? It was as if a cold hand were steadily squeezing drop by drop the life−blood from her heart. In contrast, and as if with one flash of light, the long happy days of the last six months passed before her mind. How could she give him up? Her breathing came in short gasps, her lips became dry, her eyes fixed and staring. She was fighting for what was dearer to her than life. Suddenly she flung her hands to her face and groaned aloud.

"What is it, Mandy?" cried her husband, starting from his place.

His words seemed to recall her. The agonizing agitation passed from her and a great quiet fell upon her soul. The struggle was done. She had made the ancient sacrifice demanded of women since ever the first man went forth to war. It remained only to complete with fitting ritual this ancient sacrifice. She rose from her seat and faced her husband.

"Allan," she said, and her voice was of indescribable sweetness, "you must go."

Her husband took her in his arms without a word, then brokenly he said:

"My girl! My own brave girl! I knew you must send me."

"Yes," she replied, gazing into his face with a wan smile, "I knew it too, because I knew you would expect me to."

The Inspector had risen from his chair at her first cry and was standing with bent head, as if in the presence of a scene too sacred to witness. Then he came to her, and, with old time and courtly grace of the fine gentleman he was, he took her hand and raised it to his lips.

"Dear lady," he said, "for such as you brave men would gladly give their lives."

"Give their lives!" cried Mandy. "I would much rather they would save them. But," she added, her voice taking a practical tone, "sit down and let us talk. Now what's the work and what's the plan?"

The men glanced at each other in silent admiration of this woman who, without moan or murmur, could surrender her heart's dearest treasure for her country's good. This was a spirit of their own type.

They sat down before the fire and discussed the business before them. But as they discussed ever and again Mandy would find her mind wandering back over the past happy days. Ever and again a word would recall her, but only for a brief moment and soon she was far away again.

A phrase of the Inspector, however, arrested and held her.

"He's really a fine looking Indian, in short a kind of aristocrat among the Indians," he was saying.

"An aristocrat?" she exclaimed, remembering her own word about the Indian Chief they had met that very evening. "Why, that is like our Chief, Allan."

"By Jove! You're right!" exclaimed her husband. "What's your man like, again? Describe him, Inspector."

The Inspector described him in detail.

"The very man we saw to−night!" cried Mandy, and gave her description of the "Big Chief."

When she had finished the Inspector sat looking into the fire.

"Among the Piegans, too," he mused. "That fits in. There was a big powwow the other day in the Sun Dance Canyon. The Piegans' is the nearest reserve, and a lot of them were there. The Superintendent says he is somewhere along the Sun Dance."

"Inspector," said Allan, with sudden determination, "we will drop in on the Piegans to−morrow morning by sun−up."

Mandy started. This pace was more rapid than she had expected, but, having made the sacrifice, there was with her no word of recall.

The Inspector pondered the suggestion.

"Well," he said, "it would do no harm to reconnoiter at any rate. But we can't afford to make any false move, and we can't afford to fail."

"Fail!" said Cameron quietly. "We won't fail. We'll get him." And the lines in his face reminded his wife of how he looked that night three years before when he cowed the great bully Perkins into submission at her father's door.

Long they sat and planned. As the Inspector said, there must be no failure; hence the plan must provide for every possible contingency. By far the keenest of the three in mental activity was Mandy. By a curious psychological process the Indian Chief, who an hour before had awakened in her admiration and a certain romantic interest, had in a single moment become an object of loathing, almost of hatred. That he should be in this land planning for her people, for innocent and defenseless women and children, the horrors of massacre filled her with a fierce anger. But a deeper analysis would doubtless have revealed a personal element in her anger and loathing. The Indian had become the enemy for whose capture and for whose destruction her husband was now enlisted. Deep down in her quiet, strong, self−controlled nature there burned a passion in which mingled the primitive animal instincts of the female, mate for mate, and mother for offspring. Already her mind had leaped forward to the moment when this cunning, powerful plotter would be at death−grips with her husband and she not there to help. With intensity of purpose and relentlessness of determination she focused the powers of her forceful and practical mind upon the problem engaging their thought.

With mind whetted to its keenest she listened to the men as they made and unmade their plans. In ordinary circumstances the procedure of arrest would have been extremely simple. The Inspector and Cameron would have ridden into the Piegan camp, and, demanding their man, would have quietly and without even a show of violence carried him off. It would have been like things they had each of them done single−handed within the past year.

"When once we make a start, you see, Mrs. Cameron, we never turn back. We could not afford to," said the Inspector. There was no suspicion of boasting in the Inspector's voice. He was simply enunciating the traditional code of the Police. "And if we should hesitate with this man or fail to land him every Indian in these territories would have it within a week and our prestige would receive a shock. We dare not exhibit any sign of nerves. On the other hand we dare not make any movement in force. In short, anything unusual must be avoided."

"I quite see," replied Mandy with keen appreciation of the delicacy of the situation.

"So that I fancy the simpler the plan the better. Cameron will ride into the Piegan camp inquiring about his cattle, as, fortunately for the present situation, he has cause enough to in quite an ordinary way. I drop in on my regular patrol looking up a cattle−thief in quite the ordinary way. Seeing this strange chief, I arrest him on suspicion. Cameron backs me up. The thing is done. Luckily Trotting Wolf, who is the Head Chief now of the Piegans, has a fairly thorough respect for the Police, and unless things have gone much farther in his band than I think he will not resist. He is, after all, rather harmless."

"I don't like your plan at all, Inspector," said Mandy promptly. "The moment you suggest arrest that moment the younger men will be up. They are just back from a big brave−making powwow, you say. They are all worked up, and keen for a chance to prove that they are braves in more than in name. You give them the very opportunity you wish to avoid. Now hear my plan," she continued, her voice eager, keen, hard, in the intensity of her purpose.

"I ride into camp to−morrow morning to see the sick boy. I promised I would and I really want to. I find him in a fever, for a fever he certainly will have. I dress his wounded ankle and discover he must have some medicine. I get old Copperhead to ride back with me for it. You wait here and arrest him without trouble."

The two men looked at each other, then at her, with a gentle admiring pity. The plan was simplicity itself and undoubtedly eliminated the elements of danger which the Inspector's possessed. It had, however, one fatal defect.

"Fine, Mandy!" said her husband, reaching across the table and patting her hand that lay clenched upon the cloth. "But it won't do."

"And why not, pray?" she demanded.

"We do not use our women as decoys in this country, nor do we expose them to dangers we men dare not face."

"Allan," cried his wife with angry impatience, "you miss the whole point. For a woman to ride into the Piegan camp, especially on this errand of mercy, involves her in no danger. And what possible danger would there be in having the old villain ride back with me for medicine? And as to the decoy business," here she shrugged her shoulders contemptuously, "do you think I care a bit for that? Isn't he planning to kill women and children in this country? And−− and−−won't he do his best to kill you?" she panted. "Isn't it right for me to prevent him? Prevent him! To me he is like a snake. I would−−would−−gladly kill him−−myself." As she spoke these words her eyes were indeed, in Sergeant Ferry's words, "like little blue flames."

But the men remained utterly unmoved. To their manhood the plan was repugnant, and in spite of Mandy's arguments and entreaties was rejected.

"It is the better plan, Mrs. Cameron," said the Inspector kindly, "but we cannot, you must see we cannot, adopt it."

"You mean you will not," cried Mandy indignantly, "just because you are stupid stubborn men!" And she proceeded to argue the matter all over again with convincing logic, but with the same result. There are propositions which do not lend themselves to the arbitrament of logic with men. When the safety of their women is at stake they refuse to discuss chances. In such a case they may be stupid, but they are quite immovable.

Blocked by this immovable stupidity, Mandy yielded her ground, but only to attempt a flank movement.

"Let me go with you on your reconnoitering expedition," she pleaded. "Rather, let US go, Allan, you and I together, to see the boy. I am really sorry for that boy. He can't help his father, can he?"

"Quite true," said the Inspector gravely.

"Let us go and find out all we can and next day make your attempt. Besides, Allan," she cried under a sudden inspiration of memory, "you can't possibly go. You forget your sister arrives at Calgary this week. You must meet her."

"By Jove! Is that so? I had forgotten," said Cameron, turning to study the calendar on the wall, a gorgeous work of art produced out of the surplus revenues of a Life Insurance Company. "Let's see," he calculated. "This week? Three days will take us in. We are still all right. We have five. That gives us two days clear for this job. I feel like making this try, Mandy," he continued earnestly. "We have this chap practically within our grasp. He will be off guard. The Piegans are not yet worked up to the point of resistance. Ten days from now our man may be we can't tell where."

Mandy remained silent. The ritual of her sacrifice was not yet complete.

"I think you are right, Allan," at length she said slowly with a twisted smile. "I'm afraid you are right. It's hard not to be in it, though. But," she added, as if moved by a sudden thought, "I may be in it yet."

"You will certainly be with us in spirit, Mandy," he replied, patting the firm brown hand that lay upon the table.

"Yes, truly, and in our hearts," added the Inspector with a bow.

But Mandy made no reply. Already she was turning over in her mind a half−formed plan which she had no intention of sharing with these men, who, after the manner of their kind, would doubtless block it.

Early morning found Cameron and the Inspector on the trail toward the Piegan Reserve, riding easily, for they knew not what lay before them nor what demand they might have to make upon their horses that day. The Inspector rode a strongly built, stocky horse of no great speed but good for an all−day run. Cameron's horse was a broncho, an unlovely brute, awkward and ginger−colored−−his name was Ginger−−sad−eyed and wicked−looking, but short−coupled and with flat, rangy legs that promised speed. For his sad−eyed, awkward

broncho Cameron professed a deep affection and defended him stoutly against the Inspector's jibes.

"You can't kill him," he declared. "He'll go till he drops, and then twelve miles more. He isn't beautiful to look at and his manners are nothing to boast of, but he will hang upon the fence the handsome skin of that cob of yours."

When still five or six miles from camp they separated.

"The old boy may, of course, be gone," said the Inspector as he was parting from his friend. "By Superintendent Strong's report he seems to be continually on the move."

"I rather think his son will hold him for a day or two," replied Cameron. "Now you give me a full half hour. I shall look in upon the boy, you know. But don't be longer. I don't as a rule linger among these Piegan gentry, you know, and a lengthened stay would certainly arouse suspicion."

Cameron's way lay along the high plateau, from which a descent could be made by a trail leading straight south into the Piegan camp. The Inspector's course carried him in a long detour to the left, by which he should enter from the eastern end the valley in which lay the Indian camp. Cameron's trail at the first took him through thick timber, then, as it approached the level floor of the valley, through country that became more open. The trees were larger and with less undergrowth between them. In the valley itself a few stubble fields with fences sadly in need of repair gave evidence of the partial success of the attempts of the farm instructor to initiate the Piegans into the science and art of agriculture. A few scattering log houses, which the Indians had been induced by the Government to build for themselves, could be seen here and there among the trees. But during the long summer days, and indeed until driven from the open by the blizzards of winter, not one of these children of the free air and open sky could be persuaded to enter the dismal shelter afforded by the log houses. They much preferred the flimsy teepee or tent. And small wonder. Their methods of sanitation did not comport with a permanent dwelling. When the teepee grew foul, which their habits made inevitable, a simple and satisfactory remedy was discovered in a shift to another camp−ground. Not so with the log houses, whose foul corners, littered with the accumulated filth of a winter's occupation, became fertile breeding places for the germs of disease and death. Irregularly strewn upon the grassy plain in the valley bottom some two dozen teepees marked the Piegan summer headquarters. Above the camp rose the smoke of their camp−fires, for it was still early and their morning meal was yet in preparation.

CHAPTER VI. THE ILLUSIVE COPPERHEAD

Cameron's approach to the Piegan camp was greeted by a discordant chorus of yelps and howls from a pack of mangy, half−starved curs of all breeds, shapes and sizes, the invariable and inevitable concomitants of an Indian encampment. The squaws, who had been busy superintending the pots and pans in which simmered the morning meal of their lords and masters, faded from view at Cameron's approach, and from the teepees on every side men appeared and stood awaiting with stolid faces the white man's greeting. Cameron was known to them of old.

"Good−day!" he cried briefly, singling out the Chief.

"Huh!" replied the Chief, and awaited further parley.

"No grub yet, eh? You sleep too long, Chief."

The Chief smiled grimly.

"I say, Chief," continued Cameron, "I have lost a couple of steers−− big fellows, too−−any of your fellows seen them?"

Trotting Wolf turned to the group of Indians who had slouched toward them in the meantime and spoke to them in the singsong monotone of the Indian.

"No see cow," he replied briefly.

Cameron threw himself from his horse and, striding to a large pot simmering over a fire, stuck his knife into the mass and lifted up a large piece of flesh, the bones of which looked uncommonly like ribs of beef.

"What's this, Trotting Wolf?" he inquired with a stern ring in his voice.

"Deer," promptly and curtly replied the Chief.

"Who shot him?"

The Chief consulted the group of Indians standing near.

"This man," he replied, indicating a young Indian.

"What's your name?" said Cameron sharply. "I know you."

The young Indian shook his head.

"Oh, come now, you know English all right. What's your name?"

Still the Indian shook his head, meeting Cameron's look with a fearless eye.

"He White Cloud," said the Chief.

"White Cloud! Big Chief, eh?" said Cameron.

"Huh!" replied Trotting Wolf, while a smile appeared on several faces.

"You shot this deer?"

"Huh!" replied the Indian, nodding.

"I thought you could speak English all right."

Again a smile touched the faces of some of the group.

"Where did you shoot him?"

White Cloud pointed vaguely toward the mountains.

"How far? Two, three, four miles?" inquired Cameron, holding up his fingers.

"Huh!" grunted the Indian, holding up five fingers.

"Five miles, eh? Big deer, too," said Cameron, pointing to the ribs.

"Huh!"

"How did you carry him home?"

The Indian shook his head.

"How did he carry him these five miles?" continued Cameron, turning to Trotting Wolf.

"Pony," replied Trotting Wolf curtly.

"Good!" said Cameron. "Now," said he, turning swiftly upon the young Indian, "where is the skin?"

The Indian's eyes wavered for a fleeting instant. He spoke a few words to Trotting Wolf. Conversation followed.

"Well?" said Cameron.

"He says dogs eat him up."

"And the head? This big fellow had a big head. Where is it?"

Again the Indian's eyes wavered and again the conversation followed.

"Left him up in bush," replied the chief.

"We will ride up and see it, then," said Cameron.

The Indians became voluble among themselves.

"No find," said the Chief. "Wolf eat him up."

Cameron raised the meat to his nose, sniffed its odor and dropped it back into the pot. With a single stride he was close to White Cloud.

"White Cloud," he said sternly, "you speak with a forked tongue. In plain English, White Cloud, you lie. Trotting Wolf, you know that is no deer. That is cow. That is my cow."

Trotting Wolf shrugged his shoulders.

"No see cow me," he said sullenly.

"White Cloud," said Cameron, swiftly turning again upon the young Indian, "where did you shoot my cow?"

The young Indian stared back at Cameron, never blinking an eyelid. Cameron felt his wrath rising, but kept himself well in hand, remembering the purpose of his visit. During this conversation he had been searching the gathering crowd of Indians for the tall form of his friend of the previous night, but he was nowhere to be seen. Cameron felt he must continue the conversation, and, raising his voice as if in anger−−and indeed there was no need of pretense for he longed to seize White Cloud by the throat and shake the truth out of him−−he said:

"Trotting Wolf, your young men have been killing my cattle for many days. You know that this is a serious offense with the Police. Indians go to jail for this. And the Police will hold you responsible. You are the Chief on this reserve. The Police will ask why you cannot keep your young men from stealing cattle."

The number of Indians was increasing every moment and still Cameron's eyes searched the group, but in vain. Murmurs arose from the Indians, which he easily interpreted to mean resentment, but he paid no heed.

"The Police do not want a Chief," he cried in a still louder voice, "who cannot control his young men and keep them from breaking the law."

He paused abruptly. From behind a teepee some distance away there appeared the figure of the "Big Chief" whom he so greatly desired to see. Giving no sign of his discovery, he continued his exhortation to Trotting Wolf, to that worthy's mingled rage and embarrassment. The suggestion of jail for cattle−thieves the Chief knew well was no empty threat, for two of his band even at that moment were in prison for this very crime. This knowledge rendered him uneasy. He had no desire himself to undergo a like experience, and it irked his tribe and made them restless and impatient of his control that their Chief could not protect them from these unhappy consequences of their misdeeds. They knew that with old Crowfoot, the Chief of the Blackfeet band, such untoward consequences rarely befell the members of that tribe. Already Trotting Wolf could distinguish the murmurs of his young men, who were resenting the charge against White Cloud, as well as the tone and manner in which it was delivered. Most gladly would he have defied this truculent rancher to do his worst, but his courage was not equal to the plunge, and, besides, the circumstances for such a break were not yet favorable.

At this juncture Cameron, facing about, saw within a few feet of him the Indian whose capture he was enlisted to secure.

"Hello!" he cried, as if suddenly recognizing him. "How is the boy?"

"Good," said the Indian with grave dignity. "He sick here," touching his head.

"Ah! Fever, I suppose," replied Cameron. "Take me to see him."

The Indian led the way to the teepee that stood slightly apart from the others.

Inside the teepee upon some skins and blankets lay the boy, whose bright eyes and flushed cheeks proclaimed fever. An old squaw, bent in form and wrinkled in face, crouched at the end of the couch, her eyes gleaming like beads of black glass in her mahogany face.

"How is the foot to−day?" cried Allan. "Pain bad?"

"Huh!" grunted the lad, and remained perfectly motionless but for the restless glittering eyes that followed every movement of his father.

"You want the doctor here," said Cameron in a serious tone, kneeling beside the couch. "That boy is in a high

fever. And you can't get him too quick. Better send a boy to the Fort and get the Police doctor. How did you sleep last night?" he inquired of the lad.

"No sleep," said his father. "Go this way−−this way," throwing his arms about his head. "Talk, talk, talk."

But Cameron was not listening to him. He was hearing a jingle of spurs and bridle from down the trail and he knew that the Inspector had arrived. The old Indian, too, had caught the sound. His piercing eyes swiftly searched the face of the white man beside him. But Cameron, glancing quietly at him, continued to discuss the condition of the boy.

"Yes, you must get the doctor here at once. There is danger of blood−poisoning. The boy may lose his foot." And he continued to describe the gruesome possibilities of neglect of that lacerated wound. As he rose from the couch the boy caught his arm.

"You' squaw good. Come see me," he said. "Good−−good." The eager look in the fevered eye touched Cameron.

"All right, boy, I shall tell her," he said. "Good−by!" He took the boy's hand in his. But the boy held it fast in a nervous grasp.

"You' squaw come−−sure. Hurt here−−bad." He struck his forehead with his hand. "You' squaw come−−make good."

"All right," said Cameron. "I shall bring her myself. Good−by!"

Together they passed out of the teepee, Cameron keeping close to the Indian's side and talking to him loudly and earnestly about the boy's condition, all the while listening to the Inspector's voice from behind the row of teepees.

"Ah!" he exclaimed aloud as they came in sight of the Inspector mounted on his horse. "Here is my friend, Inspector Dickson. Hello, Inspector!" he called out. "Come over here. We have a sick boy and I want you to help us."

"Hello, Cameron!" cried the Inspector, riding up and dismounting. "What's up?"

Trotting Wolf and the other Indians slowly drew near.

"There is a sick boy in here," said Cameron, pointing to the teepee behind him. "He is the son of this man, Chief−−" He paused. "I don't know your name."

Without an instant's hesitation the Indian replied:

"Chief Onawata."

"His boy got his foot in a trap. My wife dressed the wound last night," continued Cameron. "Come in and see him."

But the Indian put up his hand.

"No," he said quietly. "My boy not like strange man. Bad head−− here. Want sleep−−sleep."

"Ah!" said the Inspector. "Quite right. Let him sleep. Nothing better than sleep. A good long sleep will fix him up."

"He needs the doctor, however," said Cameron.

"Ah, yes, yes. Well, we shall send the doctor."

"Everything all right, Inspector?" said Cameron, throwing his friend a significant glance.

"Quite right!" replied the Inspector. "But I must be going. Good− by, Chief!" As his one hand closed on the Indian's his other slid down upon his wrist. "I want you, Chief," he said in a quiet stern voice. "I want you to come along with me."

His hand had hardly closed upon the wrist than with a single motion, swift, snake−like, the Indian wrenched his hand from the Inspector's iron grasp and, leaping back a space of three paces, stood with body poised as if to spring.

"Halt there, Chief! Don't move or you die!"

The Indian turned to see Cameron covering him with two guns. At once he relaxed his tense attitude and, drawing himself up, he demanded in a voice of indignant scorn:

"Why you touch me? Me Big Chief! You little dog!"

As he stood, erect, tall, scornful, commanding, with his head thrown back and his arm outstretched, his eyes glittering and his face eloquent of haughty pride, he seemed the very incarnation of the wild unconquered spirit of that once proud race he represented. For a moment or two a deep silence held the group of Indians, and even the

white men were impressed. Then the Inspector spoke.

"Trotting Wolf," he said, "I want this man. He is a horse−thief. I know him. I am going to take him to the Fort. He is a bad man."

"No," said Trotting Wolf, in a loud voice, "he no bad man. He my friend. Come here many days." He held up both hands. "No teef−− my friend."

A loud murmur rose from the Indians, who in larger numbers kept crowding nearer. At this ominous sound the Inspector swiftly drew two revolvers, and, backing toward the man he was seeking to arrest, said in a quiet, clear voice:

"Trotting Wolf, this man goes with me. If he is no thief he will be back again very soon. See these guns? Six men die," shaking one of them, "when this goes off. And six more die," shaking the other, "when this goes off. The first man will be you, Trotting Wolf, and this man second."

Trotting Wolf hesitated.

"Trotting Wolf," said Cameron. "See these guns? Twelve men die if you make any fuss. You steal my cattle. You cannot stop your young men. The Piegans need a new Chief. If this man is no thief he will be back again in a few days. The Inspector speaks truth. You know he never lies."

Still Trotting Wolf stood irresolute. The Indians began to shuffle and crowd nearer.

"Trotting Wolf," said the Inspector sharply, "tell your men that the first man that steps beyond that poplar−tree dies. That is my word."

The Chief spoke to the crowd. There was a hoarse guttural murmur in response, but those nearest to the tree backed away from it. They knew the Police never showed a gun except when prepared to use it. For years they had been accustomed to the administration of justice and the enforcement of law at the hands of the North West Mounted Police, and among the traditions of that Force the Indians had learned to accept two as absolutely settled: the first, that they never failed to get the man they wanted; the second, that their administration of law was marked by the most rigid justice. It was Chief Onawata himself that found the solution.

"Me no thief. Me no steal horse. Me Big Chief. Me go to your Fort. My heart clean. Me see your Big Chief." He uttered these words with an air of quiet but impressive dignity.

"That's sensible," said the Inspector, moving toward him. "You will get full justice. Come along!"

"I go see my boy. My boy sick." His voice became low, soft, almost tremulous.

"Certainly," said Cameron. "Go in and see the lad. And we will see that you get fair play."

"Good!" said the Indian, and, turning on his heel, he passed into the teepee where his boy lay.

Through the teepee wall their voices could be heard in quiet conversation. In a few minutes the old squaw passed out on an errand and then in again, eying the Inspector as she passed with malevolent hate. Again she passed out, this time bowed down under a load of blankets and articles of Indian household furniture, and returned no more. Still the conversation within the teepee continued, the boy's voice now and again rising high, clear, the other replying in low, even, deep tones.

"I will just get my horse, Inspector," said Cameron, making his way through the group of Indians to where Ginger was standing with sad and drooping head.

"Time's up, I should say," said the Inspector to Cameron as he returned with his horse. "Just give him a call, will you?"

Cameron stepped to the door of the teepee.

"Come along, Chief, we must be going," he said, putting his head inside the teepee door. "Hello!" he cried, "Where the deuce−−where is he gone?" He sprang quickly out of the teepee. "Has he passed out?"

"Passed out?" said the Inspector. "No. Is he not inside?"

"He's not here."

Both men rushed into the teepee. On the couch the boy still lay, his eyes brilliant with fever but more with hate. At the foot of the couch still crouched the old crone, but there was no sign of the Chief.

"Get up!" said the Inspector to the old squaw, turning the blankets and skins upside down.

"Hee! hee!" she laughed in diabolical glee, spitting at him as he passed.

"Did no one enter?" asked Cameron.

"Not a soul."

"Nor go out?"

"No one except the old squaw here. I saw her go out with a pack."

"With a pack!" echoed Cameron. And the two men stood looking at each other. "By Jove!" said Cameron in deep disgust, "We're done. He is rightly named Copperhead. Quick!" he cried, "Let us search this camp, though it's not much use."

And so indeed it proved. Through every teepee they searched in hot haste, tumbling out squalling squaws and papooses. But all in vain. Copperhead had as completely disappeared as if he had vanished into thin air. With faces stolid and unmoved by a single gleam of satisfaction the Indians watched their hurried search.

"We will take a turn around this camp," said Cameron, swinging on to his pony. "You hear me!" he continued, riding up close to Trotting Wolf, "We haven't got our man but we will come back again. And listen carefully! If I lose a single steer this fall I shall come and take you, Trotting Wolf, to the Fort, if I have to bring you by the hair of the head."

But Trotting Wolf only shrugged his shoulders, saying:

"No see cow."

"Is there any use taking a look around this camp?" said the Inspector.

"What else can we do?" said Cameron. "We might as well. There is a faint chance we might come across a trace."

But no trace did they find, though they spent an hour and more in close and minute scrutiny of the ground about the camp and the trails leading out from it.

"Where now?" inquired the Inspector.

"Home for me," said Cameron. "To−morrow to Calgary. Next week I take up this trail. You may as well come along with me, Inspector. We can talk things over as we go."

They were a silent and chagrined pair as they rode out from the Reserve toward the ranch. As they were climbing from the valley to the plateau above they came to a soft bit of ground. Here Cameron suddenly drew rein with a warning cry, and, flinging himself off his broncho, was upon his knee examining a fresh track.

"A pony−track, by all that's holy! And within an hour. It is our man," he cried, examining the trail carefully and following it up the hill and out on to the plateau. "It is our man sure enough, and he is taking this trail."

For some miles the pony−tracks were visible enough. There was no attempt to cover them. The rider was evidently pushing hard.

"Where do you think he is heading for, Inspector?"

"Well," said the Inspector, "this trail strikes toward the Blackfoot Reserve by way of your ranch."

"My ranch!" cried Cameron. "My God! Look there!"

As he spoke the ginger−colored broncho leaped into a gallop. Five miles away a thin column of smoke could be seen rising up into the air. Every mile made it clearer to Cameron that the smoke rising from behind the round−topped hill before him was from his ranch− buildings, and every mile intensified his anxiety. His wife was alone on the ranch at the mercy of that fiend. That was the agonizing thought that tore at his heart as his panting broncho pounded along the trail. From the top of the hill overlooking the ranch a mile away his eye swept the scene below, swiftly taking in the details. The ranch−house was in flames and burning fiercely. The stables were untouched. A horse stood tied to the corral and two figures were hurrying to and fro about the blazing building. As they neared the scene it became clear that one of the figures was that of a woman.

"Mandy!" he shouted from afar. "Mandy, thank God it's you!"

But they were too absorbed in their business of fighting the fire. They neither heard nor saw him till he flung himself off his broncho at their side.

"Oh, thank God, Mandy!" he panted, "you are safe." He gathered her into his arms.

"Oh, Allan, I am so sorry."

"Sorry? Sorry? Why?"

"Our beautiful house!"

"House?"

"And all our beautiful things!"

"Things!" He laughed aloud. "House and things! Why, Mandy, I have YOU safe. What else matters?" Again he laughed aloud, holding her off from him at arm's length and gazing at her grimy face. "Mandy," he said, "I believe you are improving every day in your appearance, but you never looked so stunning as this blessed

minute." Again he laughed aloud. He was white and trembling.

"But the house, Allan!"

"Oh, yes, by the way," he said, "the house. And who's the Johnny carrying water there?"

"Oh, I quite forgot. That's Thatcher's new man."

"Rather wobbly about the knees, isn't he?" cried Cameron. "By Jove, Mandy! I feared I should never see you again," he said in a voice that trembled and broke. "And what's the chap's name?" he inquired.

"Smith, I think," said Mandy.

"Smith? Fine fellow! Most useful name!" cried Cameron.

"What's the matter, Allan?"

"The matter? Nothing now, Mandy. Nothing matters. I was afraid that−−but no matter. Hello, here's the Inspector!"

"Dear Mrs. Cameron," cried the Inspector, taking both her hands in his, "I'm awfully glad there's nothing wrong."

"Nothing wrong? Look at that house!"

"Oh, yes, awfully sorry. But we were afraid−−of that−−eh−−that is−−"

"Yes, Mandy," said her husband, making visible efforts to control his voice, "we frankly were afraid that that old devil Copperhead had come this way and−−"

"He did!" cried Mandy.

"What?"

"He did. Oh, Allan, I was going to tell you just as the Inspector came, and I am so sorry. When you left I wanted to help. I was afraid of what all those Indians might do to you, so I thought I would ride up the trail a bit. I got near to where it branches off toward the Reserve near by those pine trees. There I saw a man come tearing along on a pony. It was this Indian. I drew aside. He was just going past when he glanced at me. He stopped and came rushing at me, waving a pistol in his hand. Oh, such a face! I wonder I ever thought him fine−looking. He caught me by the arm. I thought his fingers would break the bone. Look!" She pulled up her sleeve, and upon the firm brown flesh blue and red finger marks could be seen. "He caught me and shook me and fairly yelled at me, 'You save my boy once. Me save you to−day. Next time me see your man me kill him.' He flung me away from him and nearly off my horse−−such eyes! such a face!−−and went galloping off down the trail. I feared I was going to be ill, so I came on homeward. When I reached the top of the hill I saw the smoke and by the time I arrived the house was blazing and Smith was carrying water to put out the fire where it had caught upon the smoke house and stables."

The men listened to her story with tense white faces. When she had finished Cameron said quietly:

"Mandy, roll me up some grub in a blanket."

"Where are you going, Allan?" her face pale as his own.

"Going? To get my hands on that Indian's throat."

"But not now?"

"Yes, now," he said, moving toward his horse.

"What about me, Allan?"

The word arrested him as if a hand had gripped him.

"You," he said in a dazed manner. "Why, Mandy, of course, there's you. He might have killed you." Then, shaking his shoulders as if throwing off a load, he said impatiently, "Oh, I am a fool. That devil has sent me off my head. I tell you what, Mandy, we will feed first, then we will make new plans."

"And there is Moira, too," said Mandy.

"Yes, there is Moira. We will plan for her too. After all," he continued, with a slight laugh and with slow deliberation, "there's−−lots−−of time−−to−−get him!"

CHAPTER VII. THE SARCEE CAMP

The sun had reached the peaks of the Rockies far in the west, touching their white with red, and all the lesser peaks and all the rounded hills between with great splashes of gold and blue and purple. It is the sunset and the sunrise that make the foothill country a world of mystery and of beauty, a world to dream about and long for in later days.

Through this mystic world of gold and blue and purple drove Cameron and his wife, on their way to the little town of Calgary, three days after the ruthless burning of their home. As the sun dipped behind the western peaks they reached the crossing of the Elbow and entered the wide Bow Valley, upon whose level plain was situated the busy, ambitious and would−be wicked little pioneer town. The town and plain lay bathed in a soft haze of rosy purple that lent a kind of Oriental splendor to the tawdry, unsightly cluster of shacks that sprawled here and there in irregular bunches on the prairie.

"What a picture it makes!" cried Mandy. "How wonderful this great plain with its encircling rivers, those hills with the great peaks beyond! What a site for a town!"

"There is no finer," replied her husband, "anywhere in the world that I know, unless it be that of 'Auld Reekie.'"

"Meaning?"

"Meaning!" he echoed indignantly. "What else but the finest of all the capitals of Europe?"

"London?" inquired Mandy.

"London!" echoed her husband contemptuously. "You ignorant Colonial! Edinburgh, of course. But this is perfectly splendid," he continued. "I never get used to the wonder of Calgary. You see that deep cut between those peaks in the far west? That is where 'The Gap' lies, through which the Bow flows toward us. A great site this for a great town some day. But you ought to see these peaks in the morning with the sunlight coming up from the east across the foothills and falling upon them. Whoa, there! Steady, Pepper!" he cried to the broncho, which owed its name to the speckled appearance of its hide, and which at the present moment was plunging and kicking at a dog that had rushed out from an Indian encampment close by the trail. "Did you never see an Indian dog before?"

"Oh, Allan," cried Mandy with a shudder, "do you know I can't bear to look at an Indian since last week, and I used to like them."

"Hardly fair, though, to blame the whole race for the deviltry of one specimen."

"I know that, but−−"

"This is a Sarcee camp, I fancy. They are a cunning lot and not the most reliable of the Indians. Let me see−−three−−four teepees. Ought to be fifteen or twenty in that camp. Only squaws about. The braves apparently are in town painting things up a bit."

A quarter of a mile past the Indian encampment the trail made a sharp turn into what appeared to be the beginning of the main street of the town.

"By Jove!" cried Cameron. "Here they come. Sit tight, Mandy." He pointed with his whip down the trail to what seemed to be a rolling cloud of dust, vocal with wild whoops and animated with plunging figures of men and ponies.

"Steady, there, boys! Get on!" cried Cameron to his plunging, jibing bronchos, who were evidently unwilling to face that rolling cloud of dust with its mass of shrieking men and galloping ponies thundering down upon them. Swift and fierce upon their flanks fell the hissing lash. "Stand up to them, you beggars!" he shouted to his bronchos, which seemed intent upon turning tail and joining the approaching cavalcade. "Hie, there! Hello! Look out!" he yelled, standing up in his wagon, waving his whip and holding his bronchos steadily on the trail. The next moment the dust cloud enveloped them and the thundering cavalcade, parting, surged by on either side. Cameron was wild with rage.

"Infernal cheeky brutes!" he cried. "For two shillings I'd go back and break some of their necks. Ride me down, would they?" he continued, grinding his teeth in fury.

He pulled up his bronchos with half a mind to turn them about and pursue the flying Indians. His experience and training with the Mounted Police made it difficult for him to accept with equal mind what he called the infernal cheek of a bunch of Indians. At the entreaties of his wife, however, he hesitated in carrying his purpose into effect.

"Let them go," said Mandy. "They didn't hurt us, after all."

"Didn't? No thanks to them. They might have killed you. Well, I shall see about this later." He gave his excited bronchos their head and sailed into town, drawing up in magnificent style at the Royal Hotel.

An attendant in cowboy garb came lounging up.

"Hello, Billy!" cried Cameron. "Still blooming?"

"Sure! And rosebuds ain't in it with you, Colonel." Billy was from the land of colonels. "You've got a whole garden with you this trip, eh?"

"My wife, Billy," replied Cameron, presenting her.

Billy pulled off his Stetson.

"Proud to meet you, madam. Hope I see you well and happy."

"Yes, indeed, well and happy," cried Mandy emphatically.

"Sure thing, if looks mean anything," said Billy, admiration glowing in his eyes.

"Take the horses, Billy. They have come a hundred and fifty miles."

"Hundred and fifty, eh? They don't look it. But I'll take care of 'em all right. You go right in."

"I shall be back presently, Billy," said Cameron, passing into the dingy sitting−room that opened off the bar.

In a few minutes he had his wife settled in a frowsy little eight− by−ten bedroom, the best the hotel afforded, and departed to attend to his team, make arrangements for supper and inquire about the incoming train. The train he found to be three hours late. His team he found in the capable hands of Billy, who was unharnessing and rubbing them down. While ordering his supper a hand gripped his shoulder and a voice shouted in his ear:

"Hello, old sport! How goes it?"

"Martin, old boy!" shouted Cameron in reply. "It's awfully good to see you. How did you get here? Oh, yes, of course, I remember. You left the construction camp and came here to settle down." All the while Cameron was speaking he was shaking his friend's hand with both of his. "By Jove, but you're fit!" he continued, running his eye over the slight but athletic figure of his friend.

"Fit! Never fitter, not even in the old days when I used to pass the pigskin to you out of the scrimmage. But you? You're hardly up to the mark." The keen gray eyes searched Cameron's face. "What's up with you?"

"Oh, nothing. A little extra work and a little worry, but I'll tell you later."

"Well, what are you on to now?" inquired Martin.

"Ordering our supper. We've just come in from a hundred and fifty miles' drive."

"Supper? Your wife here too? Glory! It's up to me, old boy! Look here, Connolly," he turned to the proprietor behind the bar, "a bang−up supper for three. All the season's delicacies and all the courses in order. As you love me, Connolly, do us your prettiest. And soon, awfully soon. A hundred and fifty miles, remember. Now, then, how's my old nurse?" he continued, turning back to Cameron. "She was my nurse, remember, till you came and stole her."

"She was, eh? Ask her," laughed Cameron. "But she will be glad to see you. Where's MY nurse, then, my little nurse, who saw me through a fever and a broken leg?"

"Oh, she's up in the mountains still, in the construction camp. I proposed to bring her down here with me, but there was a riot. I barely escaped. If ever she gets out from that camp it will be when they are all asleep or when she is in a box car."

"Come along, then," cried Cameron. "I have much to tell you, and my wife will be glad to see you. My sister comes in by No. 1, do you know?"

"Your sister? By No. 1? You don't say! Why, I never thought your sister−−by No. 1, eh?"

"Yes, by No. 1."

"Say, Doc," said the hotel man, breaking into the conversation. "There's a bunch of 'em comin' in, ain't there? Who's the lady you was expectin' yourself on No. 1?"

"Lady?" said Cameron. "What's this, Martin?"

"Me? Wake up, Connolly, you're walking in your sleep," violently signaling to the hotel man.

"Oh, it won't do, Martin," said Cameron with grave concern. "You may as well own up. Who is it? Come. By Jove! What? A blush? And on that asbestos cheek? Something here, sure enough."

"Oh, rot, Cameron! Connolly is a well−known somnambulist."

"Sure thing!" said Connolly. "Is it catchin,' for I guess you had the same thing last night?"

"Connolly, you've gone batty! You need a nurse."

"A nurse? Maybe so. Maybe so. But I guess you've got to the point where you need a preacher. Ha! ha! Got you that time, Doc!" laughed the hotel man, winking at Cameron.

"Oh, let it out, Martin. You'll feel better afterward. Who is it?"

"Cameron, so help me! Connolly is an infernal ass. He's batty, I tell you. I'm treating him for it right now."

"All right," said Cameron, "never mind. I shall run up and tell my wife you are here. Wait for me," he cried, as he ran up the stairs.

"Connolly, you fool! I'll knock your wooden block off!" said the doctor in a fury.

"But, Doc, you did say−−"

"Oh, confound you! Shut up! It was−−"

"But you did say−−"

"Will you shut up?"

"Certain, sure I'll shut up. But you said−−"

"Look here!" broke in the doctor impatiently. "He'll be down in a minute. I don't want him to know."

"Aw, Doc, cut it out! He ain't no Lady Clara."

"Connolly, close that trap of yours and listen to me. This is serious. He'll be back in a jiffy. It's the same lady as he is going to meet."

"Same lady? But she's his sister."

"Yes, of course, you idiot! She's his sister. And now you've queered me with him and he will think−−"

"Aw, Doc, let me be. I'll straighten that tangle out."

"Sh−h! Here he is. Not a word, on your life!"

"Aw, get out!" replied Connolly with generous enthusiasm. "I don't leave no pard of mine in a hole. Say," he cried, turning to Cameron, "about that lady. Ha! ha!"

"Shut your ugly mug!" said the doctor savagely.

"It's the same lady. Ha! ha! Good joke, eh, Sergeant?"

"Same lady?" echoed Cameron.

"Sure, same lady."

"What does he mean, Martin?"

"The man's drunk, Cameron. He got a permit last week and he hasn't been sober for a day since."

"Ha! ha!" laughed Connolly again. "Wish I had a chance."

"But the lady?" said Cameron, looking at his friend suspiciously. "And these blushes?"

"Oh, well, hang it!" said Martin. "I suppose I might as well tell you. I found out that your sister was to be in on this train, and in case you should not turn up I told Connolly here to have a room ready."

"Oh," said Cameron, with his eyes upon his friend's face. "You found out? And how did you find out that Moira was coming?"

"Well," said Martin, his face growing hotter with every word of explanation, "you have a wife and we have a mutual friend in our little nurse, and that's how I learned. And so I thought I'd be on hand anyway. You remember I met your sister up at your Highland home with the unpronounceable name."

"Ah, yes! Cuagh Oir. Dear old spot!" said Cameron reminiscently. "Moira will be heart broken every day when she sees the Big Horn Ranch, I'm afraid. But here comes Mandy."

The meeting between the doctor and Cameron's wife was like that between old comrades in arms, as indeed they had been through many a hard fight with disease, accident and death during the construction days along the line of the Canadian Pacific Railway through the Rocky Mountains.

A jolly hour they had together at supper, exchanging news and retailing the latest jokes. And then Cameron told his friend the story of old Copperhead and of the task laid upon him by Superintendent Strong. Martin listened in grave silence till the tale was done, then said with quiet gravity:

"Cameron, this is a serious business. Why! It's−−it's terrible."

"Yes," replied Mandy quickly, "but you can see that he must do it. We have quite settled that. You see there are the women and children."

"And is there no one else? Surely−−"

"No, there is no one else quite so fit to do it," said Mandy.

"By Jove, you're a wonder!" cried Martin, his face lighting up with sudden enthusiasm.

"Not much of a wonder," she replied, a quick tremor in her voice. "Not much of a wonder, I'm afraid. But how could I keep him? I couldn't keep him, could I," she said, "if his country needs him?"

The doctor glanced at her face with its appealing deep blue eyes.

"No, by Jove! You couldn't keep him, not you."

"Now, Mandy," said Cameron, "you must upstairs and to bed." He read aright the signs upon her face. "You are tired and you will need all the sleep you can get. Wait for me, Martin, I'll be down in a few moments."

When they reached their room Cameron turned and took his wife in his arms.

"Mandy! as Martin says, you are wonderful. You are a brave woman. You have nerve enough for both of us, and you will need to have nerve for both, for how I am going to leave you I know not. But now you must to bed. I have a little business to attend to."

"Business?" inquired his wife.

"Yes. Oh, I won't try to hide it from you, Mandy. It's 'The Big Business.' We are−−Dr. Martin and I−−going up to the Barracks. Superintendent Strong has come down for a consultation." He paused and looked into his wife's face. "I must go, dear."

"Yes, yes, I know, Allan. You must go. But−−do you know−−it's foolish to say it, but as those Indians passed us I fancied I saw the face of Copperhead."

"Hardly, I fancy," said her husband with a laugh. "He'd know better than run into this town in open day just now. All Indians will look to you like old Copperhead for a while."

"It may be so. I fancy I'm a little nervous. But come back soon."

"You may be sure of that, sweetheart. Meantime sleep well."

The little town of Calgary stands on one of the most beautiful town−sites in all the world. A great plain with ramparts of hills on every side, encircled by the twin mountain rivers, the Bow and the Elbow, overlooked by rolling hills and far away to the west by the mighty peaks of the Rockies, it holds at once ample space and unusual picturesque beauty. The little town itself was just emerging from its early days as a railway construction−camp and was beginning to develop ambitions toward a well−ordered business activity and social stability. It was an all−night town, for the simple and sufficient reason that its communications with the world lying to the east and to the west began with the arrival of No. 2 at half−past twelve at night and No. 1 at five o'clock next morning. Few of its citizens thought it worth while to settle down for the night until after the departure of No. 2 on its westward journey.

Through this "all−night" little town Cameron and the doctor took their way. The sidewalks were still thronged, the stores still doing business, the restaurants, hotels, pool−rooms all wide open. It kept Sergeant Crisp busy enough running out the "tin−horn" gamblers and whisky−peddlers, keeping guard over the fresh and innocent lambs that strayed in from the East and across from the old land ready for shearing, and preserving law and order in this hustling frontier town. Money was still easy in the town, and had Sergeant Crisp been minded for the mere closing of his eyes or turning of his back upon occasion he might have retired early from the Force with a competency. Unhappily for Sergeant Crisp, however, there stood in the pathway of his fortune the awkward fact of his conscience and his oath of service. Consequently he was forced to grub along upon the munificent bounty of the daily pay with which Her Majesty awarded the faithful service of the non− coms. in her North West Mounted Police Force. And indeed through all the wide reaches of that great West land during those pioneer days and among all the officers of that gallant force no record can be found of an officer who counted fortune dearer than honor.

Through this wide awake, wicked, but well−watched little town Cameron with his friend made his way westward toward the Barracks to keep his appointment with his former Chief, Superintendent Strong. The Barracks stood upon the prairie about half a mile distant from the town. They found Superintendent Strong fuming with impatience, which he controlled with difficulty while Cameron presented his friend.

"Well, Cameron, you've come at last," was his salutation when the introduction was completed. "When did

you get into town? I have been waiting all day to see you. Where have you been?"

"Arrived an hour ago," said Cameron shortly, for he did not half like the Superintendent's brusque manner. "The trail was heavy owing to the rain day before yesterday."

"When did you leave the ranch?" inquired Sergeant Crisp.

"Yesterday morning," said Cameron. "The colts were green and I couldn't send them along."

"Yesterday morning!" exclaimed Sergeant Crisp. "You needn't apologize for the colts, Cameron."

"I wasn't apologizing for anybody or anything. I was making a statement of fact," replied Cameron curtly.

"Ah, yes, very good going, Cameron. Very good going, indeed, I should say," said the Superintendent, conscious of his own brusqueness and anxious to appease. "Did Mrs. Cameron come with you?"

"She did."

"Indeed. That is a long drive for a lady to make, Cameron. Too long a drive, I should say. I hope she is quite well, not−−eh−− over−fatigued?"

"She is quite well, thank you."

"Well, she is an old campaigner," said the Superintendent with a smile, "and not easily knocked up if I remember her aright. But I ought to say, Cameron, how very deeply I appreciate your very fine−− indeed very handsome conduct in volunteering to come to our assistance in this matter. Very handsome indeed I call it. It will have a good effect upon the community. I appreciate the sacrifice. The Commissioner and the whole Force will appreciate it. But," he added, as if to himself, "before we are through with this business I fear there will be more sacrifice demanded from all of us. I trust none of us will be found wanting." The Superintendent's voice was unduly solemn, his manner almost somber. Cameron was impressed with this manifestation of feeling so unusual with the Superintendent.

"Any more news, sir?" he inquired.

"Yes, every post brings news of seditious meetings up north along the Saskatchewan and of indifference on the part of the Government. And further, I have the most conclusive evidence that our Indians are being tampered with, and successfully too. There is no reason to doubt that the head chiefs have been approached and that many of the minor chiefs are listening to the proposals of Riel and his half−breeds. But you have some news to give, I understand? Dickson said you would give me particulars."

Thereupon Cameron briefly related the incidents in connection with the attempted arrest of the Sioux Chief, and closed with a brief account of the burning of his home.

"That is most daring, most serious," exclaimed the Superintendent. "But you are quite certain that it was the Sioux that was responsible for the outrage?"

"Well," said Cameron, "he met my wife on a trail five miles away, threatened her, and−−"

"Good God, Cameron! Threatened your wife?"

"Yes, nearly flung her off her horse," replied Cameron, his voice quiet and even, but his eyes glowing like fires in his white face.

"Flung her off her horse? But−−he didn't injure her?" replied the Superintendent.

"Only that he terrified her with his threats and then went on toward the house, which he left in flames."

"My God, Cameron!" said the Superintendent, rising in his excitement. "This is really terrible. You must have suffered awful anxiety. I apologize for my abrupt manner a moment ago," he added, offering his hand. "I'm awfully sorry."

"It's all right, Superintendent," replied Cameron. "I'm afraid I am a little upset myself."

"But what a God's mercy she escaped! How came that, I wonder?"

Then Cameron told the story of the rescue of the Indian boy.

"That undoubtedly explains it," exclaimed the Superintendent. "That was a most fortunate affair. Do an Indian a good turn and he will never forget it. I shudder to think of what might have happened, for I assure you that this Copperhead will stick at nothing. We have an unusually able man to deal with, and we shall put our whole Force on this business of arresting this man. Have you any suggestions yourself?"

"No," said Cameron, "except that it would appear to be a mistake to give any sign that we were very specially anxious to get him just now. So far we have not shown our hand. Any concentrating of the Force upon his capture would only arouse suspicion and defeat our aim, while my going after him, no matter how keenly, will be accounted for on personal grounds."

"There is something in that, but do you think you can get him?"

"I am going to get him," said Cameron quietly.

The superintendent glanced at his face.

"By Jove, I believe you will! But remember, you can count on me and on my Force to a man any time and every time to back you up, and there's my hand on it. And now, let's get at this thing. We have a cunning devil to do with and he has gathered about him the very worst elements on the reserves."

Together they sat and made their plans till far on into the night. But as a matter of fact they could make little progress. They knew well it would be extremely difficult to discover their man. Owing to the state of feeling throughout the reserves the source of information upon which the Police ordinarily relied had suddenly dried up or become untrustworthy. A marked change had come over the temper of the Indians. While as yet they were apparently on friendly terms and guilty of no open breach of the law, a sullen and suspicious aloofness marked the bearing of the younger braves and even of some of the chiefs toward the Police. Then, too, among the Piegans in the south and among the Sarcees whose reserve was in the neighborhood of Calgary an epidemic of cattle−stealing had broken out and the Police were finding it increasingly difficult to bring the criminals to justice. Hence with this large increase in crime and with the changed attitude and temper of the Indians toward the Police, such an amount of additional patrol−work was necessary that the Police had almost reached the limit of their endurance.

"In fact, we have really a difficult proposition before us, short− handed as we are," said the Superintendent as they closed their interview. "Indeed, if things become much worse we may find it necessary to organize the settlers as Home Guards. An outbreak on the Saskatchewan might produce at any moment the most serious results here and in British Columbia. Meantime, while we stand ready to help all we can, it looks to me, Cameron, that you are right and that in this business you must go it alone pretty much."

"I realize that, sir," replied Cameron. "But first I must get my house built and things in shape, then I hope to take this up."

"Most certainly," replied the Superintendent. "Take a month. He can't do much more harm in a month, and meantime we shall do our utmost to obtain information and we shall keep you informed of anything we discover."

The Superintendent and Sergeant accompanied Cameron and his friend to the door.

"It is a black night," said Sergeant Crisp. "I hope they're not running any 'wet freight' in to−night."

"It's a good night for it, Sergeant," said Dr. Martin. "Do you expect anything to come in?"

"I have heard rumors," replied the Sergeant, "and there is a freight train standing right there now which I have already gone through but upon which it is worth while still to keep an eye."

"Well, good−night," said the Superintendent, shaking Cameron by the hand. "Keep me posted and when within reach be sure and see me. Good−night, Dr. Martin. We may want you too before long."

"All right, sir, you have only to say the word."

The night was so black that the trail which in the daylight was worn smooth and plainly visible was quite blotted out. The light from the Indian camp fire, which was blazing brightly a hundred yards away, helped them to keep their general direction.

"For a proper black night commend me to the prairie," said the doctor. "It is the dead level does it, I believe. There is nothing to cast a reflection or a shadow."

"It will be better in a few minutes," said Cameron, "when we get our night sight."

"You are off the trail a bit, I think," said the doctor.

"Yes, I know. I am hitting toward the fire. The light makes it better going that way."

"I say, that chap appears to be going some. Quite a song and dance he's giving them," said the doctor, pointing to an Indian who in the full light of the camp fire was standing erect and, with hand outstretched, was declaiming to the others, who, kneeling or squatting about the fire, were giving him rapt attention. The erect figure and outstretched arm arrested Cameron. A haunting sense of familiarity floated across his memory.

"Let's go nearer," he said, "and quietly."

With extreme caution they made about two−thirds of the distance when a howl from an Indian dog revealed their presence. At once the speaker who had been standing in the firelight sank crouching to the ground. Instantly Cameron ran forward a few swift steps and, like a hound upon a deer, leapt across the fire and fair upon the crouching Indian, crying "Call the Police, Martin!"

With a loud cry of "Police! Police! Help here!" Martin sprang into the middle of an excited group of Indians. Two of them threw themselves upon him, but with a hard right and left he laid them low and, seizing a stick of wood, sprang toward two others who were seeking to batter the life out of Cameron as he lay gripping his enemy by the throat with one hand and with the other by the wrist to check a knife thrust. Swinging his stick around his head and repeating his cry for help, Martin made Cameron's assailants give back a space and before they could renew the attack Sergeant Crisp burst open the door of the Barracks, and, followed by a Slim young constable and the Superintendent, came rushing with shouts upon the scene. Immediately upon the approach of the Police the Indians ceased the fight and all that could faded out of the light into the black night around them, while the Indian who continued to struggle with incredible fury to free himself from Cameron's grip suddenly became limp and motionless.

"Now, what's all this?" demanded the Sergeant. "Why, it's you, doctor, and where−−? You don't mean that's Cameron there? Hello, Cameron!" he said, leaning over him. "Let go! He's safe enough. We've got him all right. Let go! By Jove! Are they both dead?"

Here the Superintendent came up. The incidents leading up to the present situation were briefly described by the doctor.

"I can't get this fellow free," said the Sergeant, who was working hard to release the Indian's throat from the gripping fingers. He turned Cameron over on his back. He was quite insensible. Blood was pouring from his mouth and nose, but his fingers like steel clamps were gripping the wrist and throat of his foe. The Indian lay like dead.

"Good Lord, doctor! What shall we do?" cried the Superintendent. "Is he dead?"

"No," said Martin, with his hand upon Cameron's heart. "Bring water. You can't loosen his fingers till he revives. The blow that knocked him senseless set those fingers as they are and they will stay set thus till released by returning consciousness."

"Here then, get water quick!" shouted the Superintendent to the slim young constable.

Gradually as the water was splashed upon his face Cameron came back to life and, relaxing his fingers, stretched himself with a sigh as of vast relief and lay still.

"Here, take that, you beast!" cried the Sergeant, dashing the rest of the water into the face of the Indian lying rigid and motionless on the ground. A long shudder ran through the Indian's limbs. Clutching at his throat with both hands, he raised himself to a sitting posture, his breath coming in raucous gasps, glared wildly upon the group, then sank back upon the ground, rolled over upon his side and lay twitching and breathing heavily, unheeded by the doctor and Police who were working hard over Cameron.

"No bones broken, I think," said the doctor, feeling the battered head. "Here's where the blow fell that knocked him out," pointing to a ridge that ran along the side of Cameron's head. "A little lower, a little more to the front and he would never have moved. Let's get him in."

Cameron opened his eyes, struggled to speak and sank back again.

"Don't stir, old chap. You're all right. Don't move for a bit. Could you get a little brandy, Sergeant?"

Again the slim young constable rushed toward the Barracks and in a few moments returned with the spirits. After taking a sip of the brandy Cameron again opened his eyes and managed to say "Don't−−"

"All right, old chap," said the doctor. "We won't move you yet. Just lie still a bit." But as once more Cameron opened his eyes the agony of the appeal in them aroused the doctor's attention. "Something wrong, eh?" he said. "Are you in pain, old boy?"

The appealing eyes closed, then, opening again, turned toward the Superintendent.

"Copperhead," he whispered.

"What do you say?" said the Superintendent kneeling down.

Once more with painful effort Cameron managed to utter the word "Copperhead."

"Copperhead!" ejaculated the Superintendent in a low tense voice, springing to his feet and turning toward the unconscious Indian. "He's gone!" he cried with a great oath. "He's gone! Sergeant Crisp!" he shouted, "Call out the whole Force! Surround this camp and hold every Indian. Search every teepee for this fellow who was lying here. Quick! Quick!" Leaving Cameron to the doctor, who in a few minutes became satisfied that no serious injury had been sustained, he joined in the search with fierce energy. The teepees were searched, the squaws and papooses were ruthlessly bundled out from their slumbers and with the Indians were huddled into the Barracks.

But of the Sioux Chief there was no sign. He had utterly vanished. The black prairie had engulfed him.

But the Police had their own methods. Within a quarter of an hour half a dozen mounted constables were riding off in different directions to cover the main trails leading to the Indian reserves and to sweep a wide circle about the town.

"They will surely get him," said Dr. Martin confidently.

"Not much chance of it," growled Cameron, to whom with returning consciousness had come the bitter knowledge of the escape of the man he had come to regard as his mortal enemy. "I had him fast enough," he groaned, "in spite of the best he could do, and I would have choked his life out had it not been for these other devils."

"They certainly jumped in savagely," said Martin. "In fact I cannot understand how they got at the thing so quickly."

"Didn't you hear him call?" said Cameron. "It was his call that did it. Something he said turned them into devils. They were bound to do for me. I never saw Indians act like that."

"Yes, I heard that call, and it mighty near did the trick for you. Thank Heaven your thick Hielan' skull saved you."

"How did they let him go?" again groaned Cameron.

"How? Because he was too swift for us," said the Superintendent, who had come in, "and we too slow. I thought it was an ordinary Indian row, you see, but I might have known that you would not have gone in in that style without good reason. Who would think that this old devil should have the impudence to camp right here under our nose? Where did he come from anyway, do you suppose?"

"Been to the Blackfoot Reserve like enough and was on his way to the Sarcees when he fell in with this little camp of theirs."

"That's about it," replied the Superintendent gloomily. "And to think you had him fast and we let him go!"

The thought brought small comfort to any of them, least of all to Cameron. In that vast foothill country with all the hidings of the hills and hollows there was little chance that the Police would round up the fugitive, and upon Cameron still lay the task of capturing this cunning and resourceful foe.

"Never mind," said Martin cheerily. "Three out, all out. You'll get him next time."

"I don't know about that. But I'll get him some time or he'll get me," replied Cameron as his face settled into grim lines. "Let's get back."

"Are you quite fit?" inquired the Superintendent.

"Fit enough. Sore a bit in the head, but can navigate."

"I can't tell you how disappointed and chagrined I feel. It isn't often that my wits are so slow but−−" The Superintendent's jaws here cut off his speech with a snap. The one crime reckoned unpardonable in the men under his own command was that of failure and his failure to capture old Copperhead thus delivered into his hands galled him terribly.

"Well, good−night, Cameron," said the Superintendent, looking out into the black night. "We shall let you know to−morrow the result of our scouting, though I don't expect much from it. He is much too clever to be caught in the open in this country."

"Perhaps he'll skidoo," said Dr. Martin hopefully.

"No, he's not that kind," replied the Superintendent. "You can't scare him out. You have got to catch him or kill him."

"I think you are right, sir," said Cameron. "He will stay till his work is done or till he is made to quit."

"That is true, Cameron−−till he is made to quit−−and that's your job," said the Superintendent solemnly.

"Yes, that is my job, sir," replied Cameron simply and with equal solemnity. "I shall do my best."

"We have every confidence in you, Cameron," replied the Superintendent. "Good−night," he said again, shutting the door.

"Say, old man, this is too gruesome," said Martin with fierce impatience. "I can't see why it's up to you more than any other."

"The Sun Dance Trail is the trail he must take to do his work. That was my patrol last year−−I know it best. God knows I don't want this−−" his breath came quick−−"I am not afraid−−but−−but there's−− We have been together for such a little while, you know." He could get no farther for a moment or two, then added quietly, "But

somehow I know−−yes and she knows−−bless her brave heart−−it is my job. I must stay with it."

CHAPTER VIII. THE GIRL ON NO. 1.

By the time they had reached the hotel Cameron was glad enough to go to his bed.

"You need not tell your wife, I suppose," said the doctor.

"Tell her? Certainly!" said Cameron. "She is with me in this. I play fair with her. Don't you fear, she is up to it."

And so she was, and, though her face grew white as she listened to the tale, never for a moment did her courage falter.

"Doctor, is Allan all right? Tell me," she said, her big blue eyes holding his in a steady gaze.

"Right enough, but he must have a long sleep. You must not let him stir at five."

"Then," said Mandy, "I shall go to meet the train, Allan."

"But you don't know Moira."

"No, but I shall find her out."

"Of course," said Dr. Martin in a deprecating tone, "I know Miss Cameron, but−−"

"Of course you do," cried Mandy. "Why, that is splendid! You will go and Allan need not be disturbed. She will understand. Not a word, now, Allan. We will look after this, the doctor and I, eh, Doctor?"

"Why−−eh−−yes−−yes certainly, of course. Why not?"

"Why not, indeed?" echoed Mandy briskly. "She will understand."

And thus it was arranged. Under the influence of a powder left by Dr. Martin, Cameron, after an hour's tossing, fell into a heavy sleep.

"I am so glad you are here," said Mandy to the doctor, as he looked in upon her. "You are sure there is no injury?"

"No, nothing serious. Shock, that's all. A day's quiet will fix him up."

"I am so thankful," said Mandy, heaving a deep sigh of relief, "and I am so glad that you are here. And it is so nice that you know Moira."

"You are not going to the train?" said the doctor.

"No, no, there is no need, and I don't like to leave him. Besides you don't need me."

"N−o−o, no, not at all−−certainly not," said the doctor with growing confidence. "Good−night. I shall show her to her room."

"Oh," cried Mandy, "I shall meet you when you come. Thank you so much. So glad you are here," she added with a tremulous smile.

The doctor passed down the stairs.

"By Jove, she's a brick!" he said to himself. "She has about all she can stand just now. Glad I am here, eh? Well, I guess I am too. But what about this thing? It's up to me now to do the Wild West welcome act, and I'm scared−−plain scared to death. She won't know me from a goat. Let's see. I've got two hours yet to work up my ginger. I'll have a pipe to start with."

He passed into the bar, where, finding himself alone, he curled up in a big leather chair and gave himself up to his pipe and his dreams. The dingy bar−room gave place to a little sunny glen in the Highlands of Scotland, in which nestled a little cluster of stone−built cottages, moss−grown and rose−covered. Far down in the bottom of the Glen a tiny loch gleamed like a jewel. Up on the hillside above the valley an avenue of ragged pines led to a large manor house, old, quaint, but dignified, and in the doorway a maiden stood, grave of face and wonderfully sweet, in whose brown eyes and over whose brown curls all the glory of the little Glen of the Cup of Gold seemed to gather. Through many pipes he pursued his dreams, but always they led him to that old doorway and the maiden with the grave sweet face and the hair and eyes full of the golden sunlight of the Glen Cuagh Oir.

"Oh, pshaw!" he grumbled to himself at last, knocking the ashes from his pipe. "She has forgotten me. It was only one single day. But what a day!"

He lit a fresh pipe and began anew to dream of that wonderful day, that day which was the one unfading point

of light in all his Old Country stay. Not even the day when he stood to receive his parchment and the special commendation of the Senatus and of his own professor for his excellent work lived with him like that day in the Glen. Every detail of the picture he could recall and ever in the foreground the maiden. With deliberate purpose he settled himself in his chair and set himself to fill in those fine and delicate touches that were necessary to make perfect the foreground of his picture, the pale olive face with its bewildering frame of golden waves and curls, the clear brown eyes, now soft and tender, now flashing with wrath, and the voice with its soft Highland cadence.

"By Jove, I'm dotty! Clean dotty! I'll make an ass of myself, sure thing, when I see her to−day." He sprang from his chair and shook himself together. "Besides, she has forgotten all about me." He looked at his watch. It was twenty minutes to train−time. He opened the door and looked out. The chill morning air struck him sharply in the face. He turned quickly, snatched his overcoat from a nail in the hall and put it on.

At this point Billy, who combined in his own person the offices of ostler, porter and clerk, appeared, his lantern shining with a dim yellow glare in the gray light of the dawn.

"No. 1 is about due, Doc," he said.

"She is, eh? I say, Billy," said the Doctor, "want to do something for me?" He pushed a dollar at Billy over the counter.

"Name it, Doc, without further insult," replied Billy, shoving the dollar back with a lordly scorn.

"All right, Billy, you're a white little soul. Now listen. I want your ladies' parlor aired."

"Aired?" gasped Billy.

"Yes, open the windows. Put on a fire. I have a lady coming−−I have−−that is−−Sergeant Cameron's sister is coming−−"

"Say no more," said Billy with a wink. "I get you, Doc. But what about the open window, Doc? It's rather cold."

"Open it up and put on a fire. Those Old Country people are mad about fresh air."

"All right, Doc," replied Billy with another knowing wink. "The best is none too good for her, eh?"

"Look here, now, Billy−−" the doctor's tone grew severe−−"let's have no nonsense. This is Sergeant Cameron's sister. He is knocked out, unable to meet her. I am taking his place. Do you get me? Now be quick. If you have any think juice in that block of yours turn it on."

Billy twisted one ear as if turning a cock, and tapped his forehead with his knuckles.

"Doc," he said solemnly, "she's workin' like a watch, full jewel, patent lever."

"All right. Now get on to this. Sitting−room aired, good fire going, windows open and a cup of coffee."

"Coffee? Say, Doc, there ain't time. What about tea?"

"You know well enough, Billy, you haven't got any but that infernal green stuff fit to tan the stomach of a brass monkey."

"There's another can, Doc. I know where it is. Leave it to me."

"All right, Billy, I trust you. They are death on tea in the Old Country. And toast, Billy. What about toast?"

"Toast? Toast, eh? Well, all right, Doc. Toast it is. Trust yours truly. You keep her out a−viewin' the scenery for half an hour."

"And Billy, a big pitcher of hot water. They can't live without hot water in the morning, those Old Country people."

"Sure thing, Doc. A tub if you like."

"No, a pitcher will do."

At this point a long drawn whistle sounded through the still morning air.

"There she goes, Doc. She has struck the grade. Say, Doc−−"

But his words fell upon empty space. The doctor had already disappeared.

"Say, he's a sprinter," said Billy to himself. "He ain't takin' no chances on bein' late. Shouldn't be surprised if the Doc got there all right."

He darted upstairs and looked around the ladies' parlor. The air was heavy with mingled odors of the bar and the kitchen. A spittoon occupied a prominent place in the center of the room. The tables were dusty, the furniture in confusion. The ladies' parlor was perfectly familiar to Billy, but this morning he viewed it with new eyes.

"Say, the Doc ain't fair. He's too swift in his movements," he muttered to himself as he proceeded to fling things into their places. He raised the windows, opened the stove door and looked in. The ashes of many fires half

filling the box met his eyes with silent reproach. "Say, the Doc ain't fair," he muttered again. "Them ashes ought to have been out of there long ago." This fact none knew better than himself, inasmuch as there was no other from whom this duty might properly be expected. Yet it brought some small relief to vent his disgust upon this offending accumulation of many days' neglect. There was not a moment to lose. He was due in ten minutes to meet the possible guests for the Royal at the train. He seized a pail left in the hall by the none too tidy housemaid and with his hands scooped into it the ashes from the stove, and, leaving a cloud of dust to settle everywhere upon tables and chairs, ran down with his pail and back again with kindling and firewood and had a fire going in an extraordinarily short time. He then caught up an ancient antimacassar, used it as a duster upon chairs and tables, flung it back again in its place over the rickety sofa and rushed for the station to find that the train had already pulled in, had come to a standstill and was disgorging its passengers upon the platform.

"Roy−−al Ho−−tel!" shouted Billy. "Best in town! All the comforts and conveniences! Yes, sir! Take your grip, sir? Just give me them checks! That's all right, leave 'em to me. I'll get your baggage all right."

He saw the doctor wandering distractedly up and down the platform.

"Hello, Doc, got your lady? Not on the Pullman, eh? Take a look in the First Class. Say, Doc," he added in a lower voice, coming near to the doctor, "what's that behind you?"

The doctor turned sharply and saw a young lady whose long clinging black dress made her seem taller than she was. She wore a little black hat with a single feather on one side, which gave it a sort of tam o' shanter effect. She came forward with hand outstretched.

"I know you, Mr. Martin," she said in a voice that indicated immense relief.

"You?" he cried. "Is it you? And to think I didn't know you. And to think you should remember me."

"Remember! Well do I remember you−−and that day in the Cuagh Oir−− but you have forgotten all about that day." A little flush appeared on her pale cheek.

"Forgotten?" cried Martin.

"But you didn't know me," she added with a slight severity in her tone.

"I was not looking for you."

"Not looking for me?" cried the girl. "Then who−−?" She paused in a sudden confusion, and with a little haughty lift of her head said, "Where is Allan, my brother?"

But the doctor ignored her question. He was gazing at her in stupid amazement.

"I was looking for a little girl," he said, "in a blue serge dress and tangled hair, brown, and all curls, with brown eyes and−−"

"And you found a grown up woman with all the silly curls in their proper place−−much older−−very much older. It is a habit we have in Scotland of growing older."

"Older?"

"Yes, older, and more sober and sensible−−and plainer."

"Plainer?" The doctor's mind was evidently not working with its usual ease and swiftness, partly from amazement at the transformation that had resulted in this tall slender young lady standing before him with her stately air, and partly from rage at himself and his unutterable stupidity.

"But you have not answered me," said the girl, obviously taken aback at the doctor's manner. "Where is my brother? He was to meet me. This is Cal−−gar−−ry, is it not?"

"It's Calgary all right," cried the doctor, glad to find in this fact a solid resting place for his mind.

"And my brother? There is nothing wrong?" The alarm in her voice brought him to himself.

"Wrong? Not a bit. At least, not much."

"Not much? Tell me at once, please." With an imperious air the young lady lifted her head and impaled the doctor with her flashing brown eyes.

"Well," said the doctor in halting confusion, "you see, he met with an accident."

"An accident?" she cried. "You are hiding something from me, Mr. Martin. My brother is ill, or−−"

"No, no, not he. An Indian hit him on the head," said the doctor, rendered desperate by her face.

"An Indian?" Her cry, her white face, the quick clutch of her hands at her heart, roused the doctor's professional instincts and banished his confusion.

"He is perfectly all right, I assure you, Miss Cameron. Only it was better that he should have his sleep out. He was most anxious to meet you, but as his medical adviser I urged him to remain quiet and offered to come in his

place. His wife is with him. A day's rest, believe me, will make him quite fit." The doctor's manner was briskly professional and helped to quiet the girl's alarm.

"Can I see him?" she asked.

"Most certainly, in a few hours when he wakes and when you are rested. Here, Billy, take Miss Cameron's checks. Look sharp."

"Say, Doc," said Billy in an undertone, "about that tea and toast−−"

"What the deuce−−?" said the doctor impatiently. "Oh, yes−−all right! Only look lively."

"Keep her a−viewin' the scenery, Doc, a bit," continued Billy under his breath.

"Oh, get a move on, Billy! What are you monkeying about?" said the doctor quite crossly. He was anxious to escape from a position that had become intolerable to him. For months he had been looking forward to this meeting and now he had bungled it. In the first place he had begun by not knowing the girl who for three years and more had been in his dreams day and night, then he had carried himself like a schoolboy in her presence, and lastly had frightened her almost to death by his clumsy announcement of her brother's accident. The young lady at his side, with the quick intuition of her Celtic nature, felt his mood, and, not knowing the cause, became politely distant.

On their walk to the hotel Dr. Martin pointed out the wonderful pearly gray light stealing across the plain and beginning to brighten on the tops of the rampart hills that surrounded the town.

"You will see the Rockies in an hour, Miss Cameron, in the far west there," he said. But there was no enthusiasm in his voice.

"Ah, yes, how beautiful!" said the young lady. But her tone, too, was lifeless.

Desperately the doctor strove to make conversation during their short walk and with infinite relief did he welcome the appearance of Mandy at her bedroom door waiting their approach.

"Your brother's wife, Miss Cameron," said he.

For a single moment they stood searching each other's souls. Then by some secret intuition known only to the female mind they reached a conclusion, an entirely satisfactory conclusion, too, for at once they were in each other's arms.

"You are Moira?" cried Mandy.

"Yes," said the girl in an eager, tremulous voice. "And my brother? Is he well?"

"Well? Of course he is−−perfectly fine. He is sleeping now. We will not wake him. He has had none too good a night."

"No, no," cried Moira, "don't wake him. Oh, I am so glad. You see, I was afraid."

"Afraid? Why were you afraid?" inquired Mandy, looking indignantly at the doctor, who stood back, a picture of self condemnation.

"Yes, yes, Mrs. Cameron, blame me. I deserve it all. I bungled the whole thing this morning and frightened Miss Cameron nearly into a fit, for no other reason than that I am all ass. Now I shall retire. Pray deal gently with me. Good−by!" he added abruptly, lifted his hat and was gone.

"What's the matter with him?" said Mandy, looking at her sister−in− law.

"I do not know, I am sure," replied Moira indifferently. "Is there anything the matter?"

"He is not like himself a bit. But come, my dear, take off your things. As the doctor says, a sleep for a couple of hours will do you good. After that you will see Allan. You are looking very weary, dear, and no wonder, no wonder," said Mandy, "with all that journey and−−and all you have gone through." She gathered the girl into her strong arms. "My, I could just pick you up like a babe!" She held her close and kissed her.

The caressing touch was too much for the girl. With a rush the tears came.

"Och, oh," she cried, lapsing into her Highland speech, "it iss ashamed of myself I am, but no one has done that to me for many a day since−−since−−my father−−"

"There, there, you poor darling," said Mandy, comforting her as if she were a child, "you will not want for love here in this country. Cry away, it will do you good." There was a sound of feet on the stairs. "Hush, hush, Billy is coming." She swept the girl into her bedroom as Billy appeared.

"Oh, I am just silly," said Moira impatiently, as she wiped her eyes. "But you are so good, and I will never be forgetting your kindness to me this day."

"Hot water," said Billy, tapping at the door.

"Hot water! What for?" cried Mandy.

"For the young lady. The doctor said she was used to it."

"The doctor? Well, that is very thoughtful. Do you want hot water, Moira?"

"Yes, the very thing I do want to get the dust out of my eyes and the grime off my face."

"And the tea is in the ladies' parlor," added Billy.

"Tea!" cried Mandy, "the very thing!"

"The doctor said tea and toast."

"The doctor again!"

"Sure thing! Said they were all stuck on tea in the Old Country."

"Oh, he did, eh? Will you have tea, Moira?"

"No tea, thank you. I shall lie down, I think, for a little."

"All right, dear, we will see you at breakfast. Don't worry. I shall call you."

Again she kissed the girl and left her to sleep. She found Billy standing in the ladies' parlor with a perplexed and disappointed look on his face.

"The Doc said she'd sure want some tea," he said.

"And you made the tea yourself?" inquired Mandy.

"Sure thing! The Doc−−"

"Well, Billy, I'd just love a cup of tea if you don't mind wasting it on me."

"Sure thing, ma'm! The Doc won't mind, bein' as she turned it down."

"Where is Dr. Martin gone, Billy? He needs a cup of tea; he's been up all night. He must be feeling tough."

"Judgin' by his langwidge I should surmise yes," said Billy judicially.

"Would you get him, Billy, and bring him here?"

"Get him? S'pose I could. But as to bringin' him here, I'd prefer wild cats myself. The last I seen of him he was hikin' for the Rockies with a blue haze round his hair."

"But what in the world is wrong with him, Billy?" said Mandy anxiously. "I've never seen him this way."

"No, nor me," said Billy. "The Doc's a pretty level headed cuss. There's somethin' workin' on him, if you ask me."

"Billy, you get him and tell him we want to see him at breakfast, will you?"

Billy shook his head.

"Tell him, Billy, I want him to see my husband then."

"Sure thing! That'll catch him, I guess. He's dead stuck on his work."

And it did catch him, for, after breakfast was over, clean−shaven, calm and controlled, and in his very best professional style, Dr. Martin made his morning call on his patient. Rigidly he eliminated from his manner anything beyond a severe professional interest. Mandy, who for two years had served with him as nurse, and who thought she knew his every mood, was much perplexed. Do what she could, she was unable to break through the barrier of his professional reserve. He was kindly courteous and perfectly correct.

"I would suggest a quiet day for him, Mrs. Cameron," was his verdict after examining the patient. "He will be quite able to get up in the afternoon and go about, but not to set off on a hundred and fifty mile drive. A quiet day, sleep, cheerful company, such as you can furnish here, will fix him up."

"Doctor, we will secure the quiet day if you will furnish the cheerful company," said Mandy, beaming on him.

"I have a very busy day before me, and as for cheerful company, with you two ladies he will have all the company that is good for him."

"CHEERFUL company, you said, Doctor. If you desert us how can we be cheerful?"

"Exactly for that reason," replied the doctor.

"Say, Martin," interposed Cameron, "take them out for a drive this afternoon and leave me in peace."

"A drive!" cried Mandy, "with one hundred and fifty miles behind me and another hundred and fifty miles before me!"

"A ride then," said Cameron. "Moira, you used to be fond of riding."

"And am still," cried the girl, with sparkling eyes.

"A ride!" cried Mandy. "Great! This is the country for riding. But have you a habit?"

"My habit is in one of my boxes," replied Moira.

"I can get a habit," said the doctor, "and two of them."

"That's settled, then," cried Mandy. "I am not very keen. We shall do some shopping, Allan, you and I this afternoon and you two can go off to the hills. The hills! th−−ink of that, Moira, for a highlander!" She glanced at Moira's face and read refusal there. "But I insist you must go. A whole week in an awful stuffy train. This is the very thing for you."

"Yes, the very thing, Moira," cried her brother. "We will have a long talk this morning then in the afternoon we will do some business here, Mandy and I, and you can go up the Bow."

"The Bow?"

"The Bow River. A glorious ride. Nothing like it even in Scotland, and that's saying a good deal," said her brother with emphasis.

This arrangement appeared to give complete satisfaction to all parties except those most immediately interested, but there seemed to be no very sufficient reason with either to decline, hence they agreed.

CHAPTER IX. THE RIDE UP THE BOW

Having once agreed to the proposal of a ride up the Bow, the doctor lost no time in making the necessary preparations. Half an hour later he found himself in the stable consulting with Billy. His mood was gloomy and his language reflected his mood. Gladly would he have escaped what to him, he felt, would be a trying and prolonged ordeal. But he could not do this without exciting the surprise of his friends and possibly wounding the sensitive girl whom he would gladly give his life to serve. He resolved that at all costs he would go through with the thing.

"I'll give her a good time, by Jingo! if I bust something," he muttered as he walked up and down the stable picking out his mounts. "But for a compound, double−opposed, self−adjusting jackass, I'm your choice. Lost my first chance. Threw it clean away and queered myself with her first shot. I say, Billy," he called, "come here."

"What's up, Doc?" said Billy.

"Kick me, Billy," said the doctor solemnly.

"Well now, Doc, I−−"

"Kick me, Billy, good and swift."

"Don't believe I could give no satisfaction, Doc. But there's that Hiram mule, he's a high class artist. You might back up to him."

"No use being kicked, Billy, by something that wouldn't appreciate it," said Martin.

"Don't guess that way, Doc. He's an ornery cuss, he'd appreciate it all right, that old mule. But Doc, what's eatin' you?"

"Oh, nothing, Billy, except that I'm an ass, an infernal ass."

"An ass, eh? Then I guess I couldn't give you no satisfaction. You better try that mule."

"Well, Billy, the horses at two," said the doctor briskly, "the broncho and that dandy little pinto."

"All serene, Doc. Hope you'll have a good time. Brace up, Doc, it's comin' to you." Billy's wink conveyed infinitely more than his words.

"Look here, Billy, you cut that all out," said the doctor.

"All right, Doc, if that's the way you feel. You'll see no monkey− work on me. I'll make a preacher look like a sideshow."

And truly Billy's manner was irreproachable as he stood with the ponies at the hotel door and helped their riders to mount. There was an almost sad gravity in his demeanor that suggested a mind preoccupied with solemn and unworldly thoughts with which the doctor and his affairs had not even the remotest association.

As Cameron who, with his wife, watched their departure from the balcony above, waved them farewell, he cried, "Keep your eyes skinned for an Indian, Martin. Bring him in if you find him."

"I've got no gun on me," replied the doctor, "and if I get sight of him, you hear me, I'll make for the timber quick. No heroic captures for me this trip."

"What is all this about the Indian, Dr. Martin?" inquired the girl at his side as they cantered down the street.

"Didn't your brother tell you?"

"No."

"Well, I've done enough to you with that Indian already to−day."

"To me?"

"Didn't I like a fool frighten you nearly to death with him?"

"Well, I was startled. I was silly to show it. But an Indian to an Old Country person familiar with Fenimore Cooper, well−−"

"Oh, I was a proper idiot all round this morning," grumbled the doctor. "I didn't know what I was doing."

The brown eyes were open wide upon him.

"You see," continued the doctor desperately, "I'd looked forward to meeting you for so long." The brown eyes grew wider. "And then to think that I actually didn't know you."

"You didn't look at me," cried Moira.

"No, I was looking for the girl I saw that day, almost three years ago, in the Glen. I have never forgotten that day."

"No, nor I," replied the girl softly. "That is how I knew you. It was a terrible day to us all in the Glen, my brother going to leave us and under that dreadful cloud, and you came with the letter that cleared it all away. Oh, it was like the coming of an angel from heaven, and I have often thought, Mr. Martin−−Dr. Martin you are now, of course−−that I never thanked you as I ought that day. I was thinking of Allan. I have often wished to do it. I should like to do it now."

"Get at it," cried the doctor with great emphasis, "I need it. It might help me a bit. I behaved so stupidly this morning. The truth is, I was completely knocked out, flabbergasted."

"Was that it?" cried Moira with a bright smile. "I thought−−" A faint color tinged her pale cheek and she paused a moment. "But tell me about the Indian. My brother just made little of it. It is his way with me. He thinks me just a little girl not to be trusted with things."

"He doesn't know you, then," said the doctor.

She laughed gayly. "And do you?"

"I know you better than that, at least."

"What can you know about me?"

"I know you are to be trusted with that or with anything else that calls for nerve. Besides, sooner or later you must know about this Indian. Wait till we cross the bridge and reach the top of the hill yonder, it will be better going."

The hillside gave them a stiff scramble, for the trail went straight up. But the sure−footed ponies, scrambling over stones and gravel, reached the top safely, with no worse result than an obvious disarrangement of the girl's hair, so that around the Scotch bonnet which she had pinned on her head the little brown curls were peeping in a way that quite shook the heart of Dr. Martin.

"Now you look a little more like yourself," he cried, his eyes fastened upon the curls with unmistakable admiration, "more like the girl I remember."

"Oh," she said, "it is my bonnet. I put on this old thing for the ride."

"No," said the doctor, "you wore no bonnet that day. It is your face, your hair, you are not quite−−so−−so proper."

"My hair!" Her hands went up to her head. "Oh, my silly curls, I suppose. They are my bane." ("My joy," the doctor nearly had said.) "But now for the Indian story."

Then the doctor grew grave.

"It is not a pleasant thing to greet a guest with," he said, "but you must know it and I may as well give it to you. And, mind you, this is altogether a new thing with us."

For the next half hour as they rode westward toward the big hills, steadily climbing as they went, the story of the disturbance in the north country, of the unrest among the Indians, of the part played in it by the Indian Copperhead, and of the appeal by the Superintendent to Cameron for assistance, furnished the topic for conversation. The girl listened with serious face, but there was no fear in the brown eyes, nor tremor in the quiet voice, as they talked it over.

"Now let us forget it for a while," cried the doctor. "The Police have rarely, if ever, failed to get their man. That is their boast. And they will get this chap, too. And as for the row on the Saskatchewan, I don't take much stock in that. Now we're coming to a view in a few minutes, one of the finest I have seen anywhere."

For half a mile farther they loped along the trail that led them to the top of a hill that stood a little higher than the others round about. Upon the hilltop they drew rein.

"What do you think of that for a view?" said the doctor.

Before them stretched the wide valley of the Bow for many miles, sweeping up toward the mountains, with rounded hills on either side, and far beyond the hills the majestic masses of the Rockies some fifty miles away, snow−capped, some of them, and here and there upon their faces the great glaciers that looked like patches of snow. Through this wide valley wound the swift flowing Bow, and up from it on either side the hills, rough with rocks and ragged masses of pine, climbed till they seemed to reach the very bases of the mountains beyond. Over all the blue arch of sky spanned the wide valley and seemed to rest upon the great ranges on either side, like the

dome of a vast cathedral.

Silent, with lips parted and eyes alight with wonder, Moira sat and gazed upon the glory of that splendid scene.

"What do you think−−" began the doctor.

She put out her hand and touched his arm.

"Please don't speak," she breathed, "this is not for words, but for worship."

Long she continued to gaze in rapt silence upon the picture spread out before her. It was, indeed, a place for worship. She pointed to a hill some distance in front of them.

"You have been beyond that?" she asked in a hushed voice.

"Yes, I have been all through this country. I know it well. From the top of that hill we get a magnificent sweep toward the south."

"Let us go!" she cried.

Down the hillside they scrambled, across a little valley and up the farther side, following the trail that wound along the hill but declined to make the top. As they rounded the shoulder of the little mountain Moira cried:

"It would be a great view from the top there beyond the trees. Can we reach it?"

"Are you good for a climb?" replied the doctor. "We could tie the horses."

For answer she flung herself from her pinto and, gathering up her habit, began eagerly to climb. By the time the doctor had tethered the ponies she was half way to the top. Putting forth all his energy he raced after her, and together they parted a screen of brushwood and stepped out on a clear rock that overhung the deep canyon that broadened into a great valley sweeping toward the south.

"Beats Scotland, eh?" cried the doctor, as they stepped out together.

She laid her hand upon his arm and drew him back into the bushes.

"Hush," she whispered. Surprised into silence, he stood gazing at her. Her face was white and her eyes gleaming. "An Indian down there," she whispered.

"An Indian? Where? Show me."

"He was looking up at us. Come this way. I think he heard us."

She led him by a little detour and on their hands and knees they crept through the brushwood. They reached the open rock and peered down through a screen of bushes into the canyon below.

"There he is," cried Moira.

Across the little stream that flowed at the bottom of the canyon, and not more than a hundred yards away, stood an Indian, tall, straight and rigidly attent, obviously listening and gazing steadily at the point where they had first stood. For many minutes he stood thus rigid while they watched him. Then his attitude relaxed. He sat down upon the rocky ledge that sloped up from the stream toward a great overhanging crag behind him, laid his rifle beside him and, calmly filling his pipe, began to smoke. Intently they followed his every movement.

"I do believe it is our Indian," whispered the doctor.

"Oh, if we could only get him!" replied the girl.

The doctor glanced swiftly at her. Her face was pale but firm set with resolve. Quickly he revolved in his mind the possibilities.

"If I only had a gun," he said to himself, "I'd risk it."

"What is he going to do?"

The Indian was breaking off some dead twigs from the standing pines about him.

"He's going to light a fire," replied the doctor, "perhaps camp for the night."

"Then," cried the girl in an excited whisper, "we could get him."

The doctor smiled at her. The Indian soon had his fire going and, unrolling his blanket pack, he took thence what looked like a lump of meat, cut some strips from it and hung them from pointed sticks over the fire. He proceeded to gather some poles from the dead wood lying about.

"What now is he going to do?" inquired Moira.

"Wait," replied the doctor.

The Indian proceeded to place the poles in order against the rock, keeping his eye on the toasting meat the while and now and again turning it before the fire. Then he began to cut branches of spruce and balsam.

"By the living Jingo!" cried the doctor, greatly excited, "I declare he's going to camp."

"To sleep?" said Moira.

"Yes," replied the doctor. "He had no sleep last night."

"Then," cried the girl, "we can get him."

The doctor gazed at her in admiration.

"You are a brick," he said. "How can we get him? He'd double me up like a jack−knife. Remember I only played quarter," he added.

"No, no," she cried quickly, "you stay here to watch him. Let me go back for the Police."

"I say," cried the doctor, "you are a wonder. There's something in that." He thought rapidly, then said, "No, it won't do. I can't allow you to risk it."

"Risk? Risk what?"

A year ago the doctor would not have hesitated a moment to allow her to go, but now he thought of the roving bands of Indians and the possibility of the girl falling into their hands.

"No, Miss Cameron, it will not do."

"But think," she cried, "we might get him and save Allan all the trouble and perhaps his life. You must not stop me. You cannot stop me. I am going. You wait and watch. Don't move. I can find my way."

He seized her by the arm.

"Wait," he said, "let me think."

"What danger can there be?" she pleaded. "It is broad daylight. The road is good. I cannot possibly lose my way. I am used to riding alone among the hills at home."

"Ah, yes, at home," said the doctor gloomily.

"But there is no danger," she persisted. "I am not afraid. Besides, you cannot keep me." She stood up among the bushes looking down at him with a face so fiercely resolved that he was constrained to say, "By Jove! I don't believe I could. But I can go with you."

"You would not do that," she cried, stamping her foot, "if I forbade you. It is your duty to stay here and watch that Indian. It is mine to go and get the Police. Good−by."

He rose to follow her.

"No," she said, "I forbid you to come. You are not doing right. You are to stay. We will save my brother."

She glided through the bushes from his sight and was gone.

"Am I a fool or what?" said the doctor to himself. "She is taking a chance, but after all it is worth while."

It was now the middle of the afternoon and it would take Moira an hour and a half over that rocky winding trail to make the ten miles that lay before her. Ten minutes more would see the Police started on their return. The doctor settled himself down to his three hours' wait, keeping his eye fixed upon the Indian. The latter was now busy with his meal, which he ate ravenously.

"The beggar has me tied up tight," muttered the doctor ruefully. "My grub is on my saddle, and I guess I dare not smoke till he lights up himself."

A hand touched his arm. Instantly he was on his feet. It was Moira.

"Great Caesar, you scared me! Thought it was the whole Blackfoot tribe."

"You will be the better for something to eat," she said simply, handing him the lunch basket. "Good−by."

"Hold up!" he cried. But she was gone.

"Say, she's a regular−−" He paused and thought for a moment. "She's an angel, that's what−−and a mighty sight better than most of them. She's a−−" He turned back to his watch, leaving his thought unspoken. In the presence of the greater passions words are woefully inadequate.

The Indian was still eating as ravenously as ever.

"He's filling up, I guess. He ought to be full soon at that rate. Wish he'd get his pipe agoing."

In due time the Indian finished eating, rolled up the fragments carefully in a rag, and then proceeded to construct with the poles and brush which he had cut, a penthouse against the rock. At one end his little shelter thus constructed ran into a spruce tree whose thick branches reached right to the ground. When he had completed this shelter to his satisfaction he sat down again on the rock beside his smoldering fire and pulled out his pipe.

"Thanks be!" said the doctor to himself fervently. "Go on, old boy, hit her up."

A pipe and then another the Indian smoked, then, taking his gun, blanket and pack, he crawled into his brush wigwam out of sight.

"There, you old beggar!" said the doctor with a sigh of relief. "You are safe for an hour or two, thank goodness. You had no sleep last night and you've got to make up for it now. Sleep tight, old boy. We'll give you a call." The doctor hugged himself with supreme satisfaction and continued to smoke with his eye fixed upon the hole into which the Indian had disappeared.

Through the long hours he sat and smoked while he formulated the plan of attack which he proposed to develop when his reinforcements should arrive.

"We will work up behind him from away down the valley, a couple of us will cover him from the front and the others go right in."

He continued with great care to make and revise his plans, and while in the midst of his final revision a movement in the bushes behind him startled him to his feet. The bushes parted and the face of Moira appeared with that of her brother over her shoulder.

"Is he still there?" she whispered eagerly.

"Asleep, snug as a bug. Never moved," said the doctor exultantly, and proceeded to explain his plan of attack. "How many have you?" he asked Cameron.

"Crisp and a constable."

"Just two?" said the doctor.

"Two," replied Cameron briefly. "That's plenty. Here they are." He stepped back through the bushes and brought forward Crisp and the constable. "Now, then, here's our plan," he said. "You, Crisp, will go down the canyon, cross the stream and work up on the other side right to that rock. When you arrive at the rock the constable and I will go in. The doctor will cover him from this side."

"Fine!" said the doctor. "Fine, except that I propose to go in myself with you. He's a devil to fight. I could see that last night."

Cameron hesitated.

"There's really no use, you know, Doctor. The constable and I can handle him."

Moira stood looking eagerly from one to the other.

"All right," said the doctor, "'nuff said. Only I'm going in. If you want to come along, suit yourself."

"Oh, do be careful," said Moira, clasping her hands. "Oh, I'm afraid."

"Afraid?" said the doctor, looking at her quickly. "You? Not much fear in you, I guess."

"Come on, then," said Cameron. "Moira, you stay here and keep your eye on him. You are safe enough here."

She pressed her lips tight together till they made a thin red line in her white face.

"Can you let me have a gun?" she asked.

"A gun?" exclaimed the doctor.

"Oh, she can shoot−−rabbits, at least," said her brother with a smile. "I shall bring you one, Moira, but remember, handle it carefully."

With a gun across her knees Moira sat and watched the development of the attack. For many minutes there was no sign or sound, till she began to wonder if a change had been made in the plan. At length some distance down the canyon and on the other side Sergeant Crisp was seen working his way with painful care step by step toward the rock of rendezvous. There was no sign of her brother or Dr. Martin. It was for them she watched with an intensity of anxiety which she could not explain to herself. At length Sergeant Crisp reached the crag against whose base the penthouse leaned in which the sleeping Indian lay. Immediately she saw her brother, quickly followed by Dr. Martin, leap the little stream, run lightly up the sloping rock and join Crisp at the crag. Still there was no sign from the Indian. She saw her brother motion the Sergeant round to the farther corner of the penthouse where it ran into the spruce tree, while he himself, with a revolver in each hand, dropped on one knee and peered under the leaning poles. With a loud exclamation he sprang to his feet.

"He's gone!" he shouted. "Stand where you are!" Like a hound on a scent he ran to the back of the spruce tree and on his knees examined the earth there. In a few moments his search was rewarded. He struck the trail and followed it round the rock and through the woods till he came to the hard beaten track. Then he came back, pale with rage and disappointment. "He's gone!" he said.

"I swear he never came out of that hole!" said Dr. Martin. "I kept my eye on it every minute of the last three hours."

"There's another hole," said Crisp, "under the tree here."

Cameron said not a word. His disappointment was too keen. Together they retraced their steps across the little stream. On the farther bank they found Moira, who had raced down to meet them.

"He's gone?" she cried.

"Gone!" echoed her brother. "Gone for this time−−but−−some day−− some day," he added below his breath.

But many things were to happen before that day came.

CHAPTER X. RAVEN TO THE RESCUE

Overhead the stars were still twinkling far in the western sky. The crescent moon still shone serene, marshaling her attendant constellations. Eastward the prairie still lay in deep shadow, its long rolls outlined by the deeper shadows lying in the hollows between. Over the Bow and the Elbow mists hung like white veils swathing the faces of the rampart hills north and south. In the little town a stillness reigned as of death, for at length Calgary was asleep, and sound asleep would remain for hours to come.

Not so the world about. Through the dead stillness of the waning night the liquid note of the adventurous meadow lark fell like the dropping of a silver stream into the pool below. Brave little heart, roused from slumber perchance by domestic care, perchance by the first burdening presage of the long fall flight waiting her sturdy careless brood, perchance stirred by the first thrill of the Event approaching from the east. For already in the east the long round tops of the prairie undulations are shining gray above the dark hollows and faint bars of light are shooting to the zenith, fearless forerunners of the dawn, menacing the retreating stars still bravely shining their pale defiance to the oncoming of their ancient foe. Far toward the west dark masses still lie invincible upon the horizon, but high above in the clear heavens white shapes, indefinite and unattached, show where stand the snow−capped mountain peaks. Thus the swift and silent moments mark the fortunes of this age−long conflict. But sudden all heaven and all earth thrill tremulous in eager expectancy of the daily miracle when, all unaware, the gray light in the eastern horizon over the roll of the prairie has grown to silver, and through the silver a streamer of palest rose has flashed up into the sky, the gay and gallant 'avant courier' of an advancing host, then another and another, then by tens and hundreds, till, radiating from a center yet unseen, ten thousand times ten thousand flaming flaunting banners flash into orderly array and possess the utmost limits of the heavens, sweeping before them the ever paling stars, that indomitable rearguard of the flying night, proclaiming to all heaven and all earth the King is come, the Monarch of the Day. Flushed in the new radiance of the morning, the long flowing waves of the prairie, the tumbling hills, the mighty rocky peaks stand surprised, as if caught all unprepared by the swift advance, trembling and blushing in the presence of the triumphant King, waiting the royal proclamation that it is time to wake and work, for the day is come.

All oblivious of this wondrous miracle stands Billy, his powers of mind and body concentrated upon a single task, that namely of holding down to earth the game little bronchos, Mustard and Pepper, till the party should appear. Nearby another broncho, saddled and with the knotted reins hanging down from his bridle, stood viewing with all too obvious contempt the youthful frolics of the colts. Well he knew that life would cure them of all this foolish waste of spirit and of energy. Meantime on his part he was content to wait till his master−−Dr. Martin, to wit−−should give the order to move. His master meantime was busily engaged with clever sinewy fingers packing in the last parcels that represented the shopping activities of Cameron and his wife during the past two days. There was a whole living and sleeping outfit for the family to gather together. Already a heavily laden wagon had gone on before them. The building material for the new house was to follow, for it was near the end of September and a tent dwelling, while quite endurable, does not lend itself to comfort through a late fall in the foothill country. Besides, there was upon Cameron, and still more upon his wife, the ever deepening sense of a duty to be done that could not wait, and for the doing of that duty due preparation must be made. Hence the new house must be built and its simple appointments and furnishings set in order without delay, and hence the laden wagon gone before and the numerous packages in the democrat, covered with a new tent and roped securely into place.

This packing and roping the doctor made his peculiar care, for he was a true Canadian, born and bred in the atmosphere of pioneer days in old Ontario, and the packing and roping could be trusted to no amateur hands, for there were hills to go up and hills to go down, sleughs to cross and rivers to ford with all their perilous contingencies before they should arrive at the place where they would be.

"All secure, Martin?" said Cameron, coming out from the hotel with hand bags and valises.

"They'll stay, I think," replied the doctor, "unless those bronchos of yours get away from you."

"Aren't they dears, Billy?" cried Moira, coming out at the moment and dancing over to the bronchos' heads.

"Well, miss," said Billy with judicial care, "I don't know about that. They're ornery little cusses and mean−actin.' They'll go straight enough if everything is all right, but let anythin' go wrong, a trace or a line, and they'll put it to you good and hard."

"I do not think I would be afraid of them," replied the girl, reaching out her hand to stroke Pepper's nose, a movement which surprised that broncho so completely that he flew back violently upon the whiffle−tree, carrying Billy with him.

"Come up here, you beast!" said Billy, giving him a fierce yank.

"Oh, Billy!" expostulated Moira.

"Oh, he ain't no lady's maid, miss. You would, eh, you young devil,"−−this to Pepper, whose intention to walk over Billy was only too obvious−−"Get back there, will you! Now then, take that, and stand still!" Billy evidently did not rely solely upon the law of love in handling his broncho.

Moira abandoned him and climbed to her place in the democrat between Cameron and his wife.

By a most singular and fortunate coincidence Dr. Martin had learned that a patient of his at Big River was in urgent need of a call, so, to the open delight of the others and to the subdued delight of the doctor, he was to ride with them thus far on their journey.

"All set, Billy?" cried Cameron. "Let them go."

"Good−by, Billy," cried both ladies, to which Billy replied with a wave of his Stetson.

Away plunged the bronchos on a dead gallop, as if determined to end the journey during the next half hour at most, and away with them went the doctor upon his steady broncho, the latter much annoyed at being thus ignominiously outdistanced by these silly colts and so induced to strike a somewhat more rapid pace than he considered wise at the beginning of an all−day journey. Away down the street between the silent shacks and stores and out among the straggling residences that lined the trail. Away past the Indian encampment and the Police Barracks. Away across the echoing bridge, whose planks resounded like the rattle of rifles under the flying hoofs. Away up the long stony hill, scrambling and scrabbling, but never ceasing till they reached the level prairie at the top. Away upon the smooth resilient trail winding like a black ribbon over the green bed of the prairie. Away down long, long slopes to low, wide valleys, and up long, long slopes to the next higher prairie level. Away across the plain skirting sleughs where ducks of various kinds, and in hundreds, quacked and plunged and fought joyously and all unheeding. Away with the morning air, rare and wondrously exhilarating, rushing at them and past them and filling their hearts with the keen zest of living. Away beyond sight and sound of the great world, past little shacks, the brave vanguard of civilization, whose solitary loneliness only served to emphasize their remoteness from the civilization which they heralded. Away from the haunts of men and through the haunts of wild things where the shy coyote, his head thrown back over his shoulder, loped laughing at them and their futile noisy speed. Away through the wide rich pasture lands where feeding herds of cattle and bands of horses made up the wealth of the solitary rancher, whose low−built wandering ranch house proclaimed at once his faith and his courage. Away and ever away, the shining morning hours and the fleeting miles racing with them, till by noon−day, all wet but still unweary, the bronchos drew up at the Big River Stopping Place, forty miles from the point of their departure.

Close behind the democrat rode Dr. Martin, the steady pace of his wise old broncho making up upon the dashing but somewhat erratic gait of the colts.

While the ladies passed into the primitive Stopping Place, the men unhitched the ponies, stripped off their harness and proceeded to rub them down from head to heel, wash out their mouths and remove from them as far as they could by these attentions the travel marks of the last six hours.

Big River could hardly be called even by the generous estimate of the optimistic westerner a town. It consisted of a blacksmith's shop, with which was combined the Post Office, a little school, which did for church−−the farthest outpost of civilization−−and a manse, simple, neat and tiny, but with a wondrous air of comfort about it, and very like the little Nova Scotian woman inside, who made it a very vestibule of heaven for many a cowboy and rancher in the district, and last, the Stopping Place run by a man who had won the distinction of being well known to the Mounted Police and who bore the suggestive name of Hell Gleeson, which appeared, however, in the old English Registry as Hellmuth Raymond Gleeson. The Mounted Police thought it worth while often to run in upon Hell at unexpected times, and more than once they had found it necessary to invite him to contribute to Her Majesty's revenue as compensation for Hell's objectionable habit of having in possession and of retailing to

his friends bad whisky without attending to the little formality of a permit.

The Stopping Place was a rambling shack, or rather a series of shacks, loosely joined together, whose ramifications were found by Hell and his friends to be useful in an emergency. The largest room in the building was the bar, as it was called. Behind the counter, however, instead of the array of bottles and glasses usually found in rooms bearing this name, the shelf was filled with patent medicines, chiefly various brands of pain−killer. Off the bar was the dining−room, and behind the dining−room another and smaller room, while the room most retired in the collection of shacks constituting the Stopping Place was known in the neighborhood as the "snake room," a room devoted to those unhappy wretches who, under the influence of prolonged indulgence in Hell's bad whisky, were reduced to such a mental and nervous condition that the landscape of their dreams became alive with snakes of various sizes, shapes and hues.

To Mandy familiarity had hardened her sensibilities to endurance of all the grimy uncleanness of the place, but to Moira the appearance of the house and especially of the dining−room filled her with loathing unspeakable.

"Oh, Mandy," she groaned, "can we not eat outside somewhere? This is terrible."

Mandy thought for a moment.

"No," she cried, "but we will do better. I know Mrs. Macintyre in the manse. I nursed her once last spring. We will go and see her."

"Oh, that would not do," said Moira, her Scotch shy independence shrinking from such an intrusion.

"And why not?"

"She doesn't know me−−and there are four of us."

"Oh, nonsense, you don't know this country. You don't know what our visit will mean to the little woman, what a joy it will be to her to see a new face, and I declare when she hears you are new out from Scotland she will simply revel in you. We are about to confer a great favor upon Mrs. Macintyre."

If Moira had any lingering doubts as to the soundness of her sister−in−law's opinion they vanished before the welcome she had from the minister's wife.

"Mr. Cameron's sister?" she cried, with both hands extended, "and just out from Scotland? And where from? From near Braemar? And our folk came from near Inverness. Mhail Gaelic heaibh?"

"Go dearbh ha."

And on they went for some minutes in what Mrs. Macintyre called "the dear old speech," till Mrs. Macintyre, remembering herself, said to Mandy:

"But you do not understand the Gaelic? Well, well, you will forgive us. And to think that in this far land I should find a young lady like this to speak it to me! Do you know, I am forgetting it out here." All the while she was speaking she was laying the cloth and setting the table. "And you have come all the way from Calgary this morning? What a drive for the young lady! You must be tired out. Would you lie down upon the bed for an hour? Then come away in to the bedroom and fresh yourselves up a bit. Come away in. I'll get Mr. Cameron over."

"We are a big party," said Mandy, "for your wee house. We have a friend with us−−Dr. Martin."

"Dr. Martin? Indeed I know him well, and a fine man he is and that kind and clever. I'll get him too."

"Let me go for them," said Mandy.

"Very well, go then. I'll just hurry the dinner."

"But are you quite sure," asked Mandy, "you can−−you have everything handy? You know, Mrs. Macintyre, I know just how hard it is to keep a stock of everything on hand."

"Well, we have bread and molasses−−our butter is run out, it is hard to get−−and some bacon and potatoes and tea. Will that do?"

"Oh, that will do fine. And we have some things with us, if you don't mind."

"Mind? Not a bit, my dear. You can just suit yourself."

The dinner was a glorious success. The clean linen, the shining dishes, the silver−−for Mrs. Macintyre brought out her wedding presents−−gave the table a brilliantly festive appearance in the eyes of those who had lived for some years in the western country.

"You don't appreciate the true significance of a table napkin, I venture to say, Miss Cameron," said the doctor, "until you have lived a year in this country at least, or how much an unspotted table cloth means, or shining cutlery and crockery."

"Well, I have been two days at the Royal Hotel, whatever," replied Moira.

"The Royal Hotel!" exclaimed the doctor aghast. "Our most palatial Western hostelry−−all the comforts and conveniences of civilization!"

"Anyway, I like this better," said Moira. "It is like home."

"Is it, indeed, my dear?" said the minister's wife greatly delighted. "You have paid me a very fine tribute."

The hour lengthened into two, for when a departure was suggested the doctor grew eloquent in urging delay. The horses would be all the better for the rest. It would be fine driving in the evening. They could easily make the Black Dog Ford before dark. After that the trail was good for twenty miles, where they would camp. But like all happy hours these hours fled past, and all too swiftly, and soon the travelers were ready to depart.

Before the Stopping Place door Hell was holding down the bronchos, while Cameron was packing in the valises and making all secure again. Near the wagon stood the doctor waiting their departure.

"You are going back from here, Dr. Martin?" said Moira.

"Yes," said the doctor, "I am going back."

"It has been good to see you," she said. "I hope next time you will know me."

"Ah, now, Miss Cameron, don't rub it in. You see−−but what's the use?" continued the doctor. "You had changed. My picture of the girl I had seen in the Highlands that day never changed and never will change." The doctor's keen gray eyes burned into hers for a moment. A slight flush came to her cheek and she found herself embarrassed for want of words. Her embarrassment was relieved by the sound of hoofs pounding down the trail.

"Hello, who's this?" said the doctor, as they stood watching the horseman approaching at a rapid pace and accompanied by a cloud of dust. Nearer and nearer he came, still on the gallop till within a few yards of the group.

"My!" cried Moira. "Whoever he is he will run us down!" and she sprang into her place in the democrat.

Without slackening rein the rider came up to the Stopping Place door at a full gallop, then at a single word his horse planted his four feet solidly on the trail, and, plowing up the dirt, came to a standstill; then, throwing up his magnificent head, he gave a loud snort and stood, a perfect picture of equine beauty.

"Oh, what a horse!" breathed Moira. "How perfectly splendid! And what a rider!" she added. "Do you know him?"

"I do not," said the doctor, conscious of a feeling of hostility to the stranger, and all the more because he was forced to acknowledge to himself that the rider and his horse made a very striking picture. The man was tall and sinewy, with dark, clean−cut face, thin lips, firm chin and deep−set, brown−gray eyes that glittered like steel, and with that unmistakable something in his bearing that suggested the breeding of a gentleman. His horse was as distinguished as its rider. His coal black skin shone like silk, his flat legs, sloping hips, well−ribbed barrel, small head, large, flashing eyes, all proclaimed his high breeding.

"What a beauty! What a beauty!" breathed Moira again to the doctor.

As if in answer to her praise the stranger, raising his Stetson, swept her an elaborate bow, and, touching his horse, moved nearer to the door of the Stopping Place and swung himself to the ground.

"Ah, Cameron, it's you, sure enough. I can hardly believe my good fortune."

"Hello, Raven, that you?" said Cameron indifferently. "Hope you are fit?" But he made no motion to offer his hand nor did he introduce him to the company. At the sound of his name Dr. Martin started and swept his keen eyes over the stranger's face. He had heard that name before.

"Fit?" inquired the stranger whom Cameron had saluted as Raven. "Fit as ever," a hard smile curling his lips as he noted Cameron's omission. "Hello, Hell!" he continued, his eyes falling upon that individual, who was struggling with the restive ponies, "how goes it with your noble self?"

Hastily Hell, leaving the bronchos for the moment, responded, "Hello, Mr. Raven, mighty glad to see you!"

Meantime the bronchos, freed from Hell's supervision, and apparently interested in the strange horse who was viewing them with lordly disdain, turned their heads and took the liberty of sniffing at the newcomer. Instantly, with mouth wide open and ears flat on his head, the black horse rushed at the bronchos. With a single bound they were off, the lines trailing in the dust. Together Hell, Cameron and the doctor sprang for the wagon, but before they could touch it it was whisked from underneath their fingers as the bronchos dashed in a mad gallop down the trail, Moira meantime clinging desperately to the seat of the pitching wagon. After them darted Cameron and for some moments it seemed as if he could overtake the flying ponies, but gradually they drew away and he gave up the chase. After him followed the whole company, his wife, the doctor, Hell, all in a blind horror of helplessness.

"My God! My God!" cried Cameron, his breath coming in sobbing gasps. "The cut bank!"

Hardly were the words out of his mouth when Raven came up at an easy canter.

"Don't worry," he said quietly to Mandy, who was wringing her hands in despair, "I'll get them."

Like a swallow for swiftness and for grace, the black stallion sped away, flattening his body to the trail as he gathered speed. The bronchos had a hundred yards of a start, but they had not run another hundred until the agonized group of watchers could see that the stallion was gaining rapidly upon them.

"He'll get 'em," cried Hell, "he'll get 'em, by gum!"

"But can he turn them from the bank?" groaned Mandy.

"If anything in horse−flesh or man−flesh can do it," said Hell, "it'll be done."

But a tail−race is a long race and a hundred yards' start is a serious handicap in a quarter of a mile. Down the sloping trail the bronchos were running savagely, their noses close to earth, their feet on the hard ground like the roar of a kettledrum, their harness and trappings fluttering over their backs, the wagon pitching like a ship in a gale, the girl clinging to its high seat as a sailor to a swaying mast. Behind, and swiftly drawing level with the flying bronchos, sped the black horse, still with that smooth grace of a skimming swallow and with such ease of motion as made it seem as if he could readily have increased his speed had he so chosen.

"My God! why doesn't he send the brute along?" cried Dr. Martin, his stark face and staring eyes proclaiming his agony.

"He is up! He is up!" cried Cameron.

The agonized watchers saw the rider lean far over the bronchos and seize one line, then gradually begin to turn the flying ponies away from the cut bank and steer them in a wide circle across the prairie.

"Thank God! Thank God! Oh, thank God!" cried the doctor brokenly, wiping the sweat from his face.

"Let us go to head them off," said Cameron, setting off at a run, leaving the doctor and his wife to follow.

As they watched with staring eyes the racing horses they saw Raven bring back the line to the girl clinging to the wagon seat, then the black stallion, shooting in front of the ponies, began to slow down upon them, hampering their running till they were brought to an easy canter, and, under the more active discipline of teeth and hoofs, were forced to a trot and finally brought to a standstill, and so held till Cameron and the doctor came up to them.

"Raven," gasped Cameron, fighting for his breath and coming forward with hand outstretched, "you have−−done−−a great thing−−to−day−−for me. I shall not−−forget it."

"Tut tut, Cameron, simple thing. I fancy you are still a few points ahead," said Raven, taking his hand in a strong grip. "After all, it was Night Hawk did it."

"You saved−−my sister's life," continued Cameron, still struggling for breath.

"Perhaps, perhaps, but I don't forget," and here Raven leaned over his saddle and spoke in a lower voice, "I don't forget the day you saved mine, my boy."

"Come," said Cameron, "let me present you to my sister."

Instantly Raven swung himself from his horse.

"Stand, Night Hawk!" he commanded, and the horse stood like a soldier on guard.

"Moira," said Cameron, still panting hard, "this is−−my friend−−Mr. Raven."

Raven stood bowing before her with his hat in his hand, but the girl leaned far down from her seat with both hands outstretched.

"I thank you, Mr. Raven," she said in a quiet voice, but her brown eyes were shining like stars in her white face. "You are a wonderful rider."

"I could not have done it, Miss Cameron," said Raven, a wonderfully sweet smile lighting up his hard face, "I could not have done it had you ever lost your nerve."

"I had no fear after I saw your face," said the girl simply. "I knew you could do it."

"Ah, and how did you know that?" His gray−brown eyes searched her face more keenly.

"I cannot tell. I just knew."

"Let me introduce my friend, Dr. Martin," said Cameron as the doctor came up.

"I−−too−−want to thank you−−Mr. Raven," said the doctor, seizing him with both hands. "I never can−−we never can forget it−−or repay you."

"Oh," said Raven, with a careless laugh, "what else could I do? After all it was Night Hawk did the trick." He lifted his hat again to Moira, bowed with a beautiful grace, threw himself on his horse and stood till the two men, after carefully examining the harness and securing the reins, had climbed to their places on the wagon seat.

Then he trotted on before toward the Stopping Place, where the minister's wife and indeed the whole company of villagers awaited them.

"Oh, isn't he wonderful!" cried Moira, with her eyes upon the rider in front of them. "And he did it so easily." But the men sat silent. "Who is he, Allan? You know him."

"Yes−−he is−−he is a chap I met when I was on the Force."

"A Policeman?"

"No, no," replied her brother hastily.

"What then? Does he live here?"

"He lives somewhere south. Don't know exactly where he lives."

"What is he? A rancher?"

"A rancher? Ah−−yes, yes, he is a rancher I fancy. Don't know very well. That is−−I have seen little of him−−in fact−−only a couple of times−−or so."

"He seems to know you, Allan," said his sister a little reproachfully. "Anyway," she continued with a deep breath, "he is just splendid." Dr. Martin glanced at her face glowing with enthusiasm and was shamefully conscious of a jealous pang at his heart. "He is just splendid," continued Moira, with growing enthusiasm, "and I mean to know more of him."

"What?" said her brother sharply, as if waking from a dream. "Nonsense, Moira! You do not know what you are talking about. You must not speak like that."

"And why, pray?" asked his sister in surprise.

"Oh, never mind just now, Moira. In this country we don't take up with strangers."

"Strangers?" echoed the girl, pain mingling with her surprise. "And yet he saved my life!"

"Yes, thank God, he saved your life," cried her brother, "and we shall never cease to be grateful to him, but−−but−−oh, drop it just now please, Moira. You don't know and−−here we are. How white Mandy is. What a terrible experience for us all!"

"Terrible indeed," echoed the doctor.

"Terrible?" said Moira. "It might have been worse."

To this neither made reply, but there came a day when both doubted such a possibility.

CHAPTER XI. SMITH'S WORK

The short September day was nearly gone. The sun still rode above the great peaks that outlined the western horizon. Already the shadows were beginning to creep up the eastern slope of the hills that clambered till they reached the bases of the great mountains. A purple haze hung over mountain, hill and rolling plain, softening the sharp outlines that ordinarily defined the features of the foothill landscape.

With the approach of evening the fierce sun heat had ceased and a fresh cooling western breeze from the mountain passes brought welcome refreshment alike to the travelers and their beasts, wearied with their three days' drive.

"That is the last hill, Moira," cried her sister−in−law, pointing to a long slope before them. "The very last, I promise you. From the top we can see our home. Our home, alas, I had forgotten! There is no home there, only a black spot on the prairie."

Her husband grunted savagely and cut sharply at the bronchos.

"But the tent will be fine, Mandy. I just long for the experience," said Moira.

"Yes, but just think of all my pretty things, and some of Allan's too, all gone."

"Were the pipes burned, Allan?" cried Moira with a sudden anxiety.

"Were they, Mandy? I never thought," said Cameron.

"The pipes? Let me see. No−−no−−you remember, Allan, young−− what's his name?−−that young Highlander at the Fort wanted them."

"Sure enough−−Macgregor," said her husband in a tone of immense relief.

"Yes, young Mr. Macgregor."

"My, but that is fine, Allan," said his sister. "I should have grieved if we could not hear the pipes again among these hills. Oh, it is all so bonny; just look at the big Bens yonder."

It was, as she said, all bonny. Far toward their left the low hills rolled in soft swelling waves toward the level prairie, and far away to the right the hills climbed by sharper ascents, flecked here and there with dark patches of fir, and broken with jutting ledges of gray limestone, climbed till they reached the great Rockies, majestic in their massive serried ranges that pierced the western sky. And all that lay between, the hills, the hollows, the rolling prairie, was bathed in a multitudinous riot of color that made a scene of loveliness beyond power of speech to describe.

"Oh, Allan, Allan," cried his sister, "I never thought to see anything as lovely as the Cuagh Oir, but this is up to it I do believe."

"It must indeed be lovely, then," said her brother with a smile, "if you can say that. And I am glad you like it. I was afraid that you might not."

"Here we are, just at the top," cried Mandy. "In a minute beyond the shoulder there we shall see the Big Horn Valley and the place where our home used to be. There, wait Allan."

The ponies came to a stand. Exclamations of amazement burst from Cameron and his wife.

"Why, Allan? What? Is this the trail?"

"It is the trail all right," said her husband in a low voice, "but what in thunder does this mean?"

"It is a house, Allan, a new house."

"It looks like it−−but−−"

"And there are people all about!"

For some breathless moments they gazed upon the scene. A wide valley, flanked by hills and threaded by a gleaming river, lay before them and in a bend of the river against the gold and yellow of a poplar bluff stood a log house of comfortable size gleaming in all its newness fresh from the ax and saw.

"What does it all mean, Allan?" inquired his wife.

"Blest if I know!"

"Look at the people. I know now, Allan. It's a 'raising bee.' A raising bee!" she cried with growing enthusiasm.

"You remember them in Ontario. It's a bee, sure enough. Oh, hurry, let's go!"

The bronchos seemed to catch her excitement, their weariness disappeared, and, pulling hard on the bit, they tore down the winding trail as if at the beginning rather than at the end of their hundred and fifty mile drive.

"What a size!" cried Mandy.

"And a cook house, too!"

"And a verandah!"

"And a shingled roof!"

"And all the people! Where in the world can they have come from?"

"There's the Inspector, anyway," said Cameron. "He is at the bottom of this, I'll bet you."

"And Mr. Cochrane! And that young Englishman, Mr. Newsome!"

"And old Thatcher!"

"And Mrs. Cochrane, and Mr. Dent, and, oh, there's my friend Smith! You remember he helped me put out the fire."

Soon they were at the gate of the corral where a group of men and women stood awaiting them. Inspector Dickson was first:

"Hello, Cameron! Got back, eh? Welcome home, Mrs. Cameron," he said as he helped her to alight.

Smith stood at the bronchos' heads.

"Now, Inspector," said Cameron, holding him by hand and collar, "now what does this business mean?"

"Mean?" cried the Inspector with a laugh. "Means just what you see. But won't you introduce us all?"

After all had been presented to his sister Cameron pursued his question. "What does it mean, Inspector?"

"Mean? Ask Cochrane."

"Mr. Cochrane, tell me," cried Mandy, "who began this?"

"Ask Mr. Thatcher there," replied Mr. Cochrane.

"Who is responsible for this, Mr. Thatcher?" cried Mandy.

"Don't rightly know how the thing started. First thing I knowed they was all at it."

"See here, Thatcher, you might as well own up. I am going to know anyway. Where did the logs come from, for instance?" said Cameron in a determined voice.

"Logs? Guess Bracken knows," replied Cochrane, turning to a tall, lanky rancher who was standing at a little distance.

"Bracken," cried Cameron, striding to him with hand outstretched, "what about the logs for the house? Where did they come from?"

"Well, I dunno. Smith was sayin' somethin' about a bee and gettin' green logs."

"Smith?" cried Cameron, glancing at that individual now busy unhitching the bronchos.

"And of course," continued Bracken, "green logs ain't any use for a real good house, so−−and then−−well, I happened to have a bunch of logs up the Big Horn. I guess the boys floated 'em down."

"Come away, Mrs. Cameron, and inspect your house," cried a stout, red−faced matron. "I said they ought to await your coming to get your plans, but Mr. Smith said he knew a little about building and that they might as well go on with it. It was getting late in the season, and so they went at it. Come away, we're having a great time over it. Indeed, I think we've enjoyed it more than ever you will."

"But you haven't told us yet who started it," cried Mandy.

"Where did you get the lumber?" said Cameron.

"Well, the lumber," replied Cochrane, "came from the Fort, I guess. Didn't it, Inspector?"

"Yes," replied the Inspector. "We had no immediate use for it, and Smith told us just how much it would take."

"Smith?" said Cameron again. "Hello, Smith!" But Smith was already leading the bronchos away to the stable.

"Yes," continued the Inspector, "and Smith was wondering how a notice could be sent up to the Spruce Creek boys and to Loon Lake, so I sent a man with the word and they brought down the lumber without any trouble. But," continued the Inspector, "come along, Cameron, let us follow the ladies."

"But this is growing more and more mysterious," protested Cameron. "Can no one tell me how the thing originated? The sash and doors now, where did they come from?"

"Oh, that's easy," said Cochrane. "I was at the Post Office, and, hearin' Smith talkin' 'bout this raisin' bee and

how they were stuck for sash and door, so seein' I wasn't goin' to build this fall I told him he might as well have the use of these. My team was laid up and Smith got Jim Bracken to haul 'em down."

"Well, this gets me," said Cameron. "It appears no one started this thing. Everything just happened. Now the shingles, I suppose they just tumbled up into their place there."

"The shingles?" said Cochrane. "I dunno 'bout them. Didn't know there were any in the country."

"Oh, they just got up into place there of themselves I have no doubt," said Cameron.

"The shingles? Ah, bay Jove! Rawthah! Funny thing, don't−che− naow," chimed in a young fellow attired in rather emphasized cow− boy style, "funny thing! A Johnnie−−quite a strangah to me, don't− che−naow, was riding pawst my place lawst week and mentioned about this−−ah−−raisin' bee he called it I think, and in fact abaout the blawsted Indian, and the fire, don't−che−naow, and all the rest of it, and how the chaps were all chipping in as he said, logs and lumbah and so fowth. And then, bay Jove, he happened to mention that they were rathah stumped for shingles, don't−che−naow, and, funny thing, there chawnced to be behind my stable a few bunches, and I was awfully glad to tu'n them ovah, and this−−eh−−pehson−− most extraordinary chap I assuah you−−got 'em down somehow."

"Who was it inquired?" asked Cameron.

"Don't naow him in the least. But it's the chap that seems to be bossing the job."

"Oh, that's Smith," said Cochrane.

"Smith!" said Cameron, in great surprise. "I don't even know the man. He was good enough to help my wife to beat back the fire. I don't believe I even spoke to him. Who is he anyway?"

"Oh, he's Thatcher's man."

"Yes, but−−"

"Come away, Mr. Cameron," cried Mrs. Cochrane from the door of the new house. "Come away in and look at the result of our bee."

"This beats me," said Cameron, obeying the invitation, "but, say, Dickson, it is mighty good of all these men. I have no claim−−"

"Claim?" said Mr. Cochrane. "It might have been any of us. We must stand together in this country, and especially these days, eh, Inspector? Things are gettin' serious."

The Inspector nodded his head gravely.

"Yes," he said. "But, Mr. Cochrane," he added in a low voice, "it is very necessary that as little as possible should be said about these things just now. No occasion for any excitement or fuss. The quieter things are kept the better."

"All right, Inspector, I understand, but−−"

"What do you think of your new house, Mr. Cameron?" cried Mrs. Cochrane. "Come in. Now what do you think of this for three days' work?"

"Oh, Allan, I have been all through it and it's perfectly wonderful," said his wife.

"Oh nothing very wonderful, Mrs. Cameron," said Cochrane, "but it will do for a while."

"Perfectly wonderful in its whole plan, and beautifully complete," insisted Mandy. "See, a living−room, a lovely large one, two bedrooms off it, and, look here, cupboards and closets, and a pantry, and−−" here she opened the door in the corner−−"a perfectly lovely up−stairs! Not to speak of the cook−house out at the back."

"Wonderful is the word," said Cameron, "for why in all the world should these people−−?"

"And look, Allan, at Moira! She's just lost in rapture over that fireplace."

"And I don't wonder," said her husband. "It is really fine. Whose idea was it?" he continued, moving toward Moira's side, who was standing before a large fireplace of beautiful masonry set in between the two doors that led to the bedrooms at the far end of the living−room.

"It was Andy Hepburn from Loon Lake that built it," said Mr. Cochrane.

"I wish I could thank him," said Moira fervently.

"Well, there he is outside the window, Miss Moira," said a young fellow who was supposed to be busy putting up a molding round the wainscoting, but who was in reality devoting himself to the young lady at the present moment with open admiration. "Here, Andy," he cried through the window, "you're wanted. Hurry up."

"Oh, don't, Mr. Dent. What will he think?"

A hairy little man, with a face dour and unmistakably Scotch, came in.

"What's want−it, then?" he asked, with a deliberate sort of gruffness.

"It's yourself, Andy, me boy," said young Dent, who, though Canadian born, needed no announcement of his Irish ancestry. "It is yourself, Andy, and this young lady, Miss Moira Cameron−−Mr. Hepburn−−" Andy made reluctant acknowledgment of her smile and bow−−"wants to thank you for this fireplace."

"It is very beautiful indeed, Mr. Hepburn, and very thankful I am to you for building it."

"Aw, it's no that bad," admitted Andy. "But ye need not thank me."

"But you built it?"

"Aye did I. But no o' ma ain wull. A fireplace is a feckless thing in this country an' I think little o't."

"Whose idea was it then?"

"It was yon Smith buddie. He juist keepit dingin' awa' till A promised if he got the lime−−A kent o' nane in the country−−A wud build the thing."

"And he got the lime, eh, Andy?" said Dent.

"Aye, he got it," said Andy sourly. "Diel kens whaur."

"But I am sure you did it beautifully, Mr. Hepburn," said Moira, moving closer to him, "and it will be making me think of home." Her soft Highland accent and the quaint Highland phrasing seemed to reach a soft spot in the little Scot.

"Hame? An' whaur's that?" he inquired, manifesting a grudging interest.

"Where? Where but in the best of all lands, in Scotland," said Moira. "Near Braemar."

"Braemar?"

"Aye, Braemar. I have only come four days ago."

"Aye, an' did ye say, lassie!" said Andy, with a faint accession of interest. "It's a bonny country ye've left behind, and far enough frae here."

"Far indeed," said Moira, letting her shining brown eyes rest upon his face. "And it is myself that knows it. But when the fire burns yonder," she added, pointing to the fireplace, "I will be seeing the hills and the glens and the moors."

"'Deed, then, lassie," said Andy in a low hurried voice, moving toward the door, "A'm gled that Smith buddie gar't me build it."

"Wait, Mr. Hepburn," said Moira, shyly holding out her hand, "don't you think that Scotties in this far land should be friends?"

"An' prood I'd be, Miss Cameron," replied Andy, and, seizing her hand, he gave it a violent shake, flung it from him and fled through the door.

"He's a cure, now, isn't he!" said Dent.

"I think he is fine," said Moira with enthusiasm. "It takes a Scot to understand a Scot, you see, and I am glad I know him. Do you know, he is a little like the fireplace himself," she said, "rugged, a wee bit rough, but fine."

"The real stuff, eh?" said Dent. "The pure quill."

"Yes, that is it. Solid and steadfast, with no pretense."

Meanwhile the work of inspecting the new house was going on. Everywhere appeared fresh cause for delighted wonder, but still the origin of the raising bee remained a mystery.

Balked by the men, Cameron turned in his search to the women and proceeded to the tent where preparations were being made for the supper.

"Tut tut, Mr. Cameron," said Mrs. Cochrane, her broad good−natured face beaming with health and good humor, "what difference does it make? Your neighbors are only too glad of a chance to show their goodwill for yourself, and more for your wife."

"I am sure you are right there," said Cameron.

"And it is the way of the country. We must stick together, John says. It's your turn to−day, it may be ours to−morrow and that's all there is to it. So clear out of this tent and make yourself busy. By the way, where's the pipes? The folk will soon be asking for a tune."

"But I want to know, Mrs. Cochrane," persisted Cameron.

"Where's the pipes, I'm saying. John," she cried, lifting her voice, to her husband, who was standing at the other side of the house. "Where's the pipes? They're not burned, I hope," she continued, turning to Cameron. "The whole settlement would feel that a loss."

"Fortunately no. Young Macgregor at the Fort has them."

"Then I wonder if they are here. John, find out from the Inspector yonder where the pipes are. We will be wanting them this evening."

To her husband's inquiry the Inspector replied that if Macgregor ever had the pipes it was a moral certainty that he had carried them with him to the raising, "for it is my firm belief," he added, "that he sleeps with them."

"Do go and see now, like a dear man," said Mrs. Cochrane to Cameron.

From group to group of the workers Cameron went, exchanging greetings, but persistently seeking to discover the originator of the raising bee. But all in vain, and in despair he came back to his wife with the question "Who is this Smith, anyway?"

"Mr. Smith," she said with deliberate emphasis, "is my friend, my particular friend. I found him a friend when I needed one badly."

"Yes, but who is he?" inquired Moira, who, with Mr. Dent in attendance, had sauntered up. "Who is he, Mr. Dent? Do you know?"

"No, not from Adam's mule. He's old Thatcher's man. That's all I know about him."

"He is Mr. Thatcher's man? Oh!" said Moira, "Mr. Thatcher's servant." A subtle note of disappointment sounded in her voice.

"Servant, Moira?" said Allan in a shocked tone. "Wipe out the thought. There is no such thing as servant west of the Great Lakes in this country. A man may help me with my work for a consideration, but he is no servant of mine as you understand the term, for he considers himself just as good as I am and he may be considerably better."

"Oh, Allan," protested his sister with flushing face, "I know. I know all that, but you know what I mean."

"Yes, I know perfectly," said her brother, "for I had the same notion. For instance, for six months I was a 'servant' in Mandy's home, eh, Mandy?"

"Nonsense!" cried Mandy indignantly. "You were our hired man and just like the rest of us."

"Do you get that distinction, Moira? There is no such thing as servant in this country," continued Cameron. "We are all the same socially and stand to help each other. Rather a fine idea that."

"Yes, fine," cried Moira, "but−−" and she paused, her face still flushed.

"Who's Smith? is the great question," interjected Dent. "Well, then, Miss Cameron, between you and me we don't ask that question in this country. Smith is Smith and Jones is Jones and that's the first and last of it. We all let it go at that."

But now the last row of shingles was in place, the last door hung, the last door−knob set. The whole house stood complete, inside and out, top and bottom, when a tattoo beat upon a dish pan gave the summons to the supper table. The table was spread in all its luxurious variety and abundance beneath the poplar trees. There the people gathered all upon the basis of pure democratic equality, "Duke's son and cook's son," each estimated at such worth as could be demonstrated was in him. Fictitious standards of values were ignored. Every man was given his fair opportunity to show his stuff and according to his showing was his place in the community. A generous good fellowship and friendly good−will toward the new− comer pervaded the company, but with all this a kind of reserve marked the intercourse of these men with each other. Men were taken on trial at face value and no questions asked.

This evening, however, the dominant note was one of generous and enthusiastic sympathy with the young rancher and his wife, who had come so lately among them and who had been made the unfortunate victim of a sinister and threatening foe, hitherto, it is true, regarded with indifference or with friendly pity but lately assuming an ominous importance. There was underneath the gay hilarity of the gathering an undertone of apprehension until the Inspector made his speech. It was short and went straight at the mark. There was danger, he acknowledged. It would be idle to ignore that there were ugly rumors flying. There was need for watchfulness, but there was no need for alarm. The Police Force was charged with the responsibility of protecting the lives and property of the people. They assumed to the full this responsibility, though they were very short−handed at present, but if they ever felt they needed assistance they knew they could rely upon the steady courage of the men of the district such as he saw before him.

There was need of no further words and the Inspector's speech passed with no response. It was not after the manner of these men to make demonstration either of their loyalty or of their courage.

Cameron's speech at the last came haltingly. On the one hand his Highland pride made it difficult for him to accept gifts from any source whatever. On the other hand his Highland courtesy forbade his giving offense to those who were at once his hosts and his guests, but none suspected the reason for the halting in his speech. As Western men they rather approved than otherwise the hesitation and reserve that marked his words.

Before they rose from the supper table, however, there were calls for Mrs. Cameron, calls so insistent and clamorous that, overcoming her embarrassment, she made reply. "We have not yet found out who was responsible for the originating of this great kindness. But no matter. We forgive him, for otherwise my husband and I would never have come to know how rich we are in true friends and kind neighbors, and now that you have built this house let me say that henceforth by day or by night you are welcome to it, for it is yours."

After the storm of applause had died down, a voice was heard gruffly and somewhat anxiously protesting, "But not all at one time."

"Who was that?" asked Mandy of young Dent as the supper party broke up.

"That's Smith," said Dent, "and he's a queer one."

"Smith?" said Cameron. "The chap meets us everywhere. I must look him up."

But there was a universal and insistent demand for "the pipes."

"You look him up, Mandy," cried her husband as he departed in response to the call.

"I shall find him, and all about him," said Mandy with determination.

The next two hours were spent in dancing to Cameron's reels, in which all, with more or less grace, took part till the piper declared he was clean done.

"Let Macgregor have the pipes, Cameron," cried the Inspector. "He is longing for a chance, I am sure, and you give us the Highland Fling."

"Come Moira," cried Cameron gaily, handing the pipes to Macgregor and, taking his sister by the hand, he led her out into the intricacies of the Highland Reel, while the sides of the living− room, the doors and the windows, were thronged with admiring onlookers. Even Andy Hepburn's rugged face lost something of its dourness; and as the brother and sister together did that most famous of all the ancient dances of Scotland, the Highland Fling, his face relaxed into a broad smile.

"There's Smith," said young Dent to Mandy in a low voice as the reel was drawing to a close.

"Where?" she cried. "I have been looking for him everywhere."

"There, at the window, outside."

Even in the dim light of the lanterns and candles hung here and there upon the walls and stuck on the window sills, Smith's face, pale, stern, sad, shone like a specter out of the darkness behind.

"What's the matter with the man?" cried Mandy. "I must find out."

Suddenly the reel came to an end and Cameron, taking the pipes from young Macgregor, cried, "Now, Moira, we will give them our way of it," and, tuning the pipes anew, he played over once and again their own Glen March, known only to the piper of the Cuagh Oir. Then with cunning skill making atmosphere, he dropped into a wild and weird lament, Moira standing the while like one seeing a vision. With a swift change the pipes shrilled into the true Highland version of the ancient reel, enriched with grace notes and variations all his own. For a few moments the girl stood as if unwilling to yield herself to the invitation of the pipes. Suddenly, as if moved by another spirit than her own, she stepped into the circle and whirled away into the mazes of the ancient style of the Highland Fling, such as is mastered by comparatively few even of the Highland folk. With wonderful grace and supple strength she passed from figure to figure and from step to step, responding to the wild mad music as to a master spirit.

In the midst of the dance Mandy made her way out of the house and round to the window where Smith stood gazing in upon the dancer. She quietly approached him from behind and for a few moments stood at his side. He was breathing heavily like a man in pain.

"What is it, Mr. Smith?" she said, touching him gently on the shoulder.

He sprang from her touch as from a stab and darted back from the crowd about the window.

"What is it, Mr. Smith?" she said again, following him. "You are not well. You are in pain."

He stood a moment or two gazing at her with staring eyes and parted lips, pain, grief and even rage distorting his pale face.

"It is wicked," at length he panted. "It is just terrible wicked−− a young girl like that."

"Wicked? Who? What?"

"That−−that girl−−dancing like that."

"Dancing? That kind of dancing?" cried Mandy, astonished. "I was brought up a Methodist myself," she continued, "but that kind of dancing−−why, I love it."

"It is of the devil. I am a Methodist−−a preacher−−but I could not preach, so I quit. But that is of the world, the flesh, and the devil and−−and I have not the courage to denounce it. She is−−God help me−−so−−so wonderful−−so wonderful."

"But, Mr. Smith," said Mandy, laying her hand upon his arm, and seeking to sooth his passion, "surely this dancing is−−"

Loud cheers and clapping of hands from the house interrupted her. The man put his hands over his eyes as if to shut out a horrid vision, shuddered violently, and with a weird sound broke from her touch and fled into the bluff behind the house just as the party came streaming from the house preparatory to departing. It seemed to Mandy as if she had caught a glimpse of the inner chambers of a soul and had seen things too sacred to be uttered.

Among the last to leave were young Dent and the Inspector.

"We have found out the culprit," cried Dent, as he was saying good− night.

"The culprit?" said Mandy. "What do you mean?"

"The fellow who has engineered this whole business."

"Who is it?" said Cameron.

"Why, listen," said Dent. "Who got the logs from Bracken? Smith. Who got the Inspector to send men through the settlement? Smith. Who got the lumber out of the same Inspector? Smith. And the sash and doors out of Cochrane? Smith. And wiggled the shingles out of Newsome? And euchred old Scotty Hepburn into building the fireplace? And planned and bossed the whole job? Who? Smith. This whole business is Smith's work."

"And where is Smith? Have you seen him, Mandy? We have not thanked him," said Cameron.

"He is gone, I think," said Mandy. "He left some time ago. We shall thank him later. But I am sure we owe a great deal to you, Inspector Dickson, to you, Mr. Dent, and indeed to all our friends," she added, as she bade them good−night.

For some moments they lingered in the moonlight.

"To think that this is Smith's work!" said Cameron, waving his hand toward the house. "That queer chap! One thing I have learned, never to judge a man by his legs again."

"He is a fine fellow," said Mandy indignantly, "and with a fine soul in spite of−−"

"His wobbly legs," said her husband smiling.

"It's a shame, Allan. What difference does it make what kind of legs a man has?"

"Very true," replied her husband smiling, "and if you knew your Bible better, Mandy, you would have found excellent authority for your position in the words of the psalmist, 'The Lord taketh no pleasure in the legs of a man.' But, say, it is a joke," he added, "to think of this being Smith's work."

CHAPTER XII. IN THE SUN DANCE CANYON

But they were not yet done with Smith, for as they turned to pass into the house a series of shrill cries from the bluff behind pierced the stillness of the night.

"Help! Help! Murder! Help! I've got him! Help! I've got him!"

Shaking off the clutching hands of his wife and sister, Cameron darted into the bluff and found two figures frantically struggling upon the ground. The moonlight trickling through the branches revealed the man on top to be an Indian with a knife in his hand, but he was held in such close embrace that he could not strike.

"Hold up!" cried Cameron, seizing the Indian by the wrist. "Stop that! Let him go!" he cried to the man below. "I've got him safe enough. Let him go! Let him go, I tell you! Now, then, get up! Get up, both of you!"

The under man released his grip, allowed the Indian to rise and got himself to his feet.

"Come out into the light!" said Cameron sharply, leading the Indian out of the bluff, followed by the other, still panting. Here they were joined by the ladies. "Now, then, what the deuce is all this row?" inquired Cameron.

"Why, it's Mr. Smith!" cried Mandy.

"Smith again! More of Smith's work, eh? Well, this beats me," said her husband. For some moments Cameron stood surveying the group, the Indian silent and immobile as one of the poplar trees beside him, the ladies with faces white, Smith disheveled in garb, pale and panting and evidently under great excitement. Cameron burst into a loud laugh. Smith's pale face flushed a swift red, visible even in the moonlight, then grew pale again, his excited panting ceased as he became quiet.

"Now what is the row?" asked Cameron again. "What is it, Smith?"

"I found this Indian in the bush here and I seized him. I thought−− he might−−do something."

"Do something?"

"Yes−−some mischief−−to some of you."

"What? You found this Indian in the bluff here and you just jumped on him? You might better have jumped on a wild cat. Are you used to this sort of thing? Do you know the ways of these people?"

"I never saw an Indian before."

"Good Heavens, man! He might have killed you. And he would have in two minutes more."

"He might have killed−−some of you," said Smith.

Cameron laughed again.

"Now what were you doing in the bluff?" he said sharply, turning to the Indian.

"Chief Trotting Wolf," said the Indian in the low undertone common to his people, "Chief Trotting Wolf want you' squaw−−boy seeck bad−− leg beeg beeg. Boy go die. Come." He turned to Mandy and repeated "Come−−queeek−−queeek."

"Why didn't you come earlier?" said Cameron sharply. "It is too late now. We are going to sleep."

"Me come dis." He lowered his hand toward the ground. "Too much mans−−no like−−Indian wait all go 'way−−dis man much beeg fight−−no good. Come queeek−−boy go die."

Already Mandy had made up her mind.

"Let us hurry, Allan," she said.

"You can't go to−night," he replied. "You are dead tired. Wait till morning."

"No, no, we must go." She turned into the house, followed by her husband, and began to rummage in her bag. "Lucky thing I got these supplies in town," she said, hastily putting together her nurse's equipment and some simple remedies. "I wonder if that boy has fever. Bring that Indian in."

"Have you had the doctor?" she inquired, when he appeared.

"Huh! Doctor want cut off leg−−dis," his action was sufficiently suggestive. "Boy say no."

"Has the boy any fever? Does he talk−talk−talk?" The Indian nodded his head vigorously.

"Talk much−−all day−−all night."

"He is evidently in a high fever," said Mandy to her husband. "We must try to check that. Now, my dear, you

hurry and get the horses."

"But what shall we do with Moira?" said Cameron suddenly.

"Why," cried Moira, "let me go with you. I should love to go."

But this did not meet with Cameron's approval.

"I can stay here," suggested Smith hesitatingly, "or Miss Cameron can go over with me to the Thatchers'."

"That is better," said Cameron shortly. "We can drop her at the Thatchers' as we pass."

In half an hour Cameron returned with the horses and the party proceeded on their way.

At the Piegan Reserve they were met by Chief Trotting Wolf himself and, without more than a single word of greeting, were led to the tent in which the sick boy lay. Beside him sat the old squaw in a corner of the tent, crooning a weird song as she swayed to and fro. The sick boy lay on a couch of skins, his eyes shining with fever, his foot festering and in a state of indescribable filth and his whole condition one of unspeakable wretchedness. Cameron found his gorge rise at the sight of the gangrenous ankle.

"This is a horrid business, Mandy," he exclaimed. "This is not for you. Let us send for the doctor. That foot will surely have to come off. Don't mess with it. Let us have the doctor."

But his wife, from the moment of her first sight of the wounded foot, forgot all but her mission of help.

"We must have a clean tent, Allan," she said, "and plenty of hot water. Get the hot water first."

Cameron turned to the Chief and said, "Hot water, quick!"

"Huh−−good," replied the Chief, and in a few moments returned with a small pail of luke−warm water.

"Oh," cried Mandy, "it must be hot and we must have lots of it."

"Hot," cried Cameron to the Chief. "Big pail−−hot−−hot."

"Huh," grunted the Chief a second time with growing intelligence, and in an incredibly short space returned with water sufficiently hot and in sufficient quantity.

All unconscious of the admiring eyes that followed the swift and skilled movements of her capable hands, Mandy worked over the festering and fevered wound till, cleansed, soothed, wrapped in a cooling lotion, the limb rested easily upon a sling of birch bark and skins suggested and prepared by the Chief. Then for the first time the boy made a sound.

"Huh," he grunted feebly. "Doctor−−no good. Squaw−−heap good. Me two foot−−live−−one foot−−" he held up one finger−−"die." His eyes were shining with something other than the fever that drove the blood racing through his veins. As a dog's eyes follow every movement of his master so the lad's eyes, eloquent with adoring gratitude, followed his nurse as she moved about the wigwam.

"Now we must get that clean tent, Allan."

"All right," said her husband. "It will be no easy job, but we shall do our best. Here, Chief," he cried, "get some of your young men to pitch another tent in a clean place."

The Chief, eager though he was to assist, hesitated.

"No young men," he said. "Get squaw," and departed abruptly.

"No young men, eh?" said Cameron to his wife. "Where are they, then? I notice there are no bucks around."

And so while the squaws were pitching a tent in a spot somewhat removed from the encampment, Cameron poked about among the tents and wigwams of which the Indian encampment consisted, but found for the most part only squaws and children and old men. He came back to his wife greatly disturbed.

"The young bucks are gone, Mandy. I must get after this thing quickly. I wish I had Jerry here. Let's see? You ask for a messenger to be sent to the fort for the doctor and medicine. I shall enclose a note to the Inspector. We want the doctor here as soon as possible and we want Jerry here at the earliest possible moment."

With a great show of urgency a messenger was requisitioned and dispatched, carrying a note from Cameron to the Commissioner requesting the presence of the doctor with his medicine bag, but also requesting that Jerry, the redoubtable half−breed interpreter and scout, with a couple of constables, should accompany the doctor, the constables, however, to wait outside the camp until summoned.

During the hours that must elapse before any answer could be had from the fort, Cameron prepared a couch in a corner of the sick boy's tent for his wife, and, rolling himself in his blanket, he laid himself down at the door outside where, wearied with the long day and its many exciting events, he slept without turning, till shortly after daybreak he was awakened by a chorus of yelping curs which heralded the arrival of the doctor from the fort with the interpreter Jerry in attendance.

After breakfast, prepared by Jerry with dispatch and skill, the product of long experience, there was a thorough examination of the sick boy's condition through the interpreter, upon the conclusion of which a long consultation followed between the doctor, Cameron and Mandy. It was finally decided that the doctor should remain with Mandy in the Indian camp until a change should become apparent in the condition of the boy, and that Cameron with the interpreter should pick up the two constables and follow in the trail of the young Piegan braves. In order to allay suspicion Cameron and his companion left the camp by the trail which led toward the fort. For four miles or so they rode smartly until the trail passed into a thick timber of spruce mixed with poplar. Here Cameron paused, and, making a slight sign in the direction from which they had come, he said:

"Drop back, Jerry, and see if any Indian is following."

"Good," grunted Jerry. "Go slow one mile," and, slipping from his pony, he handed the reins to Cameron and faded like a shadow into the brushwood.

For a mile Cameron rode, pausing now and then to listen for the sound of anyone following, then drew rein and waited for his companion. After a few minutes of eager listening he suddenly sat back in his saddle and felt for his pipe.

"All right, Jerry," he said softly, "come out."

Grinning somewhat shamefacedly Jerry parted a bunch of spruce boughs and stood at Cameron's side.

"Good ears," he said, glancing up into Cameron's face.

"No, Jerry," replied Cameron, "I saw the blue−jay."

"Huh," grunted Jerry, "dat fool bird tell everyt'ing."

"Any Indian following?"

Jerry held up two fingers.

"Two Indian run tree mile−−find notting−−go back."

"Good! Where are our men?"

"Down Coulee Swampy Creek."

"All right, Jerry. Any news at the fort last two or three days?"

"Beeg meetin' St. Laurent. Much half−breed. Some Indian too. Louis Riel mak beeg spik−−beeg noise−−blood! blood! blood! Much beeg fool." Jerry's tone indicated the completeness of his contempt for the whole proceedings at St. Laurent.

"Something doing, eh, Jerry?"

"Bah!" grunted Jerry contemptuously.

"Well, there's something doing here," continued Cameron. "Trotting Wolf's young men have left the reserve and Trotting Wolf is very anxious that we should not know it. I want you to go back, find out what direction they have taken, how far ahead they are, how many. We camp to−night at the Big Rock at the entrance to the Sun Dance Canyon. You remember?"

Jerry nodded.

"There's something doing, Jerry, or I am much mistaken. Got any grub?"

"Grub?" asked Jerry. "Me−−here−−t'ree day," tapping his rolled blanket at the back of his saddle. "Odder fellers−−grub−−Jakes−− t'ree men−−t'ree day. Come Beeg Rock to−night−−mebbe to−morrow." So saying, Jerry climbed on to his pony and took the back trail, while Cameron went forward to meet his men at the Swampy Creek Coulee.

Making a somewhat wide detour to avoid the approaches to the Indian encampment, Cameron and his two men rode for the Big Rock at the entrance to the Sun Dance Canyon. They gave themselves no concern about Trotting Wolf's band of young men. They knew well that what Jerry could not discover would not be worth finding out. A year's close association with Jerry had taught Cameron something of the marvelous powers of observation, of the tenacity and courage possessed by the little half−breed that made him the keenest scout in the North West Mounted Police.

At the Big Rock they arrived late in the afternoon and there waited for Jerry's appearing; but night had fallen and had broken into morning before the scout came into camp with a single word of report:

"Notting."

"No Piegans?" exclaimed Cameron.

"No−−not dis side Blood Reserve."

"Eat something, Jerry, then we will talk," said Cameron.

Jerry had already broken his fast, but was ready for more. After the meal was finished he made his report. His report was clear and concise. On leaving Cameron in the morning he had taken the most likely direction to discover traces of the Piegan band, namely that suggested by Cameron, and, fetching a wide circle, had ridden toward the mountains, but he had come upon no sign. Then he had penetrated into the canyon and ridden down toward the entrance, but still had found no trace. He had then ridden backward toward the Piegan Reserve and, picking up a trail of one or two ponies, had followed it till he found it broaden into that of a considerable band making eastward. Then he knew he had found the trail he wanted.

"How many, Jerry?" asked Cameron.

The half−breed held up both hands three times.

"Mebbe more."

"Thirty or forty?" exclaimed Cameron. "Any Squaws?

"No."

"Hunting−expedition?"

"No."

"Where were they going?"

"Blood Reserve t'ink−−dunno."

Cameron sat smoking in silence. He was completely at a loss.

"Why go to the Bloods?" he asked of Jerry.

"Dunno."

Jerry was not strong in his constructive faculty. His powers were those of observation.

"There is no sense in them going to the Blood Reserve, Jerry," said Cameron impatiently. "The Bloods are a pack of thieves, we know, but our people are keeping a close watch on them."

Jerry grunted acquiescence.

"There is no big Indian camping ground on the Blood Reserve. You wouldn't get the Blackfeet to go to any pow−wow there."

Again Jerry grunted.

"How far did you follow their trail, Jerry?"

"Two−−t'ree mile."

Cameron sat long and smoked. The thing was extremely puzzling. It seemed unlikely that if the Piegan band were going to a rendezvous of Indians they should select a district so closely under the inspection of the Police. Furthermore there was no great prestige attaching to the Bloods to make their reserve a place of meeting.

"Jerry," said Cameron at length, "I believe they are up this Sun Dance Canyon somewhere."

"No," said Jerry decisively. "No sign−−come down mesef." His tone was that of finality.

"I believe, Jerry, they doubled back and came in from the north end after you had left. I feel sure they are up there now and we will go and find them."

Jerry sat silent, smoking thoughtfully. Finally he took his pipe from his mouth, pressed the tobacco hard down with his horny middle finger and stuck it in his pocket.

"Mebbe so," he said slowly, a slight grin distorting his wizened little face, "mebbe so, but t'ink not−−me."

"Well, Jerry, where could they have gone? They might ride straight to Crowfoot's Reserve, but I think that is extremely unlikely. They certainly would not go to the Bloods, therefore they must be up this canyon. We will go up, Jerry, for ten miles or so and see what we can see."

"Good," said Jerry with a grunt, his tone conveying his conviction that where the chief scout of the North West Mounted Police had said it was useless to search, any other man searching would have nothing but his folly for his pains.

"Have a sleep first, Jerry. We need not start for a couple of hours."

Jerry grunted his usual reply, rolled himself in his blanket and, lying down at the back of a rock, was asleep in a minute's time.

In two hours to the minute he stood beside his pony waiting for Cameron, who had been explaining his plan to the two constables and giving them his final orders.

The orders were very brief and simple. They were to wait where they were till noon. If any of the band of

Piegans appeared one of the men was to ride up the canyon with the information, the other was to follow the band till they camped and then ride back till he should meet his comrades. They divided up the grub into two parts and Cameron and the interpreter took their way up the canyon.

The canyon consisted of a deep cleft across a series of ranges of hills or low mountains. Through it ran a rough breakneck trail once used by the Indians and trappers but now abandoned since the building of the Canadian Pacific Railway through the Kicking Horse Pass and the opening of the Government trail through the Crow's Nest. From this which had once been the main trail other trails led westward into the Kootenays and eastward into the Foothill country. At times the canyon widened into a valley, rich in grazing and in streams of water, again it narrowed into a gorge, deep and black, with rugged sides above which only the blue sky was visible, and from which led cavernous passages that wound into the heart of the mountains, some of them large enough to hold a hundred men or more without crowding. These caverns had been and still were found to be most convenient and useful for the purpose of whisky−runners and of cattle−rustlers, affording safe hiding−places for themselves and their spoil. With this trail and all its ramifications Jerry was thoroughly familiar. The only other man in the Force who knew it better than Jerry was Cameron himself. For many months he had patroled the main trail and all its cross leaders, lived in its caves and explored its caverns in pursuit of those interesting gentlemen whose activities more than anything else had rendered necessary the existence of the North West Mounted Police. In ancient times the caves along the Sun Dance Trail had been used by the Indian Medicine−Men for their pagan rites, and hence in the eyes of the Indians to these caves attached a dreadful reverence that made them places to be avoided in recent years by the various tribes now gathered on the reserves. But during these last months of unrest it was suspected by the Police that the ancient uses of these caves had been revived and that the rites long since fallen into desuetude were once more being practised.

For the first few miles of the canyon the trail offered good footing and easy going, but as the gorge deepened and narrowed the difficulties increased until riding became impossible, and only by the most strenuous efforts on the part of both men and beasts could any advance be made. And so through the day and into the late evening they toiled on, ever alert for sight or sound of the Piegan band. At length Cameron broke the silence.

"We must camp, Jerry," he said. "We are making no time and we may spoil things. I know a good camp−ground near by."

"Me too," grunted Jerry, who was as tired as his wiry frame ever allowed him to become.

They took a trail leading eastward, which to all eyes but those familiar with it would have been invisible, for a hundred yards or so and came to the bed of a dry stream which issued from between two great rocks. Behind one of these rocks there opened out a grassy plot a few yards square, and beyond the grass a little lifted platform of rock against a sheer cliff. Here they camped, picketing their horses on the grass and cooking their supper upon the platform of rock over a tiny fire of dry twigs, for the wind was blowing down the canyon and they knew that they could cook their meal and have their smoke without fear of detection. For some time after supper they sat smoking in that absolute silence which is the characteristic of the true man of the woods. The gentle breeze blowing down the canyon brought to their ears the rustling of the dry poplar−leaves and the faint murmur of the stream which, tumbling down the canyon, accompanied the main trail a hundred yards away.

Suddenly Cameron's hand fell upon the knee of the half−breed with a swift grip.

"Listen!" he said, bending forward.

With mouths slightly open and with hands to their ears they both sat motionless, breathless, every nerve on strain. Gradually the dead silence seemed to resolve itself into rhythmic waves of motion rather than of sound−−"TUM−ta−ta−TUM. TUM−ta−ta−TUM. TUM−ta−ta− TUM." It was the throb of the Indian medicine−drum, which once heard can never be forgotten or mistaken. Without a word to each other they rose, doused their fire, cached their saddles, blankets and grub, and, taking only their revolvers, set off up the canyon. Before they had gone many yards Cameron halted.

"What do you think, Jerry?" he said. "I take it they have come in the back way over the old Porcupine Trail."

Jerry grunted approval of the suggestion.

"Then we can go in from the canyon. It is hard going, but there is less fear of detection. They are sure to be in the Big Wigwam."

Jerry shook his head, with a puzzled look on his face.

"Dunno me."

"That is where they are," said Cameron. "Come on! Only two miles from here."

Steadily the throb of the medicine−drum grew more distinct as they moved slowly up the canyon, rising and falling upon the breeze that came down through the darkness to meet them. The trail, which was bad enough in the light, became exceedingly dangerous and difficult in the blackness of the night. On they struggled painfully, now clinging to the sides of the gorge, now mounting up over a hill and again descending to the level of the foaming stream.

"Will they have sentries out, I wonder?" whispered Cameron in Jerry's ear.

"No−−beeg medicine going on−−no sentry."

"All right, then, we will walk straight in on them."

"What you do?" inquired Jerry.

"We will see what they are doing and send them about their business," said Cameron shortly.

"No," said Jerry firmly. "S'pose Indian mak beeg medicine−−bes' leave him go till morning."

"Well, Jerry, we will take a look at them at any rate," said Cameron. "But if they are fooling around with any rebellion nonsense I am going to step in and stop it."

"No," said Jerry again very gravely. "Beeg medicine mak' Indian man crazy−−fool−−dance−−sing−−mak' brave−−then keel−−queeck!"

"Come along, then, Jerry," said Cameron impatiently. And on they went. The throb of the drum grew clearer until it seemed that the next turn in the trail should reveal the camp, while with the drum throb they began to catch, at first faintly and then more clearly, the monotonous chant "Hai−yai−kai−yai, Hai−yai−kai−yai," that ever accompanies the Indian dance. Suddenly the drums ceased altogether and with it the chanting, and then there arose upon the night silence a low moaning cry that gradually rose into a long−drawn penetrating wail, almost a scream, made by a single voice.

Jerry's hand caught Cameron's arm with a convulsive grip.

"What the deuce is that?" asked Cameron.

"Sioux Indian−−he mak' dat when he go keel."

Once more the long weird wailing scream pierced the night and, echoing down the canyon, was repeated a hundred times by the black rocky sides. Cameron could feel Jerry's hand still quivering on his arm.

"What's up with you, Jerry?" said Cameron impatiently.

"Me hear dat when A'm small boy−−me."

Then Cameron remembered that it was Sioux blood that colored the life−stream in Jerry's veins.

"Oh, pshaw!" said Cameron with gruff impatience. "Come on!" But he was more shaken than he cared to acknowledge by that weird unearthly cry and by its all too obvious effect upon the iron nerves of that little half−breed at his side.

"Dey mak' dat cry when dey go meet Custer long 'go," said Jerry, making no motion to go forward.

"What are you waiting for?" said Cameron harshly. "Come along, unless you want to go back."

His words stung the half−breed into action. Cameron could feel him in the dark jerk his hand away and hear him grit his teeth.

"Bah! You go hell!" he muttered between his clenched teeth.

"That is better," said Cameron cheerfully. "Now we will look in upon these fire−eaters."

Sharp to the right they turned behind a cliff, and then back almost upon their trail, still to the right, through a screen of spruce and poplar, and found themselves in a hole of a rock that lengthened into a tunnel blacker than the night outside. Pursuing this tunnel some little distance they became aware of a light that grew as they moved toward it into a fire set in the middle of a wide cavern. The cavern was of irregular shape, with high−vaulted roof, open to the sky at the apex and hung with glistening stalactites. The floor of this cavern lay slightly below them, and from their position they could command a full view of its interior.

The sides of the cavern round about were crowded with tawny faces of Indians arranged rank upon rank, the first row seated upon the ground, those behind crouching upon their haunches, those still farther back standing. In the center of the cavern and with his face lit by the fire stood the Sioux Chief, Onawata.

"Copperhead! By all that's holy!" cried Cameron.

"Onawata!" exclaimed the half−breed. "What he mak' here?"

"What is he saying, Jerry? Tell me everything−−quick!" commanded Cameron sharply.

Jerry was listening with eager face.

"He mak' beeg spik," he said.

"Go on!"

"He say Indian long tam' 'go have all country when his fadder small boy. Dem day good hunting−−plenty beaver, mink, moose, buffalo like leaf on tree, plenty hit (eat), warm wigwam, Indian no seeck, notting wrong. Dem day Indian lak' deer go every place. Dem day Indian man lak' bear 'fraid notting. Good tam', happy, hunt deer, keel buffalo, hit all day. Ah−h−h! ah−h−h!" The half−breed's voice faded in two long gasps.

The Sioux's chanting voice rose and fell through the vaulted cavern like a mighty instrument of music. His audience of crowding Indians gazed in solemn rapt awe upon him. A spell held them fixed. The whole circle swayed in unison with his swaying form as he chanted the departed glories of those happy days when the red man roamed free those plains and woods, lord of his destiny and subject only to his own will. The mystic magic power of that rich resonant voice, its rhythmic cadence emphasized by the soft throbbing of the drum, the uplifted face glowing as with prophetic fire, the tall swaying form instinct with exalted emotion, swept the souls of his hearers with surging tides of passion. Cameron, though he caught but little of its meaning, felt himself irresistibly borne along upon the torrent of the flowing words. He glanced at Jerry beside him and was startled by the intense emotion showing upon his little wizened face.

Suddenly there was a swift change of motif, and with it a change of tone and movement and color. The marching, vibrant, triumphant chant of freedom and of conquest subsided again into the long−drawn wail of defeat, gloom and despair. Cameron needed no interpreter. He knew the singer was telling the pathetic story of the passing of the day of the Indian's glory and the advent of the day of his humiliation. With sharp rising inflections, with staccato phrasing and with fierce passionate intonation, the Sioux wrung the hearts of his hearers. Again Cameron glanced at the half−breed at his side and again he was startled to note the transformation in his face. Where there had been glowing pride there was now bitter savage hate. For that hour at least the half−breed was all Sioux. His father's blood was the water in his veins, the red was only his Indian mother's. With face drawn tense and lips bared into a snarl, with eyes gleaming, he gazed fascinated upon the face of the singer. In imagination, in instinct, in the deepest emotions of his soul Jerry was harking back again to the savage in him, and the savage in him thirsting for revenge upon the white man who had wrought this ruin upon him and his Indian race. With a fine dramatic instinct the Sioux reached his climax and abruptly ceased. A low moaning murmur ran round the circle and swelled into a sobbing cry, then ceased as suddenly as there stepped into the circle a stranger, evidently a half−breed, who began to speak. He was a French Cree, he announced, and delivered his message in the speech, half Cree, half French, affected by his race.

He had come fresh from the North country, from the disturbed district, and bore, as it appeared, news of the very first importance from those who were the leaders of his people in the unrest. At his very first word Jerry drew a long deep breath and by his face appeared to drop from heaven to earth. As the half− breed proceeded with his tale his speech increased in rapidity.

"What is he saying, Jerry?" said Cameron after they had listened for some minutes.

"Oh he beeg damfool!" said Jerry, whose vocabulary had been learned mostly by association with freighters and the Police. "He tell 'bout beeg meeting, beeg man Louis Riel mak' beeg noise. Bah! Beeg damfool!" The whole scene had lost for Jerry its mystic impressiveness and had become contemptibly commonplace. But not so to Cameron. This was the part that held meaning for him. So he pulled up the half−breed with a quick, sharp command.

"Listen close," he said, "and let me know what he says."

And as Jerry interpreted in his broken English the half−breed's speech it appeared that there was something worth learning. At this big meeting held in Batoche it seemed a petition of rights, to the Dominion Parliament no less, had been drawn up, and besides this many plans had been formed and many promises made of reward for all those who dared to stand for their rights under the leadership of the great Riel, while for the Indians very special arrangements had been made and the most alluring prospects held out. For they were assured that, when in the far North country the new Government was set up, the old free independent life of which they had been hearing was to be restored, all hampering restrictions imposed by the white man were to be removed, and the good old days were to be brought back. The effect upon the Indians was plainly evident. With solemn faces they listened, nodding now and then grave approval, and Cameron felt that the whole situation held possibilities of horror

unspeakable in the revival of that ancient savage spirit which had been so very materially softened and tamed by years of kindly, patient and firm control on the part of those who represented among them British law and civilization. His original intention had been to stride in among these Indians, to put a stop to their savage nonsense and order them back to their reserves with never a thought of anything but obedience on their part. But as he glanced about upon the circle of faces he hesitated. This was no petty outbreak of ill temper on the part of a number of Indians dissatisfied with their rations or chafing under some new Police regulation. As his eye traveled round the circle he noted that for the most part they were young men. A few of the councilors of the various tribes represented were present. Many of them he knew, but many others he could not distinguish in the dim light of the fire.

"Who are those Indians, Jerry?" he asked.

And as Jerry ran over the names he began to realize how widely representative of the various tribes in the western country the gathering was. Practically every reserve in the West was represented: Bloods, Piegans and Blackfeet from the foothill country, Plain Crees and Wood Crees from the North. Even a few of the Stonies, who were supposed to have done with all pagan rites and to have become largely civilized, were present. Nor were these rank and file men only. They were the picked braves of the tribes, and with them a large number of the younger chiefs.

At length the half−breed Cree finished his tale, and in a few brief fierce sentences he called the Indians of the West to join their half−breed and Indian brothers of the North in one great effort to regain their lost rights and to establish themselves for all time in independence and freedom.

Then followed grave discussion carried on with deliberation and courtesy by those sitting about the fire, and though gravity and courtesy marked every utterance there thrilled through every speech an ever deepening intensity of feeling. The fiery spirit of the red man, long subdued by those powers that represented the civilization of the white man, was burning fiercely within them. The insatiable lust for glory formerly won in war or in the chase, but now no longer possible to them, burned in their hearts like a consuming fire. The life of monotonous struggle for a mere existence to which they were condemned had from the first been intolerable to them. The prowess of their fathers, whether in the slaughter of foes or in the excitement of the chase, was the theme of song and story round every Indian camp−fire and at every sun dance. For the young braves, life, once vivid with color and thrilling with tingling emotions, had faded into the somber−hued monotony of a dull and spiritless existence, eked out by the charity of the race who had robbed them of their hunting−grounds and deprived them of their rights as free men. The lust for revenge, the fury of hate, the yearning for the return of the days of the red man's independence raged through their speeches like fire in an open forest; and, ever fanning yet ever controlling the flame, old Copperhead presided till the moment should be ripe for such action as he desired. Back and forward the question was deliberated. Should they there and then pledge themselves to their Northern brothers and commit themselves to this great approaching adventure?

Quietly and with an air of judicial deliberation the Sioux put the question to them. There was something to be lost and something to be gained. But the loss, how insignificant it seemed! And the gain, how immeasurable! And after all success was almost certain. What could prevent it? A few scattered settlers with no arms nor ammunition, with no means of communication, what could they effect? A Government nearly three thousand miles away, with the nearest base of military operations a thousand miles distant, what could they do? The only real difficulty was the North West Mounted Police. But even as the Sioux uttered the words a chill silence fell upon the excited throng. The North West Mounted Police, who for a dozen years had guarded them and cared for them and ruled them without favor and without fear! Five hundred red coats of the Great White Mother across the sea, men who had never been known to turn their backs upon a foe, who laughed at noisy threats and whose simple word their greatest chief was accustomed unhesitatingly to obey! Small wonder that the mere mention of the name of those gallant "Riders of the Plains" should fall like a chill upon their fevered imaginations. The Sioux was conscious of that chill and set himself to counteract it.

"The Police!" he cried with unspeakable scorn, "the Police! They will flee before the Indian braves like leaves before the autumn wind."

"What says he?" cried Cameron eagerly. And Jerry swiftly interpreted.

Without a moment's hesitation Cameron sprang to his feet and, standing in the dim light at the entrance to the cave, with arm outstretched and finger pointed at the speaker, he cried:

"Listen!" With a sudden start every face was turned in his direction. "Listen!" he repeated. "The Sioux dog lies. He speaks with double tongue. Never have the Indians seen a Policeman's back turned in flight."

His unexpected appearance, his voice ringing like the blare of a trumpet through the cavern, his tall figure with the outstretched accusing arm and finger, the sharp challenge of the Sioux's lie with what they all knew to be the truth, produced an effect utterly indescribable. For some brief seconds they gazed upon him stricken into silence as with a physical blow, then with a fierce exclamation the Sioux snatched a rifle from the cave side and quicker than words can tell fired straight at the upright accusing figure. But quicker yet was Jerry's panther−spring. With a backhand he knocked Cameron flat, out of range. Cameron dropped to the floor as if dead.

"What the deuce do you mean, Jerry?" he cried. "You nearly knocked the wind out of me!"

"Beeg fool you!" grunted Jerry fiercely, dragging him back into the tunnel out of the light.

"Let me go, Jerry!" cried Cameron in a rage, struggling to free himself from the grip of the wiry half−breed.

"Mak' still!" hissed Jerry, laying his hand over Cameron's mouth. "Indian mad−−crazy−−tak' scalp sure queeck."

"Let me go, Jerry, you little fool!" said Cameron. "I'll kill you if you don't! I want that Sioux, and, by the eternal God, I am going to have him!" He shook himself free of the half−breed's grasp and sprang to his feet. "I am going to get him!" he repeated.

"No!" cried Jerry again, flinging himself upon him and winding his arms about him. "Wait! Nodder tam'. Indian mad crazy−−keel quick−−no talk−−now."

Up and down the tunnel Cameron dragged him about as a mastiff might a terrier, striving to free himself from those gripping arms. Even as Jerry spoke, through the dim light the figure of an Indian could be seen passing and repassing the entrance to the cave.

"We get him soon," said Jerry in an imploring whisper. "Come back now−−queeck−−beeg hole close by."

With a great effort Cameron regained his self−control.

"By Jove, you are right, Jerry," he said quietly. "We certainly can't take him now. But we must not lose him. Now listen to me quick. This passage opens on to the canyon about fifty yards farther down. Follow, and keep your eye on the Sioux. I shall watch here. Go!"

Without an instant's hesitation Jerry obeyed, well aware that his master had come to himself and again was in command.

Cameron meantime groped to the mouth of the tunnel by which he had entered and peered out into the dim light. Close to his hand stood an Indian in the cavern. Beyond him there was a confused mingling of forms as if in bewilderment. The Council was evidently broken up for the time. The Indians were greatly shaken by the vision that had broken in upon them. That it was no form of flesh and blood was very obvious to them, for the Sioux's bullet had passed through it and spattered against the wall leaving no trail of blood behind it. There was no holding them together, and almost before he was aware of it Cameron saw the cavern empty of every living soul. Quickly but warily he followed, searching each nook as he went, but the dim light of the dying fire showed him nothing but the black walls and gloomy recesses of the great cave. At the farther entrance he found Jerry awaiting him.

"Where are they gone?" he asked.

"Beeg camp close by," replied Jerry. "Beeg camp−−much Indian. Some talk−talk, then go sleep. Chief Onawata he mak' more talk−− talk all night−−then go sleep. We get him morning."

Cameron thought swiftly.

"I think you are right, Jerry. Now you get back quick for the men and come to me here in the morning. We must not spoil the chance of capturing this old devil. He will have these Indians worked up into rebellion before we know where we are."

So saying, Cameron set forward that he might with his own eyes look upon the camp and might the better plan his further course. Upon two things he was firmly resolved. First, that he should break up this council which held such possibilities of danger to the peace of the country. And secondly, and chiefly, he must lay hold of this Sioux plotter, not only because of the possibilities of mischief that lay in him, but because of the injury he had done him and his.

Forward, then, he went and soon came upon the camp, and after observing the lay of it, noting especially the tent in which the Sioux Chief had disposed himself, he groped back to his cave, in a nook of which−−for he was

nearly done out with weariness, and because much yet lay before him−−he laid himself down and slept soundly till the morning.

CHAPTER XIII. IN THE BIG WIGWAM

Long before the return of the half−breed and his men Cameron was astir and to some purpose. A scouting expedition around the Indian camp rewarded him with a significant and useful discovery. In a bluff some distance away he found the skins and heads of four steers, and by examination of the brands upon the skins discovered two of them to be from his own herd.

"All right, my braves," he muttered. "There will be a reckoning for this some day not so far away. Meantime this will help this day's work."

A night's sleep and an hour's quiet consideration had shown him the folly of a straight frontal attack upon the Indians gathered for conspiracy. They were too deeply stirred for anything like the usual brusque manner of the Police to be effective. A slight indiscretion, indeed, might kindle such a conflagration as would sweep the whole country with the devastating horror of an Indian war. He recalled the very grave manner of Inspector Dickson and resolved upon an entirely new plan of action. At all costs he must allay suspicion that the Police were at all anxious about the situation in the North. Further, he must break the influence of the Sioux Chief over these Indians. Lastly, he was determined that this arch−plotter should not escape him again.

The sun was just visible over the lowest of the broken foothills when Jerry and the two constables made their appearance, bringing, with them Cameron's horse. After explaining to them fully his plan and emphasizing the gravity of the situation and the importance of a quiet, cool and resolute demeanor, they set off toward the Indian encampment.

"I have no intention of stirring these chaps up," laid Cameron, "but I am determined to arrest old Copperhead, and at the right moment we must act boldly and promptly. He is too dangerous and much too clever to be allowed his freedom among these Indians of ours at this particular time. Now, then, Jerry and I will ride in looking for cattle and prepared to charge these Indians with cattle−stealing. This will put them on the defensive. Then the arrest will follow. You two will remain within sound of whistle, but failing specific direction let each man act on his own initiative."

Jerry listened with delight. His Chief was himself again. Before the day was over he was to see him in an entirely new role. Nothing in life afforded Jerry such keen delight as a bit of cool daring successfully carried through. Hence with joyous heart he followed Cameron into the Indian camp.

The morning hour is the hour of coolest reason. The fires of emotion and imagination have not yet begun to burn. The reactions from anything like rash action previously committed under the stimulus of a heated imagination are caution and timidity, and upon these reactions Cameron counted when he rode boldly into the Indian camp.

With one swift glance his eye swept the camp and lighted upon the Sioux Chief in the center of a group of younger men, his tall commanding figure and haughty carriage giving him an outstanding distinction over those about him. At his side stood a young Piegan Chief, Eagle Feather by name, whom Cameron knew of old as a restless, talkative Indian, an ambitious aspirant for leadership without the qualities necessary to such a position. Straight to this group Cameron rode.

"Good morning!" he said, saluting the group. "Ah, good morning, Eagle Feather!"

Eagle Feather grunted an indistinct reply.

"Big Hunt, eh? Are you in command of this party, Eagle Feather? No? Who then is?"

The Piegan turned and pointed to a short thick set man standing by another fire, whose large well shaped head and penetrating eye indicated both force and discretion.

"Ah, Running Stream," cried Cameron. "Come over here, Running Stream. I am glad to see you, for I wish to talk to a man of wisdom."

Slowly and with dignified, almost unwilling step Running Stream approached. As he began to move, but not before, Cameron went to meet him.

"I wish to talk with you," said Cameron in a quiet firm tone.

"Huh," grunted Running Stream.

"I have a matter of importance to speak to you about," continued Cameron.

Running Stream's keen glance searched his face somewhat anxiously.

"I find, Running Stream, that your young men are breaking faith with their friends, the Police."

Again the Chief searched Cameron's face with that keen swift glance, but he said not a word, only waited.

"They are breaking the law as well, and I want to tell you they will be punished. Where did they get the meat for these kettles?"

A look of relief gleamed for one brief instant across the Indian's face, not unnoticed, however, by Cameron.

"Why do your young men steal my cattle?"

The Indian evinced indifference.

"Dunno−−deer−−mebbe−−sheep."

"My brother speaks like a child," said Cameron quietly. "Do deer and sheep have steers' heads and hides with brands on? Four heads I find in the bluff. The Commissioner will ask you to explain these hides and heads, and let me tell you, Running Stream, that the thieves will spend some months in jail. They will then have plenty of time to think of their folly and their wickedness."

An ugly glance shot from the Chief's eyes.

"Dunno," he grunted again, then began speaking volubly in the Indian tongue.

"Speak English, Running Stream!" commanded Cameron. "I know you can speak English well enough."

But Running Stream shook his head and continued his speech in Indian, pointing to a bluff near by.

Cameron looked toward Jerry, who interpreted:

"He say young men tak' deer and sheep and bear. He show you skins in bluff."

"Come," said Running Stream, supplementing Jerry's interpretation and making toward the bluff. Cameron followed him and came upon the skins of three jumping deer, of two mountain sheep and of two bear. They turned back again to the fire.

"My young men no take cattle," said the Chief with haughty pride.

"Maybe so," said Cameron, "but some of your party have, Running Stream, and the Commissioner will look to you. You are in command here. He will give you a chance to clear yourself."

The Indian shrugged his shoulders and stood silent.

"My brother is not doing well," continued Cameron. "The Government feed you if you are hungry. The Government protect you if you are wronged."

It was an unfortunate word of Cameron's. A sudden cloud of anger darkened the Indian's face.

"No!" he cried aloud. "My children−−my squaw and my people go hungry−−go cold in winter−−no skin−−no meat."

"My brother knows−−" replied Cameron with patient firmness−−"You translate this, Jerry"−−and Jerry proceeded to translate with eloquence and force−−"the Government never refuse you meat. Last winter your people would have starved but for the Government."

"No," cried the Indian again in harsh quick reply, the rage in his face growing deeper, "my children cry−−Indian cannot sleep−−my white brother's ears are closed. He hear only the wind−−the storm−− he sound sleep. For me no sleep−−my children cry too loud."

"My brother knows," replied Cameron, "that the Government is far away, that it takes a long time for answer to come back to the Indian cry. But the answer came and the Indian received flour and bacon and tea and sugar, and this winter will receive them again. But how can my brother expect the Government to care for his people if the Indians break the law? That is not good. These Indians are bad Indians and the Police will punish the thieves. A thief is a bad man and ought to be punished."

Suddenly a new voice broke in abruptly upon the discourse.

"Who steal the Indian's hunting−ground? Who drive away the buffalo?" The voice rang with sharp defiance. It was the voice of Onawata, the Sioux Chief.

Cameron paid no heed to the ringing voice. He kept his back turned upon the Sioux.

"My brother knows," he continued, addressing himself to Running Stream, "that the Indian's best friend is the Government, and the Police are the Government's ears and eyes and hands and are ready always to help the Indians, to protect them from fraud, to keep away the whisky−peddlers, to be to them as friends and brothers. But

my brother has been listening to a snake that comes from another country and that speaks with a forked tongue. Our Government bought the land by treaty. Running Stream knows this to be no lie, but the truth. Nor did the Government drive away the buffalo from the Indians. The buffalo were driven away by the Sioux from the country of the snake with the forked tongue. My brother remembers that only a few years ago when the people to which this lying snake belongs came over to this country and tried to drive away from their hunting−grounds the Indians of this country, the Police protected the Indians and drove back the hungry thieving Sioux to their own land. And now a little bird has been telling me that this lying snake has been speaking into the ears of our Indian brothers and trying to persuade them to dig up the hatchet against their white brothers, their friends. The Police know all about this and laugh at it. The Police know about the foolish man at Batoche, the traitor Louis Riel. They know he is a liar and a coward. He leads brave men astray and then runs away and leaves them to suffer. This thing he did many years ago." And Cameron proceeded to give a brief sketch of the fantastic and futile rebellion of 1870 and of the ignoble part played by the vain and empty−headed Riel.

The effect of Cameron's words upon the Indians was an amazement even to himself. They forgot their breakfast and gathered close to the speaker, their eager faces and gleaming eyes showing how deeply stirred were their hearts.

Cameron was putting into his story an intensity of emotion and passion that not only surprised himself, but amazed his interpreter. Indeed so amazed was the little half−breed at Cameron's quite unusual display of oratorical power that his own imagination took fire and his own tongue was loosened to such an extent that by voice, look, tone and gesture he poured into his officer's harangue a force and fervor all his own.

"And now," continued Cameron, "this vain and foolish Frenchman seeks again to lead you astray, to lead you into war that will bring ruin to you and to your children; and this lying snake from your ancient enemies, the Sioux, thinking you are foolish children, seeks to make you fight against the great White Mother across the seas. He has been talking like a babbling old man, from whom the years have taken wisdom, when he says that the half−breeds and Indians can drive the white man from these plains. Has he told you how many are the children of the White Mother, how many are the soldiers in her army? Listen to me, and look! Get me many branches from the trees," he commanded sharply to some young Indians standing near.

So completely were the Indians under the thrall of his speech that a dozen of them sprang at once to get branches from the poplar trees near by.

"I will show you," said Cameron, "how many are the White Mother's soldiers. See,"−−he held up both hands and then stuck up a small twig in the sand to indicate the number ten. Ten of these small twigs he set in a row and by a larger stick indicated a hundred, and so on till he had set forth in the sandy soil a diagrammatic representation of a hundred thousand men, the Indians following closely his every movement. "And all these men," he continued, "are armed with rifles and with great big guns that speak like thunder. And these are only a few of the White Mother's soldiers. How many Indians and half−breeds do you think there are with rifles?" He set in a row sticks to represent a thousand men. "See," he cried, "so many." Then he added another similar row. "Perhaps, if all the Indians gathered, so many with rifles. No more. Now look," he said, "no big guns, only a few bullets, a little powder, a little food. Ha, ha!" he laughed contemptuously. "The Sioux snake is a fool. His tongue must be stopped. My Indian brothers here will not listen to him, but there are others whose hearts are like the hearts of little children who may listen to his lying words. The Sioux snake must be caught and put in a cage, and this I do now."

As he uttered the words Cameron sprang for the Sioux, but quicker than his leap the Sioux darted through the crowding Indians who, perceiving Cameron's intent, thrust themselves in his path and enabled the Sioux to get away into the brush behind.

"Head him off, Jerry," yelled Cameron, whistling sharply at the same time for his men, while he darted for his horse and threw himself upon it. The whole camp was in a seething uproar.

"Back!" yelled Cameron, drawing his gun. The Indians fell away from him like waves from a speeding vessel. On the other side of the little bluff he caught sight of a mounted Indian flying toward the mountains and with a cry he started in pursuit. It took only a few minutes for Cameron to discover that he was gaining rapidly upon his man. But the rough rocky country was not far away in front of them, and here was abundant chance for hiding. Closer and closer he drew to his flying enemy−−a hundred yards−−seventy−five yards−−fifty yards only separated them.

"Halt!" cried Cameron, "or I shoot."

But the Indian, throwing himself on the far side of his pony, urged him to his topmost speed.

Cameron steadied himself for a moment, took careful aim and fired. The flying pony stumbled, recovered himself, stumbled again and fell. But even before he reached the earth his rider had leaped free, and, still some thirty yards in advance, sped onward. Half a dozen strides and Cameron's horse was upon him, and, giving him the shoulder, hurled the Indian senseless to earth. In a flash Cameron was at his side, turned him over and discovered not the Sioux Chief but another Indian quite unknown to him.

His rage and disappointment were almost beyond his control. For an instant he held his gun poised as if to strike, but the blow did not fall. His self command came back. He put up his gun, turned quickly away from the prostrate Indian, flung himself upon his horse and set off swiftly for the camp. It was but a mile distant, but in the brief time consumed in reaching it he had made up his mind as to his line of action. Unless his men had captured the Sioux it was almost certain that he had made his escape to the canyon, and once in the canyon there was little hope of his being taken. It was of the first importance that he should not appear too deeply concerned over his failure to take his man.

With this thought in his mind Cameron loped easily into the Indian camp. He found the young braves in a state of feverish excitement. Armed with guns and clubs, they gathered about their Chiefs clamoring to be allowed to wipe out these representatives of the Police who had dared to attempt an arrest of this distinguished guest of theirs. As Cameron appeared the uproar quieted somewhat and the Indians gathered about him, eagerly waiting his next move.

Cameron cantered up to Running Stream and, looking round upon the crowding and excited braves, he said, with a smile of cool indifference:

"The Sioux snake has slid away in the grass. He has missed his breakfast. My brother was about to eat. After he has eaten we will have some quiet talk."

So saying, he swung himself from his saddle, drew the reins over his horse's ears and, throwing himself down beside a camp fire, he pulled out his pipe and proceeded to light it as calmly as if sitting in a council−lodge.

The Indians were completely nonplussed. Nothing appeals more strongly to the Indian than an exhibition of steady nerve. For some moments they stood regarding Cameron with looks of mingled curiosity and admiration with a strong admixture of impatience, for they had thought of being done out of their great powwow with its attendant joys of dance and feast, and if this Policeman should choose to remain with them all day there could certainly be neither dancing nor feasting for them. In the meantime, however, there was nothing for it but to accept the situation created for them. This cool−headed Mounted Policeman had planted himself by their camp−fire. They could not very well drive him from their camp, nor could they converse with him till he was ready.

As they were thus standing about in uncertainty of mind and temper Jerry, the interpreter, came in and, with a grunt of recognition, threw himself down by Cameron beside the fire. After some further hesitation the Indians began to busy themselves once more with their breakfast. In the group about the campfire beside which Cameron had placed himself was the Chief, Running Stream. The presence of the Policeman beside his fire was most embarrassing to the Chief, for no man living has a keener sense of the obligations of hospitality than has the Indian. But the Indian hates to eat in the presence of a white man unless the white man shares his meal. Hence Running Stream approached Cameron with a courteous request that he would eat with them.

"Thanks, Running Stream, I have eaten, but I am sure Jerry here will be glad of some breakfast," said Cameron cordially, who had no desire whatever to dip out of the very doubtful mess in the pot which had been set down on the ground in the midst of the group around the fire. Jerry, however, had no scruples in the matter and, like every Indian and half−breed, was always ready for a meal. Having thus been offered hospitality and having by proxy accepted it, Cameron was in position to discuss with the Chief in a judicial if not friendly spirit the matter he had in hand.

Breakfast over, Cameron offered his tobacco−pouch to the Chief, who, gravely helping himself to a pipeful, passed it on to his neighbor who, having done likewise, passed it in turn to the man next him till the tobacco was finished and the empty pouch returned with due gravity to the owner.

Relations of friendly diplomacy being thus established, the whole party sat smoking in solemn silence until the pipes were smoked out. Then Cameron, knocking the ashes from his pipe, opened up the matter in hand, with Jerry interpreting.

"The Sioux snake," he began quietly, "will be hungry for his breakfast. Honest men do not run away before breakfast."

"Huh," grunted Running Stream, non−committal.

"The Police will get him in due time," continued Cameron in a tone of quiet indifference. "He will cease to trouble our Indian brothers with foolish lies. The prison gates are strong and will soon close upon this stranger with the forked tongue."

Again the Chief grunted, still non−committal.

"It would be a pity if any of your young men should give heed to these silly tales. None of your wise men have done so. In the Sioux country there is frequent war between the soldiers and the Indians because bad men wish to wrong the Indians and the Indians grow angry and fight, but in this country white men are punished who do wrong to Indians. This Running Stream knows to be true."

"Huh," grunted Running Stream acquiescing.

"When Indians do wrong to white men it is just that the Indians should be punished as well. The Police do justly between the white man and the Indian. My brother knows this to be true."

"Huh," again grunted Running Stream with an uneasy look on his face.

"Therefore when young and foolish braves steal and kill cattle they must be punished. They must be taught to keep the law." Here Cameron's voice grew gentle as a child's, but there was in its tone something that made the Chief glance quickly at his face.

"Huh, my young men no steal cattle," he said sullenly.

"No? I am glad to hear that. I believe that is true, and that is why I smoke with my brother beside his camp fire. But some young men in this band have stolen cattle, and I want my brother to find them that I might take them with me to the Commissioner."

"Not know any Indian take cattle," said Running Stream in surly defiance.

"There are four skins and four heads lying in the bluff up yonder, Running Stream. I am going to take those with me to the Commissioner and I am sure he would like to see you about those skins." Cameron's manner continued to be mild but there ran through his speech an undertone of stern resolution that made the Indian squirm a bit.

"Not know any Indian take cattle," repeated Running Stream, but with less defiance.

"Then it would be well for my brother to find out the thieves, for," and here Cameron paused and looked the Chief steadily in the face for a few moments, "for we are to take them back with us or we will ask the Chief to come and explain to the Commissioner why he does not know what his young men are doing."

"No Blackfeet Indian take cattle," said the Chief once more.

"Good," said Cameron. "Then it must be the Bloods, or the Piegans or the Stonies. We will call their Chiefs together."

There was no hurry in Cameron's manner. He had determined to spend the day if necessary in running down these thieves. At his suggestion Running Stream called together the Chiefs of the various bands of Indians represented. From his supplies Cameron drew forth some more tobacco and, passing it round the circle of Chiefs, calmly waited until all had smoked their pipes out, after which he proceeded to lay the case before them.

"My brothers are not thieves. The Police believe them to be honest men, but unfortunately among them there have crept in some who are not honest. In the bluff yonder are four hides and four heads of steers, two of them from my own herd. Some bad Indians have stolen and killed these steers and they are here in this camp to−day, and I am going to take them with me to the Commissioner. Running Stream is a great Chief and speaks no lies and he tells me that none of his young men have taken these cattle. Will the Chief of the Stonies, the Chief of the Bloods, the Chief of the Piegans say the same for their young men?"

"The Stonies take no cattle," answered an Indian whom Cameron recognized as the leading representative of that tribe present.

"How many Stonies here?"

The Indian held up six fingers.

"Ha, only six. What about the Bloods and the Piegans?" demanded Cameron. "It is not for me," he continued, when there was no reply, "to discover the cattle−thieves. It is for the Big Chief of this camp, it is for you, Running Stream, and when you have found the thieves I shall arrest them and bring them to the Commissioner, for I will

not return without them. Meantime I go to bring here the skins."

So saying, Cameron rode leisurely away, leaving Jerry to keep an eye upon the camp. For more than an hour they talked among themselves, but without result. Finally they came to Jerry, who, during his years with the Police, had to a singular degree gained the confidence of the Indians. But Jerry gave them little help. There had been much stealing of cattle by some of the tribes, not by all. The Police had been patient, but they had become weary. They had their suspicions as to the thieves.

Eagle Feather was anxious to know what Indians were suspected.

"Not the Stonies and not the Blackfeet," replied Jerry quietly. It was a pity, he continued, that innocent men should suffer for the guilty. He knew Running Stream was no thief, but Running Stream must find out the thieves in the band under his control. How would Running Stream like to have the great Chief of the Blackfeet, Crowfoot, know that he could not control the young men under his command and did not know what they were doing?

This suggestion of Jerry had a mighty effect upon the Blackfeet Chief, for old Crowfoot was indeed a great Chief and a mighty power with his band, and to fall into disfavor with him would be a serious matter for any junior Chief in the tribe.

Again they withdrew for further discussion and soon it became evident that Jerry's cunning suggestions had sown seeds of discord among them. The dispute waxed hot and fierce, not as to the guilty parties, who were apparently acknowledged to be the Piegans, but as to the course to be pursued. Running Stream had no intention that his people and himself should become involved in the consequences of the crimes of other tribes whom the Blackfeet counted their inferiors. Eagle Feather and his Piegans must bear the consequences of their own misdeeds. On the other hand Eagle Feather pleaded hard that they should stand together in this matter, that the guilty parties could not be disclosed. The Police could not punish them all, and all the more necessary was it that they should hold together because of the larger enterprise into which they were about to enter.

The absence of the Sioux Chief Onawata, however, weakened the bond of unity which he more than any other had created and damped the ardor of the less eager of the conspirators. It was likewise a serious blow to their hopes of success that the Police knew all their plans. Running Stream finally gave forth his decision, which was that the thieves should be given up, and that they all should join in a humble petition to the Police for leniency, pleading the necessity of hunger on their hunting−trip, and, as for the larger enterprise, that they should apparently abandon it until suspicion had been allayed and until the plans of their brothers in the North were more nearly matured. The time for striking had not yet come.

In this decision all but the Piegans agreed. In vain Eagle Feather contended that they should stand together and defy the Police to prove any of them guilty. In vain he sought to point out that if in this crisis they surrendered the Piegans to the Police never again could they count upon the Piegans to support them in any enterprise. But Running Stream and the others were resolved. The thieves must be given up.

At the very moment in which this decision had been reached Cameron rode in, carrying with him the incriminating hides.

"Here, Jerry," he said. "You take charge of these and bring them to the Commissioner."

"All right," said Jerry, taking the hides from Cameron's horse.

"What is up, Jerry?" said Cameron in a low voice as the half−breed was untying the bundle.

"Beeg row," whispered Jerry. "Eagle Feather t'ief."

"All right, keep close."

Quietly Cameron walked over to the group of excited Indians. As he approached they opened their circle to receive him.

"My brother has discovered the thief," he said. "And after all a thief is easily found among honest men."

Slowly and deliberately his eye traveled round the circle of faces, keenly scrutinizing each in turn. When he came to Eagle Feather he paused, gazed fixedly at him, took a single step in his direction, and, suddenly leveling an accusing finger at him, cried in a loud voice:

"I have found him. This man is the thief."

Slowly he walked up to the Indian, who remained stoically motionless, laid his hand upon his wrist and said in a clear ringing voice heard over the encampment:

"Eagle Feather, I arrest you in the name of the Queen!" And before another word could be spoken or a movement made Eagle Feather stood handcuffed, a prisoner.

CHAPTER XIV. "GOOD MAN−−GOOD SQUAW"

"That boy is worse, Mrs. Cameron, decidedly worse, and I wash my hands of all responsibility." The old army surgeon was clearly annoyed.

Mandy sat silent, weary with watching and weary with the conflict that had gone on intermittently during the past three days. The doctor was determined to have the gangrenous foot off. That was the simplest solution of the problem before him and the foot would have come off days ago if he had had his way. But the Indian boy had vehemently opposed this proposal. "One foot−−me go die," was his ultimatum, and through all the fever and delirium this was his continuous refrain. In this determination his nurse supported him, for she could not bring herself to the conviction that amputation was absolutely necessary, and, besides, of all the melancholy and useless driftwood that drives hither and thither with the ebb and flow of human life, she could imagine none more melancholy and more useless than an Indian crippled of a foot. Hence she supported the boy in his ultimatum, "One foot−−me go die."

"That foot ought to come off," repeated the doctor, beginning the controversy anew. "Otherwise the boy will die."

"But, doctor," said Mandy wearily, "just think how pitiable, how helpless that boy will be. Death is better. And, besides, I have not quite given up hope that−−"

The doctor snorted his contempt for her opinion; and only his respect for her as Cameron's wife and for the truly extraordinary powers and gifts in her profession which she had displayed during the past three days held back the wrathful words that were at his lips. It was late in the afternoon and the doctor had given many hours to this case, riding back and forward from the fort every day, but all this he would not have grudged could he have had his way with his patient.

"Well, I have done my best," he said, "and now I must go back to my work."

"I know, doctor, I know," pleaded Mandy. "You have been most kind and I thank you from my heart." She rose and offered him her hand. "Don't think me too awfully obstinate, and please forgive me if you do."

The doctor took the outstretched hand grudgingly.

"Obstinate!" he exclaimed. "Of all the obstinate creatures−−"

"Oh, I am afraid I am. But I don't want to be unreasonable. You see, the boy is so splendidly plucky and such a fine chap."

The doctor grunted.

"He is a fine chap, doctor, and I can't bear to have him crippled, and−−" She paused abruptly, her lips beginning to quiver. She was near the limit of her endurance.

"You would rather have him dead, eh? All right, if that suits you better it makes no difference to me," said the doctor gruffly, picking up his bag. "Good−by."

"Doctor, you will come back again to−morrow?"

"To−morrow? Why should I come back to−morrow? I can do no more−− unless you agree to amputation. There is no use coming back to− morrow. I have other cases waiting on me. I can't give all my time to this Indian." The contempt in the doctor's voice for a mere Indian stung her like a whip. On Mandy's cheek, pale with her long vigil, a red flush appeared and in her eye a light that would have warned the doctor had he known her better.

"Is not this Indian a human being?" she asked quietly.

But the doctor was very impatient and anxious to be gone.

"A human being? Yes, of course, a human being, but there are human beings and human beings. But if you mean an Indian is as good as a white man, frankly I don't agree with you."

"You have given a great deal of your time, doctor," said Mandy with quiet deliberation, "and I am most grateful. I can ask no more for THIS INDIAN. I only regret that I have been forced to ask so much of your time. Good−by." There was a ring as of steel in her voice. The doctor became at once apologetic.

"What−−eh?−−I beg your pardon," he stammered.

"It is not at all necessary. Thank you again for all your service. Good−by."

"Eh? I don't quite−−"

"Good−by, doctor, and again thank you."

"Well, you know quite well I can't do any more," said the old doctor crossly.

"No, I don't think you can."

"Eh−−what? Well, good−by." And awkwardly the doctor walked away, rather uncertain as to her meaning but with a feeling that he had been dismissed.

"Most impossible person!" he muttered as he left the tent door, indignant with himself that no fitting reply would come to his lips. And not until he had mounted his horse and taken the trail was he able to give full and adequate expression to his feelings, and even then it took him some considerable time to do full justice to himself and to the situation.

Meantime the nurse had turned back to her watch, weary and despairing. In a way that she could not herself understand the Indian boy had awakened her interest and even her affection. His fine stoical courage, his warm and impulsive gratitude excited her admiration and touched her heart. Again arose to her lips a cry that had been like a refrain in her heart for the past three days, "Oh, if only Dr. Martin were here!" Her experience and training under Dr. Martin had made it only too apparent that the old army surgeon was archaic in his practice and method.

"I know something could be done!" she said aloud, as she bent over her patient. "If only Dr. Martin were here! Poor boy! Oh! I wish he were here!"

As if in answer to her cry there was outside a sound of galloping horses. She ran to the tent door and before her astonished eyes there drew up at her tent Dr. Martin, her sister−in−law and the ever−faithful Smith.

"Oh, oh, Dr. Martin!" she cried, running to him with both hands outstretched, and could say no more.

"Hello, what's up? Say, what the deuce have they been doing to you?" The doctor was quite wrathful.

"Oh, I am glad, that's all."

"Glad? Well, you show your joy in a mighty queer way."

"She's done out, Doctor," cried Moira, springing from her horse and running to her sister−in−law. "I ought to have come before to relieve her," she continued penitently, with her arms round Mandy, "but I knew so little, and besides I thought the doctor was here."

"He was here," said Mandy, recovering herself. "He has just gone, and oh, I am glad. He wanted to cut his foot off."

"Cut his foot off? Whose foot off? His own?" said Dr. Martin.

"But I am glad! How did you get here in all the world?"

"Your telegram came when I was away," said the doctor. "I did not get it for a day, then I came at once."

"My telegram?"

"Yes, your telegram. I have it here−−no, I've left it somewhere−− but I certainly got a telegram from you."

"From me? I never sent a telegram."

"I beg your pardon, Mrs. Cameron. I understood you to desire Dr. Martin's presence, and−−I ventured to send a wire in your name. I hope you will forgive the liberty," said Smith, red to his hair− roots and looking over his horse's neck with a most apologetic air.

"Forgive the liberty?" cried Mandy. "Why, bless you, Mr. Smith, you are my guardian angel," running to him and shaking him warmly by the hand.

"And he brought, us here, too," cried Moira. "He has been awfully good to me these days. I do not know what I should have done without him."

Meantime Smith was standing first on one foot and then on the other in a most unhappy state of mind.

"Guess I will be going back," he said in an agony of awkwardness and confusion. "It is getting kind of late."

"What? Going right away?" exclaimed Mandy.

"I've got some chores to look after, and I guess none of you are coming back now anyway."

"Well, hold on a bit," said the doctor. "We'll see what's doing inside. Let's get the lie of things."

"Guess you don't need me any more," continued Smith. "Good−by." And he climbed on to his horse. "I have got to get back. So long."

No one appeared to have any good reason why Smith should remain, and so he rode away.

"Good−by, Mr. Smith," called out Mandy impulsively. "You have really saved my life, I assure you. I was in utter despair."

"Good−by, Mr. Smith," cried Moira, waving her hand with a bright smile. "You have saved me too from dying many a time these three days."

With an awkward wave Smith answered these farewells and rode down the trail.

"He is really a fine fellow," said Mandy. "Always doing something for people."

"That is just it," cried Moira. "He has spent his whole time these three days doing things for me."

"Ah, no wonder," said the doctor. "A most useful chap. But what's the trouble here? Let's get at the business."

Mandy gave him a detailed history of the case, the doctor meanwhile making an examination of the patient's general condition.

"And the doctor would have his foot off, but I would not stand for that," cried Mandy indignantly as she closed her history.

"H'm! Looks bad enough to come off, I should say. I wish I had been here a couple of days ago. It may have to come off all right."

"Oh, Dr. Martin!"

"But not just to−night."

"Oh, I knew it."

"Not to−night," I said. "I don't know what the outcome may be, but it looks as bad as it well can."

"Oh, that's all right," cried Mandy cheerfully. Her burden of responsibility was lifted. Her care was gone. "I knew it would be all right."

"Well, whether it will or not I cannot say. But one thing I do know, you've got to trot off to sleep. Show me the ropes and then off you go. Who runs this camp anyway?"

"Oh, the Chief does, Chief Trotting Wolf. I will call him," cried Mandy. "He has been very good to me. I will get him." And she ran from the tent to find the Chief.

"Isn't she wonderful?" said Moira.

"Wonderful? I should say so. But she is played right out I can see," replied the doctor. "I must get comfortable quarters for you both."

"But do you not want some one?" said Moira. "Do you not want me?"

"Do I want you?" echoed the doctor, looking at her as she stood in the glow of the westering sun shining through the canvas tent. "Do I want you?" he repeated with deliberate emphasis. "Well, you can just bet that is just what I do want."

A slight flush appeared on the girl's face.

"I mean," she said hurriedly, "cannot I be of some help?"

"Most certainly, most certainly," said the doctor, noting the flush. "Your help will be invaluable after a bit. But first you must get Mrs. Cameron to sleep. She has been on this job, I understand, for three days. She is quite played out. And you, too, need sleep."

"Oh, I am quite fit. I do not need sleep. I am quite ready to take my sister−in−law's place, that is, as far as I can. And you will surely need some one−−to help you I mean." The doctor's eyes were upon her face. Under his gaze her voice faltered. The glow of the sunset through the tent walls illumined her face with a wonderful radiance.

"Miss Moira," said the doctor with abrupt vehemence, "I wish I had the nerve to tell you just how much−−"

"Hush!" cried the girl, her glowing face suddenly pale, "they are coming."

"Here is the Chief, Dr. Martin," cried Mandy, ushering in that stately individual. The doctor saluted the Chief in due form and said:

"Could we have another tent, Chief, for these ladies? Just beside this tent here, so that they can have a little sleep."

The Chief grunted a doubtful acquiescence, but in due time a tent very much dilapidated was pitched upon the clean dry ground close beside that in which the sick boy lay. While this was being done the doctor was making a further examination of his patient. With admiring eyes, Moira followed the swift movements of his deft fingers. There was no hesitation. There was no fumbling. There was the sure indication of accurate knowledge, the obvious self− confidence of experience in everything he did. Even to her untutored eyes the doctor seemed to be

walking with a very firm tread.

At length, after an hour's work, he turned to Mandy who was assisting him and said:

"Now you can both go to sleep. I shall need you no more till morning. I shall keep an eye on him. Off you go. Good−night."

"You will be sure to call me if I can be of service," said Mandy.

"I shall do no such thing. I expect you to sleep. I shall look after this end of the job."

"He is very sure of himself, is he not?" said Moira in a low tone to her sister−in−law as they passed out of the tent.

"He has a right to be," said Mandy proudly. "He knows his work, and now I feel as if I can sleep in peace. What a blessed thing sleep is," she added, as, without undressing, she tumbled on to the couch prepared for her.

"Is Dr. Martin very clever? I mean, is he an educated man?"

"What?" cried Mandy. "Dr. Martin what?"

"Is he very clever? Is he−−an educated man?"

"Eh, what?" she repeated, yawning desperately. "Oh, I was asleep."

"Is he clever?"

"Clever? Well, rather−−" Her voice was trailing off again into slumber.

"And is he an educated man?"

"Educated? Knows his work if that's what you mean. Oh−h−−but I'm sleepy."

"Is he a gentleman?"

"Eh? What?" Mandy sat up straight. "A gentleman? I should say so! That is, he is a man all through right to his toe−tips. And gentle−−more gentle than any woman I ever saw. Will that do? Good−night." And before Moira could make reply she was sound asleep.

Before the night was over the opportunity was given the doctor to prove his manhood, and in a truly spectacular manner. For shortly after midnight Moira found herself sitting bolt upright, wide−awake and clutching her sister−in−law in wild terror. Outside their tent the night was hideous with discordant noises, yells, whoops, cries, mingled with the beating of tom−toms. Terrified and trembling, the two girls sprang to the door, and, lifting the flap, peered out. It was the party of braves returning from the great powwow so rudely interrupted by Cameron. They were returning in an evil mood, too, for they were enraged at the arrest of Eagle Feather and three accomplices in his crime, disappointed in the interruption of their sun dance and its attendant joys of feast and song, and furious at what appeared to them to be the overthrow of the great adventure for which they had been preparing and planning for the past two months. This was indeed the chief cause of their rage, for it seemed as if all further attempts at united effort among the Western tribes had been frustrated by the discovery of their plans, by the flight of their leader, and by the treachery of the Blackfeet Chief, Running Stream, in surrendering their fellow− tribesmen to the Police. To them that treachery rendered impossible any coalition between the Piegans and the Blackfeet. Furthermore, before their powwow had been broken up there had been distributed among them a few bottles of whisky provided beforehand by the astute Sioux as a stimulus to their enthusiasm against a moment of crisis when such stimulus should be necessary. These bottles, in the absence of their great leader, were distributed among the tribes by Running Stream as a peace−offering, but for obvious reason not until the moment came for their parting from each other.

Filled with rage and disappointment, and maddened with the bad whisky they had taken, they poured into the encampment with wild shouting accompanied by the discharge of guns and the beating of drums. In terror the girls clung to each other, gazing out upon the horrid scene.

"Whatever is this, Mandy?" cried Moira.

But her sister−in−law could give her little explanation. The moonlight, glowing bright as day, revealed a truly terrifying spectacle. A band of Indians, almost naked and hideously painted, were leaping, shouting, beating drums and firing guns. Out from the tents poured the rest of the band to meet them, eagerly inquiring into the cause of their excitement. Soon fires were lighted and kettles put on, for the Indian's happiness is never complete unless associated with feasting, and the whole band prepared itself for a time of revelry.

As the girls stood peering out upon this terrible scene they became aware of the doctor standing at their side.

"Say, they seem to be cutting up rather rough, don't they?" he said coolly. "I think as a precautionary measure you had better step over into the other tent."

Hastily gathering their belongings, they ran across with the doctor to his tent, from which they continued to gaze upon the weird spectacle before them.

About the largest fire in the center of the camp the crowd gathered, Chief Trotting Wolf in the midst, and were harangued by one of the returning braves who was evidently reciting the story of their experiences and whose tale was received with the deepest interest and was punctuated by mad cries and whoops. The one English word that could be heard was the word "Police," and it needed no interpreter to explain to the watchers that the chief object of fury to the crowding, gesticulating Indians about the fire was the Policeman who had been the cause of their humiliation and disappointment. In a pause of the uproar a loud exclamation from an Indian arrested the attention of the band. Once more he uttered his exclamation and pointed to the tent lately occupied by the ladies. Quickly the whole band about the fire appeared to bunch together preparatory to rush in the direction indicated, but before they could spring forward Trotting Wolf, speaking rapidly and with violent gesticulation, stood in their path. But his voice was unheeded. He was thrust aside and the whole band came rushing madly toward the tent lately occupied by the ladies.

"Get back from the door," said the doctor, speaking rapidly. "These chaps seem to be somewhat excited. I wish I had my gun," he continued, looking about the tent for a weapon of some sort. "This will do," he said, picking up a stout poplar pole that had been used for driving the tent pegs. "Stay inside here. Don't move till I tell you."

"But they will kill you," cried Moira, laying her hand upon his arm. "You must not go out."

"Nonsense!" said the doctor almost roughly. "Kill me? Not much. I'll knock some of their blocks off first." So saying, he lifted the flap of the tent and passed out just as the rush of maddened Indians came.

Upon the ladies' tent they fell, kicked the tent poles down, and, seizing the canvas ripped it clear from its pegs. Some moments they spent searching the empty bed, then turned with renewed cries toward the other tent before which stood the doctor, waiting, grim, silent, savage. For a single moment they paused, arrested by the silent figure, then with a whoop a drink−maddened brave sprang toward the tent, his rifle clubbed to strike. Before he could deliver his blow the doctor, stepping swiftly to one side, swung his poplar club hard upon the uplifted arms, sent the rifle crashing to the ground and with a backward swing caught the astonished brave on the exposed head and dropped him to the earth as if dead.

"Take that, you dog!" he cried savagely. "Come on, who's next?" he shouted, swinging his club as a player might a baseball bat.

Before the next rush, however, help came in an unexpected form. The tent flap was pushed back and at the doctor's side stood an apparition that checked the Indians' advance and stilled their cries. It was the Indian boy, clad in a white night robe of Mandy's providing, his rifle in his hand, his face ghastly in the moonlight and his eyes burning like flames of light. One cry he uttered, weird, fierce, unearthly, but it seemed to pierce like a knife through the stillness that had fallen. Awed, sobered, paralyzed, the Indians stood motionless. Then from their ranks ran Chief Trotting Wolf, picked up the rifle of the Indian who still lay insensible on the ground, and took his place beside the boy.

A few words he spoke in a voice that rang out fiercely imperious. Still the Indians stood motionless. Again the Chief spoke in short, sharp words of command, and, as they still hesitated, took one swift stride toward the man that stood nearest, swinging his rifle over his head. Forward sprang the doctor to his side, his poplar club likewise swung up to strike. Back fell the Indians a pace or two, the Chief following them with a torrential flow of vehement invective. Slowly, sullenly the crowd gave back, cowed but still wrathful, and beginning to mutter in angry undertones. Once more the tent flap was pushed aside and there issued two figures who ran to the side of the Indian boy, now swaying weakly upon his rifle.

"My poor boy!" cried Mandy, throwing her arms round about him, and, steadying him as he let his rifle fall, let him sink slowly to the ground.

"You cowards!" cried Moira, seizing the rifle that the boy had dropped and springing to the doctor's side. "Look at what you have done!" She turned and pointed indignantly to the swooning boy.

With an exclamation of wrath the doctor stepped back to Mandy's aid, forgetful of the threatening Indians and mindful only of his patient. Quickly he sprang into the tent, returning with a stimulating remedy, bent over the boy and worked with him till he came back again to life.

Once more the Chief, who with the Indians had been gazing upon this scene, turned and spoke to his band,

this time in tones of quiet dignity, pointing to the little group behind him. Silent and subdued the Indians listened, their quick impulses like those of children stirred to sympathy for the lad and for those who would aid him. Gradually the crowd drew off, separating into groups and gathering about the various fires. For the time the danger was over.

Between them Dr. Martin and the Chief carried the boy into the tent and laid him on his bed.

"What sort of beasts have you got out there anyway?" said the doctor, facing the Chief abruptly.

"Him drink bad whisky," answered the Chief, tipping up his hand. "Him crazee," touching his head with his forefinger.

"Crazy! Well, I should say. What they want is a few ounces of lead."

The Chief made no reply, but stood with his eyes turned admiringly upon Moira's face.

"Squaw−−him good," he said, pointing to the girl. "No 'fraid−−much brave−−good."

"You are right enough there, Chief," replied the doctor heartily.

"Him you squaw?" inquired the Chief, pointing to Moira.

"Well−−eh? No, not exactly," replied the doctor, much confused, "that is−−not yet I mean−−"

"Huh! Him good squaw. Him good man," replied the Chief, pointing first to Moira, then to the doctor.

Moira hurried to the tent door.

"They are all gone," she exclaimed. "Thank God! How awful they are!"

"Huh!" replied the Chief, moving out past her. "Him drink, him crazee−−no drink, no crazee." At the door he paused, and, looking back, said once more with increased emphasis, "Huh! Him good squaw," and finally disappeared.

"By Jove!" said the doctor with a delighted chuckle. "The old boy is a man of some discernment I can see. But the kid and you saved the day, Miss Moira."

"Oh, what nonsense you are talking. It was truly awful, and how splendidly you−−you−−"

"Well, I caught him rather a neat one, I confess. I wonder if the brute is sleeping yet. But you did the trick finally, Miss Moira."

"Huh," grunted Mandy derisively, "Good man−−good squaw, eh?"

CHAPTER XV. THE OUTLAW

The bitter weather following an autumn of unusual mildness had set in with the New Year and had continued without a break for fifteen days. A heavy fall of snow with a blizzard blowing sixty miles an hour had made the trails almost impassable, indeed quite so to any but to those bent on desperate business or to Her Majesty's North West Mounted Police. To these gallant riders all trails stood open at all seasons of the year, no matter what snow might fall or blizzard blow, so long as duty called them forth.

The trail from the fort to the Big Horn Ranch, however, was so wind−swept that the snow was blown away, which made the going fairly easy, and the Superintendent, Inspector Dickson and Jerry trotted along freely enough in the face of a keen southwester that cut to the bone. It was surely some desperate business indeed that sent them out into the face of that cutting wind which made even these hardy riders, burned hard and dry by scorching suns and biting blizzards, wince and shelter their faces with their gauntleted hands.

"Deuce of a wind, this!" said the Superintendent.

"It is the raw southwester that gets to the bone," replied Inspector Dickson. "This will blow up a chinook before night."

"I wonder if he has got into shelter," said the Superintendent. "This has been an unusually hard fortnight, and I am afraid he went rather light."

"Oh, he's sure to be all right," replied the Inspector quickly. "He was riding, but he took his snowshoes with him for timber work. He's hardly the man to get caught and he won't quit easily."

"No, he won't quit, but there are times when human endurance fails. Not that I fear anything like that for Cameron," added the Superintendent hastily.

"Oh, he's not the man to fall down," replied the Inspector. "He goes the limit, but he keeps his head. He's no reckless fool."

"Well, you ought to know him," said the Superintendent. "You have been through some things together, but this last week has been about the worst that I have known. This fortnight will be remembered in the annals of this country. And it came so unexpectedly. What do you think about it, Jerry?" continued the Superintendent, turning to the half−breed.

"He good man−−cold ver' bad−−ver' long. S'pose catch heem on plains−−ver' bad."

The Inspector touched his horse to a canter. The vision that floated before his mind's eye while the half−breed was speaking he hated to contemplate.

"He's all right. He has come through too many tight places to fail here," said the Inspector in a tone almost of defiance, and refused to talk further upon the subject. But he kept urging the pace till they drew up at the stables of the Big Horn Ranch.

The Inspector's first glance upon opening the stable door swept the stall where Ginger was wont to conduct his melancholy ruminations. It gave him a start to see the stall empty.

"Hello, Smith!" he cried as that individual appeared with a bundle of hay from the stack in the yard outside. "Boss home?"

"Has Mr. Cameron returned?" inquired the Superintendent in the same breath, and in spite of himself a note of anxiety had crept into his voice. The three men stood waiting, their tense attitude expressing the anxiety they would not put into words. The deliberate Smith, who had transferred his services from old Thatcher to Cameron and who had taken the ranch and all persons and things belonging to it into his immediate charge, disposed of his bundle in a stall, and then facing them said slowly:

"Guess he's all right."

"Is he home?" asked the Inspector sharply.

"Oh, he's home all right. Gone to bed, I think," answered Smith with maddening calmness.

The Inspector cursed him between his teeth and turned away from the others till his eyes should be clear again.

"We will just look in on Mrs. Cameron for a few minutes," said the Superintendent. "We won't disturb him."

Leaving Jerry to put up their horses, they went into the ranch− house and found the ladies in a state of suppressed excitement. Mandy met them at the door with an eager welcome, holding out to them trembling hands.

"Oh, I am so glad you have come!" she cried. "It was all I could do to hold him back from going to you even as he was. He was quite set on going and only lay down on promise that I should wake him in an hour. Sit down here by the fire. An hour, mind you," she continued, talking rapidly and under obvious excitement, "and him so blind and exhausted that−−" She paused abruptly, unable to command her voice.

"He ought to sleep twelve hours straight," said the Superintendent with emphasis, "and twenty−four would be better, with suitable breaks for refreshment," he added in a lighter tone, glancing at Mandy's face.

"Yes, indeed," she replied, "for he has had little enough to eat the last three days. And that reminds me−−" she hurried to the pantry and returned with the teapot−−"you must be cold, Superintendent. Ah, this terrible cold! A hot cup of tea will be just the thing. It will take only five minutes−−and it is better than punch, though perhaps you men do not think so." She laughed somewhat wildly.

"Why, Mrs. Cameron," said the Superintendent in a shocked, bantering voice, "how can you imagine we should be guilty of such heresy−−in this prohibition country, too?"

"Oh, I know you men," replied Mandy. "We keep some Scotch in the house−−beside the laudanum. Some people can't take tea, you know," she added with an uncertain smile, struggling to regain control of herself. "But all the same, I am a nurse, and I know that after exposure tea is better."

"Ah, well," replied the Superintendent, "I bow to your experience," making a brave attempt to meet her mood and declining to note her unusual excitement.

In the specified five minutes the tea was ready.

"I could quite accept your tea−drinking theory, Mrs. Cameron," said Inspector Dickson, "if−−if, mark you−−I should always get such tea as this. But I don't believe Jerry here would agree."

Jerry, who had just entered, stood waiting explanation.

"Mrs. Cameron has just been upholding the virtue of a good cup of tea, Jerry, over a hot Scotch after a cold ride. Now what's your unbiased opinion?"

A slight grin wrinkled the cracks in Jerry's leather−skin face.

"Hot whisky−−good for fun−−for cold no good. Whisky good for sleep−−for long trail no good."

"Thank you, Jerry," cried Mandy enthusiastically.

"Oh, that's all right, Jerry," said the Inspector, joining in the general laugh that followed, "but I don't think Miss Moira here would agree with you in regard to the merits of her national beverage."

"Oh, I am not so sure," cried the young lady, entering into the mood of the others. "Of course, I am Scotch and naturally stand up for my country and for its customs, but, to be strictly honest, I remember hearing my brother say that Scotch was bad training for football."

"Good again!" cried Mandy. "You see, when anything serious is on, the wisest people cut out the Scotch, as the boys say."

"You are quite right, Mrs. Cameron," said the Superintendent, becoming grave. "On the long trail and in the bitter cold we drop the Scotch and bank on tea. As for whisky, the Lord knows it gives the Police enough trouble in this country. If it were not for the whisky half our work would be cut out. But tell me, how is Mr. Cameron?" he added, as he handed back his cup for another supply of tea.

"Done up, or more nearly done up than ever I have seen him, or than I ever want to see him again." Mandy paused abruptly, handed him his cup of tea, passed into the pantry and for some moments did not appear again.

"Oh, it was terrible to see him," said Moira, clasping her hands and speaking in an eager, excited voice. "He came, poor boy, stumbling toward the door. He had to leave his horse, you know, some miles away. Through the window we saw him coming along−−and we did not know him−−he staggered as if−−as if−−actually as if he were drunk." Her laugh was almost hysterical. "And he could not find the latch−−and when we opened the door his eyes were−−oh!−−so terrible!−−wild−−and bloodshot−−and blind! Oh, I cannot tell you about it!" she exclaimed, her voice breaking and her tears falling fast. "And he could hardly speak to us. We had to cut off his snow−shoes−−and his gauntlets and his clothes were like iron. He could not sit down−−he just−−just−−lay on the floor−−till−−my sister−−" Here the girl's sobs interrupted her story.

"Great Heavens!" cried the Superintendent. "What a mercy he reached home!"

The Inspector had risen and came round to Moira's side.

"Don't try to tell me any more," he said in a husky voice, patting her gently on the shoulder. "He is here with us, safe, poor chap. My God!" he cried in an undertone, "what he must have gone through!"

At this point Mandy returned and took her place again quietly by the fire.

"It was this sudden spell of cold that nearly killed him," she said in a quiet voice. "He was not fully prepared for it, and it caught him at the end of his trip, too, when he was nearly played out. You see, he was five weeks away and he had only expected to be three."

"Yes, I know, Mrs. Cameron," said the Inspector.

"An unexpected emergency seems to have arisen."

"I don't know what it was," replied Mandy. "He could tell me little, but he was determined to go on to the fort."

"I know something about his plans," said the Inspector. "He had proposed a tour of the reserves, beginning with the Piegans and ending with the Bloods."

"And we know something of his work, too, Mrs. Cameron," said the Superintendent. "Superintendent Strong has sent us a very fine report indeed of your husband's work. We do not talk about these things, you know, in the Police, but we can appreciate them all the same. Superintendent Strong's letter is one you would like to keep. I shall send it to you. Knowing Superintendent Strong as I do−−"

"I know him too," said Mandy with a little laugh.

"Well, then, you will be able to appreciate all the more any word of commendation he would utter. He practically attributes the present state of quiet and the apparent collapse of this conspiracy business to your husband's efforts. This, of course, is no compensation for his sufferings or yours, but I think it right that you should know the facts." The Superintendent had risen to his feet and had delivered his little speech in his very finest manner.

"Thank you," said Mandy simply.

"We had expected him back a week ago," said the Inspector. "We know he must have had some serious cause for delay."

"I do not know about that," replied Mandy, "but I do know he was most anxious to go on to the fort. He had some information to give, he said, which was of the first importance. And I am glad you are here. He will be saved that trip, which would really be dangerous in his present condition. And I don't believe I could have stopped him, but I should have gone with him. His hour will soon be up."

"Don't think of waking him," said the Superintendent. "We can wait two hours, or three hours, or more if necessary. Let him sleep."

"He would waken himself if he were not so fearfully done up. He has a trick of waking at any hour he sets," said Mandy.

A few minutes later Cameron justified her remarks by appearing from the inner room. The men, accustomed as they were to the ravages of the winter trail upon their comrades, started to their feet in horror. Blindly Cameron felt his way to them, shading his blood− shot eyes from the light. His face was blistered and peeled as if he had come through a fire, his lips swollen and distorted, his hands trembling and showing on every finger the marks of frost bite, and his feet dragging as he shuffled across the floor.

"My dear fellow, my dear fellow," cried the Inspector, springing up to meet him and grasping him by both arms to lead him to a chair. "You ran it too close that time. Here is the Superintendent to lecture you. Sit down, old man, sit down right here." The Inspector deposited him in the chair, and, striding hurriedly to the window, stood there looking out upon the bleak winter snow.

"Hello, Cameron," said the Superintendent, shaking him by the hand with hearty cheerfulness. "Glad, awfully glad to see you. Fine bit of work, very fine bit of work. Very complimentary report about you."

"I don't know what you refer to, sir," said Cameron, speaking thickly, "but I am glad you are here, for I have an important communication to make."

"Oh, that's all right," said the Superintendent. "Don't worry about that. And take your own time. First of all, how are you feeling? Snow−blind, I see," he continued, critically examining him, "and generally used up."

"Rather knocked up," replied Cameron, his tongue refusing to move with its accustomed ease. "But shall be fit in a day or two. Beastly sleepy, but cannot sleep somehow. Shall feel better when my mind is at rest. I cannot

report fully just now."

"Oh, let the report rest. We know something already."

"How is that?"

"Superintendent Strong has sent us in a report, and a very creditable report, too."

"Oh," replied Cameron indifferently. "Well, the thing I want to say is that though all looks quiet−−there is less horse stealing this month, and less moving about from the reserves−−yet I believe a serious outbreak is impending."

The Inspector, who had come around and taken a seat beside him, touched his knee at this point with an admonishing pressure.

"Eh?" said Cameron, turning toward him. "Oh, my people here know. You need not have any fear about them." A little smile distorted his face as he laid his hand upon his wife's shoulder. "But−−where was I? I cannot get the hang of things." He was as a man feeling his way through a maze.

"Oh, let it go," said the Inspector. "Wait till you have had some sleep."

"No, I must−−I must get this out. Well, anyway, the principal thing is that Big Bear, Beardy, Poundmaker−−though I am not sure about Poundmaker−−have runners on every reserve and they are arranging for a big meeting in the spring, to which every tribe North and West is to send representatives. That Frenchman−−what's his name?−−I'll forget my own next−−"

"Riel?" suggested the Inspector.

"Yes, Riel. That Frenchman is planning a big coup in the spring. You know they presented him with a house the other day, ready furnished, at Batoche, to keep him in the country. Oh, the half− breeds are very keen on this. And what is worse, I believe a lot of whites are in with them too. A chap named Jackson, and another named Scott, and Isbister and some others. These names are spoken of on every one of our reserves. I tell you, sir," he said, turning his blind eyes toward the Superintendent, "I consider it very serious indeed. And worst of all, the biggest villain of the lot, Little Pine, Cree Chief you know, our bitterest enemy−−except Little Thunder, who fortunately is cleared out of the country−−you remember, sir, that chap Raven saw about that."

The Superintendent nodded.

"Well−−where was I?−−Oh, yes, Little Pine, the biggest villain of them all, is somewhere about here. I got word of him when I was at the Blood Reserve on my way home some ten days ago. I heard he was with the Blackfeet, but I found no sign of him there. But he is in the neighborhood, and he is specially bound to see old Crowfoot. I understand he is a particularly successful pleader, and unusually cunning, and I am afraid of Crowfoot. I saw the old Chief. He was very cordial and is apparently loyal enough as yet, but you know, sir, how much that may mean. I think that is all," said Cameron, putting his hand up to his head. "I have a great deal more to tell you, but it will not come back to me now. Little Pine must be attended to, and for a day or two I am sorry I am hardly fit−− awfully sorry." His voice sank into a kind of undertone.

"Sorry?" cried the Superintendent, deeply stirred at the sight of his obvious collapse. "Sorry? Don't you use that word again. You have nothing to be sorry for, but everything to be proud of. You have done a great service to your country, and we will not forget it. In a few days you will be fit and we shall show our gratitude by calling upon you to do something more. Hello, who's that?" A horseman had ridden past the window toward the stables. Moira ran to look out.

"Oh!" she cried, "it is that Mr. Raven. I would know his splendid horse anywhere."

"Raven!" said Cameron sharply and wide awake.

"Raven, by Jove!" muttered the Inspector.

"Raven! Well, I call that cool!" said the Superintendent, a hard look upon his face.

But the laws of hospitality are nowhere so imperative as on the western plains. Cameron rose from his chair muttering, "Must look after his horse."

"You sit down," said Mandy firmly. "You are not going out."

"Well, hardly," said the Inspector. "Here, Jerry, go and show him where to get things, and−−" He hesitated.

"Bring him in," cried Mandy heartily. The men stood silent, looking at Cameron.

"Certainly, bring him in," he said firmly, "a day like this," he added, as if in apology.

"Why, of course," cried Mandy, looking from one to the other in surprise. "Why not? He is a perfectly splendid man."

"Oh, he is really splendid!" replied Moira, her cheeks burning and her eyes flashing. "You remember," she cried, addressing the Inspector, "how he saved my life the day I arrived at this ranch."

"Oh, yes," replied the Inspector briefly, "I believe I did hear that." But there was little enthusiasm in his voice.

"Well, I think he is splendid," repeated Moira. "Do not you think so?"

The Inspector had an awkward moment.

"Eh?−−well−−I can't say I know him very well."

"And his horse! What a beauty it is!" continued the girl.

"Ah, yes, a most beautiful animal, quite remarkable horse, splendid horse; in fact one of the finest, if not the very finest, in this whole country. And that is saying a good deal, too, Miss Moira. You see, this country breeds good horses." And the Inspector went on to discourse in full detail and with elaborate illustration upon the various breeds of horses the country could produce, and to classify the wonderful black stallion ridden by Raven, and all with such diligence and enthusiasm that no other of the party had an opportunity to take part in the conversation till Raven, in the convoy of Jerry, was seen approaching the house. Then the Superintendent rose.

"Well, Mrs. Cameron, I fear we must take our departure. These are rather crowded days with us."

"What?" exclaimed Mandy. "Within an hour of dinner? We can hardly allow that, you know. Besides, Mr. Cameron wants to have a great deal more talk with you."

The Superintendent attempted to set forth various other reasons for a hasty departure, but they all seemed to lack sincerity, and after a few more ineffective trials he surrendered and sat down again in silence.

The next moment the door opened and Raven, followed by Jerry, stepped into the room. As his eye fell upon the Superintendent, instinctively he dropped his hands to his hips and made an involuntary movement backward, but only for an instant. Immediately he came forward and greeted Mandy with fine, old−fashioned courtesy.

"So delighted to meet you again, Mrs. Cameron, and also to meet your charming sister." He shook hands with both the ladies very warmly. "Ah, Superintendent," he continued, "delighted to see you. And you, Inspector," he said, giving them a nod as he laid off his outer leather riding coat. "Hope I see you flourishing," he continued. His debonair manner had in it a quizzical touch of humor. "Ah, Cameron, home again I see. I came across your tracks the other day."

The men, who had risen to their feet upon his entrance, stood regarding him stiffly and made no other sign of recognition than a curt nod and a single word of greeting.

"You have had quite a trip," he continued, addressing himself to Cameron, and taking the chair offered by Mandy. "I followed you part way, but you travel too fast for me. Much too strenuous work I found it. Why," he continued, looking narrowly at Cameron, "you are badly punished. When did you get in?"

"Two hours ago, Mr. Raven," said Mandy quickly, for her husband sat gazing stupidly into the fire. "And he is quite done up."

"Two hours ago?" exclaimed Raven in utter surprise. "Do you mean to say that you have been traveling these last three days?"

Cameron nodded.

"Why, my dear sir, not even the Indians face such cold. Only the Mounted Police venture out in weather like this−−and those who want to get away from them. Ha! ha! Eh? Inspector? Ha! ha!" His gay, careless laugh rang out in the most cheery fashion. But only the ladies joined. The men stood grimly silent.

Mandy could not understand their grim and gloomy silence. By her cordiality she sought to cover up and atone for the studied and almost insulting indifference of her husband and her other guests. In these attempts she was loyally supported by her sister−in−law, whose anger was roused by the all too obvious efforts on the part of her brother and his friends to ignore this stranger, if not to treat him with contempt. There was nothing in Raven's manner to indicate that he observed anything amiss in the bearing of the male members of the company about the fire. He met the attempt of the ladies at conversation with a brilliancy of effort that quite captivated them, and, in spite of themselves, drew the Superintendent and the Inspector into the flow of talk.

As the hour of the midday meal approached Mandy rose from her place by the fire and said:

"You will stay with us to dinner, Mr. Raven? We dine at midday. It is not often we have such a distinguished and interesting company."

"Thank you, no," said Raven. "I merely looked in to give your husband a bit of interesting information. And, by the way, I have a bit of information that might interest the Superintendent as well."

"Well," said Mandy, "we are to have the pleasure of the Superintendent and the Inspector to dinner with us to−day, and you can give them all the information you think necessary while you are waiting."

Raven hesitated while he glanced at the faces of the men beside him. What he read there drew from him a little hard smile of amused contempt.

"Please do not ask me again, Mrs. Cameron," he said. "You know not how you strain my powers of resistance when I really dare not−−may not," he corrected himself with a quick glance at the Superintendent, "stay in this most interesting company and enjoy your most grateful hospitality any longer. And now my information is soon given. First of all for you, Cameron−−I shall not apologize to you, Mrs. Cameron, for delivering it in your presence. I do you the honor to believe that you ought to know−−briefly my information is this. Little Pine, in whose movements you are all interested, I understand, is at this present moment lodging with the Sarcee Indians, and next week will move on to visit old Crowfoot. The Sarcee visit amounts to little, but the visit to old Crowfoot−−well, I need say no more to you, Cameron. Probably you know more about the inside workings of old Crowfoot's mind than I do."

"Visiting Crowfoot?" exclaimed Cameron. "Then I was there too soon."

"That is his present intention, and I have no doubt the program will be carried out," said Raven. "My information is from the inside. Of course," he continued, "I know you have run across the trail of the North Cree and Salteaux runners from Big Bear and Beardy. They are not to be despised. But Little Pine is a different person from these gentlemen. The big game is scheduled for the early spring, will probably come off in about six weeks. And now," he said, rising from his chair, "I must be off."

At this point Smith came in and quietly took a seat beside Jerry near the door.

"And what's your information for me, Mr. Raven?" inquired the Superintendent. "You are not going to deprive me of my bit of news?"

"Ah, yes−−news," replied Raven, sitting down again. "Briefly this. Little Thunder has yielded to some powerful pressure and has again found it necessary to visit this country, I need hardly add, against my desire."

"Little Thunder?" exclaimed the Superintendent, and his tone indicated something more than surprise. "Then there will be something doing. And where does this−−ah−−this−−ah−−friend of yours propose to locate himself?"

"This friend of mine," replied Raven, with a hard gleam in his eye and a bitter smile curling his lips, "who would gladly adorn his person with my scalp if he might, will not ask my opinion as to his location, and probably not yours either, Mr. Superintendent." As Raven ceased speaking he once more rose from his chair, put on his leather riding coat and took up his cap and gauntlets. "Farewell, Mrs. Cameron," he said, offering her his hand. "Believe me, it has been a rare treat to see you and to sit by your fireside for one brief half−hour."

"Oh, but Mr. Raven, you are not to think of leaving us before dinner. Why this haste?"

"The trail I take," said Raven in a grave voice, "is full of pitfalls and I must take it when I can. The Superintendent knows," he added. But his smile awoke no response in the Superintendent, who sat rigidly silent.

"It's a mighty cold day outside, "interjected Smith, "and blowing up something I think."

"Oh, hang it, Raven!" blurted out Cameron, who sat stupidly gazing into the fire, "Stay and eat. This is no kind of day to go out hungry. It is too beastly cold."

"Thanks, Cameron, it IS a cold day, too cold to stay."

"Do stay, Mr. Raven," pleaded Moira.

He turned swiftly and looked into her soft brown eyes now filled with warm kindly light.

"Alas, Miss Cameron," he replied in a low voice, turning his back upon the others, his voice and his attitude seeming to isolate the girl from the rest of the company, "believe me, if I do not stay it is not because I do not want to, but because I cannot."

"You cannot?" echoed Moira in an equally low tone.

"I cannot," he replied. Then, raising his voice, "Ask the Superintendent. He knows that I cannot."

"Do you know?" said Moira, turning upon the Superintendent, "What does he mean?"

The Superintendent rose angrily.

"Mr. Raven chooses to be mysterious," he said. "If he cannot remain here he knows why without appealing to me."

"Ah, my dear Superintendent, how unfeeling! You hardly do yourself justice," said Raven, proceeding to draw on his gloves. His drawling voice seemed to irritate the Superintendent beyond control.

"Justice?" he exclaimed sharply. "Justice is a word you should hesitate to use."

"You see, Miss Cameron," said Raven with an injured air, "why I cannot remain."

"No, I do not!" cried Moira in hot indignation. "I do not see," she repeated, "and if the Superintendent does I think he should explain." Her voice rang out sharp and clear. It wakened her brother as if from a daze.

"Tut, tut, Moira!" he exclaimed. "Do not interfere where you do not understand."

"Then why make insinuations that cannot be explained?" cried his sister, standing up very straight and looking the Superintendent fair in the face.

"Explained?" echoed the Superintendent in a cool, almost contemptuous, voice. "There are certain things best not explained, but believe me if Mr. Raven desires explanation he can have it."

The men were all on their feet. Quickly Moira turned to Raven with a gesture of appeal and a look of loyal confidence in her eyes. For a moment the hard, cynical face was illumined with a smile of rare beauty, but only for a moment. The gleam passed and the old, hard, cynical face turned in challenge to the Superintendent.

"Explain!" he said bitterly, defiantly. "Go on if you can."

The Superintendent stood silent.

"Ah!" breathed Moira, a thrill of triumphant relief in her voice, "he cannot explain."

With dramatic swiftness the explanation came. It was from Jerry.

"H'explain?" cried the little half−breed, quivering with rage. "H'explain? What for he can no h'explain? Dem horse he steal de night−tam'−−dat whiskee he trade on de Indian. Bah! He no good−− he one beeg tief. Me−−I put him one sure place he no steal no more!"

A few moments of tense silence held the group rigid. In the center stood Raven, his face pale, hard, but smiling, before him Moira, waiting, eager, with lips parted and eyes aglow with successive passions, indignation, doubt, fear, horror, grief. Again that swift and subtle change touched Raven's face as his eyes rested upon the face of the girl before him.

"Now you know why I cannot stay," he said gently, almost sadly.

"It is not true," murmured Moira, piteous appeal in voice and eyes. A spasm crossed the pale face upon which her eyes rested, then the old cynical look returned.

"Once more, thank you, Mrs. Cameron," he said with a bow to Mandy, "for a happy half−hour by your fireside, and farewell."

"Good−by," said Mandy sadly.

He turned to Moira.

"Oh, good−by, good−by," cried the girl impulsively, reaching out her hand.

"Good−by," he said simply. "I shall not forget that you were kind to me." He bent low before her, but did not touch her outstretched hand. As he turned toward the door Jerry slipped in before him.

"You let him go?" he cried excitedly, looking at the Superintendent; but before the latter could answer a hand caught him by the coat collar and with a swift jerk landed him on the floor. It was Smith, his face furiously red. Before Jerry could recover himself Raven had opened the door and passed out.

"Oh, how awful!" said Mandy in a hushed, broken voice.

Moira stood for a moment as if dazed, then suddenly turned to Smith and said:

"Thank you. That was well done."

And Smith, red to his hair roots, murmured, "You wanted him to go?"

"Yes," said Moira, "I wanted him to go."

CHAPTER XVI. WAR

Commissioner Irvine sat in his office at headquarters in the little town of Regina, the capital of the North West Territories of the Dominion. A number of telegrams lay before him on the table. A look of grave anxiety was on his face. The cause of his anxiety was to be found in the news contained in the telegrams. An orderly stood behind his chair.

"Send Inspector Sanders to me!" commanded the Commissioner.

The orderly saluted and retired.

In a few moments Inspector Sanders made his appearance, a tall, soldierlike man, trim in appearance, prompt in movement and somewhat formal in speech.

"Well, the thing has come," said the Commissioner, handing Inspector Sanders one of the telegrams before him. Inspector Sanders took the wire, read it and stood very erect.

"Looks like it, sir," he replied. "You always said it would."

"It is just eight months since I first warned the government that trouble would come. Superintendent Crozier knows the situation thoroughly and would not have sent this wire if outbreak were not imminent. Then here is one from Superintendent Gagnon at Carlton. He also is a careful man."

Inspector Sanders gravely read the second telegram.

"We ought to have five hundred men on the spot this minute," he said.

"I have asked that a hundred men be sent up at once," said the Commissioner, "but I am doubtful if we can get the Government to agree. It seems almost impossible to make the authorities feel the gravity of the situation. They cannot realize, for one thing, the enormous distances that separate points that look comparatively near together upon the map." He spread a map out upon the table. "And yet," he continued, "they have these maps before them, and the figures, but somehow the facts do not impress them. Look at this vast area lying between these four posts that form an almost perfect quadrilateral. Here is the north line running from Edmonton at the northwest corner to Prince Albert at the northeast, nearly four hundred miles away; then here is the south line running from Macleod at the southwest four hundred and fifty miles to Regina at the southeast; while the sides of this quadrilateral are nearly three hundred miles long. Thus the four posts forming our quadrilateral are four hundred miles apart one way by three hundred another, and, if we run the lines down to the boundary and to the limit of the territory which we patrol, the disturbed area may come to be about five hundred miles by six hundred; and we have some five hundred men available."

"It is a good thing we have established the new post at Carlton," suggested Inspector Sanders.

"Ah, yes, there is Carlton. It is true we have strengthened up that district recently with two hundred men distributed between Battleford, Prince Albert, Fort Pitt and Fort Carlton. But Carlton is naturally a very weak post and is practically of little use to us. True, it guards us against those Willow Crees and acts as a check upon old Beardy."

"A troublesome man, that Kah−me−yes−too−waegs−−old Beardy, I mean. It took me some time to master that one," said Inspector Sanders, "but then I have studied German. He always has been a nuisance," continued the Inspector. "He was a groucher when the treaty was made in '76 and he has been a groucher ever since."

"If we only had the men, just another five hundred," replied the Commissioner, tapping the map before him with his finger, "we should hold this country safe. But what with these restless half− breeds led by this crack−brained Riel, and these ten thousand Indians−−"

"Not to speak of a couple of thousand non−treaty Indians roaming the country and stirring up trouble," interjected the Inspector.

"True enough," replied the Commissioner, "but I would have no fear of the Indians were it not for these half−breeds. They have real grievances, remember, Sanders, real grievances, and that gives force to their quarrel and cohesion to the movement. Men who have a conviction that they are suffering injustice are not easily turned aside. And these men can fight. They ride hard and shoot straight and are afraid of nothing. I confess frankly it

looks very serious to me."

"For my part," said Inspector Sanders, "it is the Indians I fear most."

"The Indians?" said the Commissioner. "Yes, if once they rise. Really, one wonders at the docility of the Indians, and their response to fair and decent treatment. Why, just think of it! Twenty years ago, no, fifteen years ago, less than fifteen years ago, these Indians whom we have been holding in our hand so quietly were roaming these plains, living like lords on the buffalo and fighting like fiends with each other, free from all control. Little wonder if, now feeling the pinch of famine, fretting under the monotony of pastoral life, and being incited to war by the hot− blooded half−breeds, they should break out in rebellion. And what is there to hold them back? Just this, a feeling that they have been justly treated, fairly and justly dealt with by the Government, and a wholesome respect for Her Majesty's North West Mounted Police, if I do say it myself. But the thing is on, and we must be ready."

"What is to be done, sir?" inquired Sanders.

"Well, thank God, there is not much to be done in the way of preparation," replied the Commissioner. "Our fellows are ready to a man. For the past six months we have been on the alert for this emergency, but we must strike promptly. When I think of these settlers about Prince Albert and Battleford at the mercy of Beardy and that restless and treacherous Salteaux, Big Bear, I confess to a terrible anxiety."

"Then there is the West, sir, as well," said Sanders, "the Blackfeet and the Bloods."

"Ah, yes, Sanders! You know them well. So do I. It is a great matter that Crowfoot is well disposed toward us, that he has confidence in our officers and that he is a shrewd old party as well. But Crowfoot is an Indian and the head of a great tribe with warlike traditions and with ambitions, and he will find it difficult to maintain his own loyalty, and much more that of his young men, in the face of any conspicuous successes by his Indian rivals, the Crees. But," added the Commissioner, rolling up the map, "I called you in principally to say that I wish you to have every available man and gun ready for a march at a day's notice. Further, I wish you to wire Superintendent Herchmer at Calgary to send at the earliest possible moment twenty−five men at least, fully equipped. We shall need every man we can spare from every post in the West to send North."

"Very good, sir. They will be ready," said Inspector Sanders, and, saluting, he left the room.

Two days later, on the 18th of March, long before the break of day, the Commissioner set out on his famous march to Prince Albert, nearly three hundred miles away. And the great game was on. They were but a small company of ninety men, but every man was thoroughly fit for the part he was expected to play in the momentous struggle before him; brave, of course, trained in prompt initiative, skilled in plaincraft, inured to hardship, oblivious of danger, quick of eye, sure of hand and rejoicing in fight. Commissioner Irvine knew he could depend upon them to see through to a finish, to their last ounce of strength and their last blood− drop, any bit of work given them to do. Past Pie−a−pot's Reserve and down the Qu'Appelle Valley to Misquopetong's, through the Touchwood Hills and across the great Salt Plain, where he had word by wire from Crozier of the first blow being struck at the south branch of the Saskatchewan where some of Beardy's men gave promise of their future conduct by looting a store, Irvine pressed his march. Onward along the Saskatchewan, he avoided the trap laid by four hundred half−breeds at Batoche's Crossing, and, making the crossing at Agnew's, further down, arrived at Prince Albert all fit and sound on the eve of the 24th, completing his two hundred and ninety−one miles in just seven days; and that in the teeth of the bitter weather of a rejuvenated winter, without loss of man or horse, a feat worthy of the traditions of the Force of which he was the head, and of the Empire whose most northern frontier it was his task to guard.

Twenty−four hours to sharpen their horses' calks and tighten up their cinches, and Irvine was on the trail again en route for Fort Carlton, where he learned serious disturbances were threatening. Arrived at Fort Carlton in the afternoon of the same day, the Commissioner found there a company of men, sad, grim and gloomy. In the fort a dozen of the gallant volunteers from Prince Albert and Crozier's Mounted Police lay groaning, some of them dying, with wounds. Others lay with their faces covered, quiet enough; while far down on the Duck Lake trail still others lay with the white snow red about them. The story was told the Commissioner with soldierlike brevity by Superintendent Crozier. The previous day a storekeeper from Duck Lake, Mitchell by name, had ridden in to report that his stock of provisions and ammunition was about to be seized by the rebels. Immediately early next morning a Sergeant of the Police with some seventeen constables had driven off to prevent these provisions and ammunition falling into the hands of the enemy. At ten o'clock a scout came pounding down the trail with the

announcement that Sergeant Stewart was in trouble and that a hundred rebels had disputed his advance. Hard upon the heels of the scout came the Sergeant himself with his constables to tell their tale to a body of men whose wrath grew as they listened. More and more furious waxed their rage as they heard the constables tell of the threats and insults heaped upon them by the half−breeds and Indians. The Prince Albert volunteers more especially were filled with indignant rage. To think that half−breeds and Indians−− Indians, mark you!−−whom they had been accustomed to regard with contempt, should have dared to turn back upon the open trail a company of men wearing the Queen's uniform! The insult was intolerable.

The Police officers received the news with philosophic calm. It was merely an incident in the day's work to them. Sooner or later they would bring these bullying half−breeds and yelling Indians to task for their temerity.

But the volunteers were undisciplined in the business of receiving insults. Hence they were for an immediate attack. The Superintendent pointed out that the Commissioner was within touch bringing reinforcements. It might be wise to delay matters a few hours till his arrival. But meantime the provisions and ammunition would be looted and distributed among the enemy, and that was a serious matter. The impetuous spirit of the volunteers prevailed. Within an hour a hundred men with a seven−pr. gun, eager to exact punishment for the insults they had suffered, took the Duck Lake trail. Ambushed by a foe who, regardless of the conventions of war, made treacherous use of the white flag, overwhelmed by more than twice their number, hampered in their evolutions by the deep crusted snow, the little company, after a half−hour's sharp engagement with the strongly posted enemy, were forced to retire, bearing their wounded and some of their dead with them, leaving others of their dead lying in the snow behind them.

And now the question was what was to be done? The events of the day had taught them their lesson, a lesson that experience has taught all soldiers, the lesson, namely, that it is never safe to despise a foe. A few miles away from them were between three hundred and four hundred half−breeds and Indians who, having tasted blood, were eager for more. The fort at Carlton was almost impossible of defense. The whole South country was in the hands of rebels. Companies of half−breeds breathing blood and fire, bands of Indians, marauding and terrorizing, were roaming the country, wrecking homesteads, looting stores, threatening destruction to all loyal settlers and direst vengeance upon all who should dare to oppose them. The situation called for quick thought and quick action. Every hour added to the number of the enemy. Whole tribes of Indians were wavering in their allegiance. Another victory such as Duck Lake and they would swing to the side of the rebels. The strategic center of the English settlements in all this country was undoubtedly Prince Albert. Fort Carlton stood close to the border of the half−breed section and was difficult of defense.

After a short council of war it was decided to abandon Fort Carlton. Thereupon Irvine led his troops, together with the gallant survivors of the bloody fight at Duck Lake, bearing their dead and wounded with them, to Prince Albert, there to hold that post with its hundreds of defenseless women and children gathered in from the country round about, against hostile half−breeds without and treacherous half−breeds within the stockade, and against swarming bands of Indians hungry for loot and thirsting for blood. And there Irvine, chafing against inactivity, eager for the joyous privilege of attack, spent the weary anxious days of the next six weeks, held at his post by the orders of his superior officer and by the stern necessities of the case, and meantime finding some slight satisfaction in scouting and scouring the country for miles on every side, thus preventing any massing of the enemy's forces.

The affair at Duck Lake put an end to all parley. Riel had been clamoring for "blood! blood! blood!" At Duck Lake he received his first taste, but before many days were over he was to find that for every drop of blood that reddened the crusted snow at Duck Lake a thousand Canadian voices would indignantly demand vengeance. The rifle−shots that rang out that winter day from the bluffs that lined the Duck Lake trail echoed throughout Canada from ocean to ocean, and everywhere men sprang to offer themselves in defense of their country. But echoes of these rifle−shots rang, too, in the teepees on the Western plains where the Piegans, the Bloods and the Blackfeet lay crouching and listening. By some mysterious system of telegraphy known only to themselves old Crowfoot and his braves heard them almost as soon as the Superintendent at Fort Macleod. Instantly every teepee was pulsing with the fever of war. The young braves dug up their rifles from their bedding, gathered together their ammunition, sharpened their knives and tomahawks in eager anticipation of the call that would set them on the war−path against the white man who had robbed them of their ancient patrimony and who held them in such close leash. The great day had come, the day they had been dreaming of in their hearts, talking over at their

council−fires and singing about in their sun dances during the past year, the day promised by the many runners from their brother Crees of the North, the day foretold by the great Sioux orator and leader, Onawata. The war of extermination had begun and the first blood had gone to the Indian and to his brother half−breed.

Two days after Duck Lake came the word that Fort Carlton had been abandoned and Battleford sacked. Five days later the news of the bloody massacre of Frog Lake cast over every English settlement the shadow of a horrible fear. From the Crow's Nest to the Blackfoot Crossing bands of braves broke loose from the reserves and began to "drive cattle" for the making of pemmican in preparation for the coming campaign.

It was a day of testing for all Canadians, but especially a day of testing for the gallant little force of six or seven hundred riders who, distributed in small groups over a vast area of over two hundred and fifty thousand square miles, were entrusted with the responsibility of guarding the lives and property of Her Majesty's subjects scattered in lonely and distant settlements over these wide plains.

And the testing found them ready. For while the Ottawa authorities with late but frantic haste were hustling their regiments from all parts of Canada to the scene of war, the Mounted Police had gripped the situation with a grip so stern that the Indian allies of the half−breed rebels paused in their leap, took a second thought and decided to wait till events should indicate the path of discretion.

And, to the blood−lusting Riel, Irvine's swift thrust Northward to Prince Albert suggested caution, while his resolute stand at that distant fort drove hard down in the North country a post of Empire that stuck fast and sure while all else seemed to be sliding to destruction.

Inspector Dickens, too, another of that fearless band of Police officers, holding with his heroic little company of twenty−two constables Fort Pitt in the far North, stayed the panic consequent upon the Frog Lake massacre and furnished food for serious thought to the cunning Chief, Little Pine, and his four hundred and fifty Crees, as well as to the sullen Salteaux, Big Bear, with his three hundred braves. And to the lasting credit of Inspector Dickens it stands that he brought his little company of twenty−two safe through a hostile country overrun with excited Indians and half− breeds to the post of Battleford, ninety−eight miles away.

At Battleford, also, after the sacking of the town, Inspector Morris with two hundred constables behind his hastily−constructed barricade kept guard over four hundred women and children and held at bay a horde of savages yelling for loot and blood.

Griesbach, in like manner, with his little handful, at Fort Saskatchewan, held the trail to Edmonton, and materially helped to bar the way against Big Bear and his marauding band.

And similarly at other points the promptness, resource, wisdom and dauntless resolution of the gallant officers of the Mounted Police and of the men they commanded saved Western Canada from the complete subversion of law and order in the whole Northern part of the territories and from the unspeakable horrors of a general Indian uprising.

But while in the Northern and Eastern part of the Territories the Police officers rendered such signal service in the face of open rebellion, it was in the foothill country in the far West that perhaps even greater service was rendered to Canada and the Empire in this time of peril by the officers and men of the Mounted Police.

It was due to the influence of such men as the Superintendents and Inspectors of the Police in charge of the various posts throughout the foothill country more than to anything else that the Chiefs of the "great, warlike, intelligent and untractable tribes" of Blackfeet, Blood, Piegan, Sarcee and Stony Indians were prevented from breaking their treaties and joining with the rebel Crees, Salteaux and Assiniboines of the North and East. For fifteen years the Chiefs of these tribes had lived under the firm and just rule of the Police, had been protected from the rapacity of unscrupulous traders and saved from the ravages of whisky−runners. It was the proud boast of a Blood Chief that the Police never broke a promise to the Indian and never failed to exact justice either for his punishment or for his protection.

Hence when the reserves were being overrun by emissaries from the turbulent Crees and from the plotting half−breeds, in the face of the impetuous demands of their own young men and of their minor Chiefs to join in the Great Adventure, the great Chiefs, Red Crow and Rainy Chief of the Bloods, Bull's Head of the Sarcees, Trotting Wolf of the Piegans, and more than all, Crowfoot, the able, astute, wise old head of the entire Blackfeet confederacy, held these young braves back from rebellion and thus gave time and opportunity to Her Majesty's Forces operating in the East and North to deal with the rebels.

And during those days of strain, strain beyond the estimate of all not immediately involved, it was the record

of such men as the Superintendents and Inspectors in charge at Fort Macleod, at Fort Calgary and on the line of the Canadian Pacific Railway construction in the mountains, and their steady bearing that more than anything else weighed with the great Chiefs and determined for them their attitude. For with calm, cool courage the Police patrols rode in and out of the reserves, quietly reasoning with the big Chiefs, smiling indulgently upon the turbulent minor Chiefs, checking up with swift, firm, but tactful justice the many outbreaks against law and order, presenting even in their most desperate moments such a front of resolute self−confidence to the Indians, and refusing to give any sign by look or word or act of the terrific anxiety they carried beneath their gay scarlet coats. And the big Chiefs, reading the faces of these cool, careless, resolute, smiling men who had a trick of appearing at unexpected times in their camps and refused to be hurried or worried, finally decided to wait a little longer. And they waited till the fatal moment of danger was past and the time for striking−−and in the heart of every Chief of them the desire to strike for larger freedom and independence lay deep−−was gone. To these guardians of Empire who fought no fight, who endured no siege, who witnessed no massacre, the Dominion and the Empire owe more than none but the most observing will ever know.

Paralleling these prompt measures of the North West Mounted Police, the Government dispatched from both East and West of Canada regiments of militia to relieve the beleaguered posts held by the Police, to prevent the spread of rebellion and to hold the great tribes of the Indians of the far West true to their allegiance.

Already on the 27th of March, before Irvine had decided to abandon Fort Carlton and to make his stand at Prince Albert, General Middleton had passed through Winnipeg on his way to take command of the Canadian Forces operating in the West; and before two weeks more had gone the General was in command of a considerable body of troops at Qu'Appelle, his temporary headquarters. From all parts of Canada these men gathered, from Quebec and Montreal, from the midland counties of Ontario, from the city of Toronto and from the city of Winnipeg, till some five or six thousand citizen−soldiers were under arms. They were needed, too, every man, not so much because of the possible weight of numbers of the enemy opposing them, nor because of the tactical skill of those leading the hostile forces, but because of the enemy's advantage of position, owing to the nature of the country which formed the scene of the Rebellion, and because of the character of the warfare adopted by their cunning foe.

The record of the brief six weeks' campaign constitutes a creditable page in Canadian history, a page which no Canadian need blush to read aloud in the presence of any company of men who know how to estimate at their highest value those qualities of courage and endurance that are the characteristics of the British soldier the world over.

CHAPTER XVII. TO ARMS!

Superintendent Strong was in a pleasant mood, and the reason was not far to seek. The distracting period of inaction, of doubt, of hesitation was past, and now at last something would be done. His term of service along the line of the Canadian Pacific Railway construction had been far from congenial to him. There had been too much of the work of the ordinary patrol−officer about it. True, he did his duty faithfully and thoroughly, so faithfully, indeed, as to move the great men of the railway company to outspoken praise, a somewhat unusual circumstance. But now he was called back to the work that more properly belonged to an officer of Her Majesty's North West Mounted Police and his soul glowed with the satisfaction of those who, having been found faithful in uncongenial duty, are rewarded with an opportunity to do a bit of work which they particularly delight to do.

With his twenty−five men, whom for the past year he had been polishing to a high state of efficiency in the trying work of police−duty in the railway construction−camp, he arrived in Calgary on the evening of the tenth of April, to find that post throbbing with military ardor and thrilling with rumors of massacres and sieges, of marching columns and contending forces. Small wonder that Superintendent Strong's face took on an appearance of grim pleasure. Straight to the Police headquarters he went, but there was no Superintendent there to welcome him. That gentleman had gone East to meet the troops and was by now under appointment as Chief of Staff to that dashing soldier, Colonel Otter.

But meantime, though the Calgary Police Post was bare of men, there were other men as keen and as daring, if not so thoroughly disciplined for war, thronging the streets of the little town and asking only a leader whom they could follow.

It was late evening, but Calgary was an "all night" town, and every minute was precious, for minutes might mean lives of women and children. So down the street rode Superintendent Strong toward the Royal Hotel. At the hitching post of that hostelry a sad−looking broncho was tied, whose calm, absorbed and detached appearance struck a note of discord with his environment; for everywhere about him men and horses seemed to be in a turmoil of excitement. Everywhere men in cow−boy garb were careering about the streets or grouped in small crowds about the saloon doors. There were few loud voices, but the words of those who were doing the speaking came more rapidly than usual.

Such a group was gathered in the rear of the sad−looking broncho before the door of the Royal Hotel. As the Superintendent loped up upon his big brown horse the group broke apart and, like birds disturbed at their feeding, circled about and closed again.

"Hello, here's Superintendent Strong," said a voice. "He'll know."

"Know what?" inquired the Superintendent.

"Why, what's doing?"

"Where are the troops?"

"Is Prince Albert down?"

"Where's Middleton?"

"What's to be done here?"

There were many voices, all eager, and in them just a touch of anxiety.

"Not a thing do I know," said Superintendent Strong somewhat gravely. "I have been up in the mountains and have heard little. I know that the Commissioner has gone north to Prince Albert."

"Have you heard about Duck Lake?" inquired a voice.

"Yes, I heard we had a reverse there, and I know that General Middleton has arrived at Qu'Appelle and has either set out for the north or is about to set out."

"Heard about Frog Lake?"

"Frog Lake? No. That is up near Fort Pitt. What about it?"

For a moment there was silence, then a deep voice replied:

"A ghastly massacre, women and children and priests."

Then another period of silence.

"Indians?" murmured the Superintendent in a low voice.

"Yes, half−breeds and Indians," replied the deep voice. And again there was silence. The men waited for Superintendent Strong to speak.

The Superintendent sat on his big horse looking at them quietly, then he said sharply:

"Men, there are some five or six thousand Indians in this district." They were all thinking the same thing. "I have twenty− five men with me. Superintendent Cotton at Macleod has less than a hundred."

The men sat their horses in silence looking at him. One could hear their deep breathing and see the quiver of the horses under the gripping knees of their riders. Their minds were working swiftly. Ever since the news of the Frog Lake massacre had spread like a fire across the country these men had been carrying in their minds−− rather, in their hearts−−pictures that started them up in their beds at night broad awake and all in a cold sweat.

The Superintendent lowered his voice. The men leaned forward to listen. He had only a single word to say, a short sharp word it was−−

"Who will join me?"

It was as if his question had released a spring drawn to its limit. From twenty different throats in twenty different tones, but with a single throbbing impulse, came the response, swift, full−throated, savage, "Me!" "I!" "Here you are!" "You bet!" "Count me!" "Rather!" and in three minutes Superintendent Strong had secured the nucleus of his famous scouts.

"To−morrow at nine at the Barracks!" said this grim and laconic Superintendent, and was about turning away when a man came out from the door of the Royal Hotel, drawn forth by that sudden savage yell.

"Hello, Cameron!" said the Superintendent, as the man moved toward the sad−appearing broncho, "I want you."

"All right, sir. I am with you," was the reply as Cameron swung on to his horse. "Wake up, Ginger!" he said to his horse, touching him with his heel. Ginger woke up with an indignant snort and forthwith fell into line with the Superintendent's big brown horse.

The Superintendent was silent till the Barracks were gained, then, giving the horses into the care of an orderly, he led Cameron into the office and after they had settled themselves before the fire he began without preliminaries.

"Cameron, I am more anxious than I can say about the situation here in this part of the country. I have been away from the center of things for some months and I have lost touch. I want you to let me know just what is doing from our side."

"I do not know much, sir," replied Cameron. "I, too, have just come in from a long parley with Crowfoot and his Chiefs."

"Ah, by the way, how is the old boy?" inquired the Superintendent. "Will he stick by us?"

"At present he is very loyal, sir,−−too loyal almost," said Cameron in a doubtful tone. "Duck Lake sent some of his young men off their heads a bit, and Frog Lake even more. The Sarcees went wild over Frog Lake, you know."

"Oh, I don't worry about the Sarcees so much. What of Crowfoot?"

"Well, he has managed to hold down his younger Chiefs so far. He made light of the Frog Lake affair, but he was most anxious to get from me the fullest particulars of the Duck Lake fight. He made careful inquiries as to just how many Police were in the fight. I could see that it gave him a shock to learn that the Police had to retire. This was a new experience for him. He was intensely anxious to learn also−−though he would not allow himself to appear so−−just what the Government was doing."

"And what are the last reports from headquarters? You see I have not been kept fully in touch. I know that the Commissioner has gone north to Prince Albert and that General Middleton has taken command of the forces in the West and has gone North with them from Qu'Appelle, but what troops he has I have not heard."

"I understand," replied Cameron, "that he has three regiments of infantry from Toronto and three from Winnipeg, with the Winnipeg Field Battery. A regiment from Quebec has arrived and one from Montreal and there are more to follow. The plan of campaign I know nothing about."

"Ah, well," replied the Superintendent, "I know something about the plan, I believe. There are three objective points, Prince Albert and Battleford, both of which are now closely besieged, and Edmonton, which is threatened

with a great body of rebel Crees and Salteaux under leadership of Little Pine and Big Bear. The Police at these points can hardly be expected to hold out long against the overwhelming numbers that are besieging them, and I expect that relief columns will be immediately dispatched. Now, in regard to this district here, do you know what is being done?"

"Well, General Strange has come in from his ranch and has offered his services in raising a local force."

"Yes, I was glad to hear that his offer had been accepted and that he has been appointed to lead an expeditionary force from here to Edmonton. He is an experienced officer and I am sure will do us fine service. I hope to see him to−morrow. Now, about the South," continued the Superintendent, "what about Fort Macleod?"

"The Superintendent there has offered himself and his whole force for service in the North, but General Middleton, I understand, has asked him to remain where he is and keep guard in this part of the country."

"Good! I am glad of that. In my judgment this country holds the key. The Crees I do not fear so much. They are more restless and uncertain, but God help us if the Blackfeet and the Bloods rise! That is why I called for volunteers to−night. We cannot afford to be without a strong force here a single day."

"I gathered that you got some volunteers to−night. I hope, sir," said Cameron, "you will have a place for me in your troop?"

"My dear fellow, nothing would please me better, I assure you," said the Superintendent cordially. "And as proof of my confidence in you I am going to send you through the South country to recruit men for my troop. I can rely upon your judgment and tact. But as for you, you cannot leave your present beat. The Sun Dance Trail cannot be abandoned for one hour. From it you keep an eye upon the secret movements of all the tribes in this whole region and you can do much to counteract if not to wholly check any hostile movement that may arise. Indeed, you have already done more than any one will ever know to hold this country safe during these last months. And you must stay where you are. Remember, Cameron," added the Superintendent impressively, "your work lies along the Sun Dance Trail. On no account and for no reason must you be persuaded to abandon that post. I shall get into touch with General Strange to−morrow and shall doubtless get something to do, but if possible I should like you to give me a day or two for this recruiting business before you take up again your patrol work along the Sun Dance."

"Very well, sir," replied Cameron quietly, trying hard to keep the disappointment out of his voice. "I shall do my best."

"That is right," said the Superintendent. "By the way, what are the Piegans doing?"

"The Piegans," replied Cameron, "are industriously stealing cattle and horses. I cannot quite make out just how they can manage to get away with them. Eagle Feather is apparently running the thing, but there is someone bigger than Eagle Feather in the game. An additional month or two in the guardroom would have done that gentleman no harm."

"Ah, has he been in the guard−room? How did he get there?"

"Oh, I pulled him out of the Sun Dance, where I found he had been killing cattle, and the Superintendent at Macleod gave him two months to meditate upon his crimes."

Superintendent Strong expressed his satisfaction.

"But now he is at his old habits again," continued Cameron. "But his is not the brain planning these raids. They are cleverly done and are getting serious. For instance, I must have lost a score or two of steers within the last three months."

"A score or two?" exclaimed the Superintendent. "What are they doing with them all?"

"That is what I find difficult to explain. Either they are running them across the border−−though the American Police know nothing of it−−or they are making pemmican."

"Pemmican? Aha! that looks serious," said the Superintendent gravely.

"Yes, indeed," said Cameron. "It makes me think that some one bigger than Eagle Feather is at the bottom of all this cattle− running. Sometimes I have thought that perhaps that chap Raven has a hand in it."

"Raven?" exclaimed the Superintendent. "He has brain enough and nerve in plenty for any dare−devil exploit."

"But," continued Cameron in a hesitating voice, "I cannot bring myself to lay this upon him."

"Why not?" inquired the Superintendent sharply. "He is a cool hand and desperate. I know his work fairly well. He is a first−class villain."

"Yes, I know he is all that, and yet−−well−−in this rebellion, sir, I believe he is with us and against them." In proof of this Cameron proceeded to relate the story of Raven's visit to the Big Horn Ranch. "So you see," he concluded, "he would not care to work in connection with the Piegans just now."

"I don't know about that−−I don't know about that," replied the Superintendent. "Of course he would not work against us directly, but he might work for himself in this crisis. It would furnish him with a good opportunity, you see. It would give him plenty of cover."

"Yes, that is true, but still−−I somehow cannot help liking the chap."

"Liking the chap?" echoed the Superintendent. "He is a cold− blooded villain and cattle−thief, a murderer, as you know. If ever I get my hand on him in this rumpus−− Why, he's an outlaw pure and simple! I have no use for that kind of man at all. I should like to hang him!" The Superintendent was indignant at the suggestion that any but the severest measures should be meted out to a man of Raven's type. It was the instinct and training of the Police officer responsible for the enforcement of law and order in the land moving within him. "But," continued the Superintendent, "let us get back to our plans. There must be a strong force raised in this district immediately. We have the kind of men best suited for the work all about us in this ranching country, and I know that if you ride south throughout the ranges you can bring me back fifty men, and there would be no finer anywhere."

"I shall do what I can, sir," replied Cameron, "but I am not sure about the fifty men."

Long they talked over the plans, till it was far past midnight, when Cameron took his leave and returned to his hotel. He put up his own horse, looking after his feeding and bedding.

"You have some work to do, Ginger, for your Queen and country to−morrow, and you must be fit," he said as he finished rubbing the horse down.

And Ginger had work to do, but not that planned for him by his master, as it turned out. At the door of the Royal Hotel, Cameron found waiting him in the shadow a tall slim Indian youth.

"Hello!" said Cameron. "Who are you and what do you want?"

As the youth stepped into the light there came to Cameron a dim suggestion of something familiar about the lad, not so much in his face as in his figure and bearing.

"Who are you?" said Cameron again somewhat impatiently.

The young man pulled up his trouser leg and showed a scarred ankle.

"Ah! Now I get you. You are the young Piegan?"

"Not" said the youth, throwing back his head with a haughty movement. "No Piegan."

"Ah, no, of course. Onawata's son, eh?"

The lad grunted.

"What do you want?" inquired Cameron.

The young man stood silent, evidently finding speech difficult.

"Eagle Feather," at length he said, "Little Thunder−−plenty Piegan−− run much cattle." He made a sweeping motion with his arm to indicate the extent of the cattle raid proposed.

"They do, eh? Come in, my boy."

The boy shook his head and drew back. He shared with all wild things the fear of inclosed places.

"Are you hungry?"

The boy nodded his head.

"Come with me."

Together they walked down the street and came to a restaurant.

"Come in and eat. It is all right," said Cameron, offering his hand.

The Indian took the offered hand, laid it upon his heart, then for a full five seconds with his fierce black eye he searched Cameron's face. Satisfied, he motioned Cameron to enter and followed close on his heel. Never before had the lad been within four walls.

"Eat," said Cameron when the ordered meal was placed before them. The lad was obviously ravenous and needed no further urging.

"How long since you left the reserve?" inquired Cameron.

The youth held up three fingers.

"Good going," said Cameron, letting his eye run down the lines of the Indian's lithe figure.

"Smoke?" inquired Cameron when the meal was finished.

The lad's eye gleamed, but he shook his head.

"No pipe, eh?" said Cameron. "Come, we will mend that. Here, John," he said to the Chinese waiter, "bring me a pipe. There," said Cameron, passing the Indian the pipe after filling it, "smoke away."

After another swift and searching look the lad took the pipe from Cameron's hand and with solemn gravity began to smoke. It was to him far more than a mere luxurious addendum to his meal. It was a solemn ceremonial sealing a compact of amity between them.

"Now, tell me," said Cameron, when the smoke had gone on for some time.

Slowly and with painful difficulty the youth told his story in terse, brief sentences.

"T'ree day," he began, holding up three fingers, "me hear Eagle Feather−−many Piegans−−talk−−talk−−talk. Go fight−−keel−−keel−− keel all white man, squaw, papoose."

"When?" inquired Cameron, keeping his face steady.

"Come Cree runner−−soon."

"You mean they are waiting for a runner from the North?" inquired Cameron. "If the Crees win the fight then the Piegans will rise? Is that it?"

The Indian nodded. "Come Cree Indian−−then Piegan fight."

"They will not rise until the runner comes, eh?"

"No."

Cameron breathed more easily.

"Is that all?" he inquired carelessly.

"This day Eagle Feather run much cattle−−beeg−−beeg run." The young man again swept the room with his arm.

"Bah! Eagle Feather is no good. He is an old squaw," said Cameron.

"Huh!" agreed the Indian quickly. "Little Thunder go too."

"Little Thunder, eh?" said Cameron, controlling his voice with an effort.

The lad nodded, his piercing eye upon Cameron's face.

For some minutes Cameron smoked quietly.

"And Onawata?" With startling suddenness he shot out the question.

Not a line of the Indian's face moved. He ignored the question, smoking steadily and looking before him.

"Ah, it is a strange way for Onawata to repay the white man's kindness to his son," said Cameron. The contemptuous voice pierced the Indian's armor of impassivity. Cameron caught the swift quiver in the face that told that his stab had reached the quick. There is nothing in the Indian's catalogue of crimes so base as the sin of ingratitude.

"Onawata beeg Chief−−beeg Chief," at length the boy said proudly. "He do beeg−−beeg t'ing."

"Yes, he steals my cattle," said Cameron with stinging scorn.

"No!" replied the Indian sharply. "Little Thunder−−Eagle Feather steal cattle−−Onawata no steal."

"I am glad to hear it, then," said Cameron. "This is a big run of cattle, eh?"

"Yes−−beeg−−beeg run." Again the Indian's arm swept the room.

"What will they do with all those cattle?" inquired Cameron.

But again the Indian ignored his question and remained silently smoking.

"Why does the son of Onawata come to me?" inquired Cameron.

A soft and subtle change transformed the boy's face. He pulled up his trouser leg and, pointing to the scarred ankle, said:

"You' squaw good−−me two leg−−me come tell you take squaw 'way far−− no keel. Take cattle 'way−−no steal." He rose suddenly to his feet. "Me go now," he said, and passed out.

"Hold on!" cried Cameron, following him out to the door. "Where are you going to sleep to−night?"

The boy waved his hand toward the hills surrounding the little town.

"Here," said Cameron, emptying his tobacco pouch into the boy's hand. "I will tell my squaw that Onawata's son is not ungrateful, that he remembered her kindness and has paid it back to me."

For the first time a smile broke on the grave face of the Indian. He took Cameron's hand, laid it upon his own heart, and then on Cameron's.

"You' squaw good−−good−−much good." He appeared to struggle to find other words, but failing, and with a

smile still lingering upon his handsome face, he turned abruptly away and glided silent as a shadow into the starlit night. Cameron watched him out of sight.

"Not a bad sort," he said to himself as he walked toward the hotel. "Pretty tough thing for him to come here and give away his dad's scheme like that−−and I bet you he is keen on it himself too."

CHAPTER XVIII. AN OUTLAW, BUT A MAN

The news brought by the Indian lad changed for Cameron all his plans. This cattle−raid was evidently a part of and preparation for the bigger thing, a general uprising and war of extermination on the part of the Indians. From his recent visit to the reserves he was convinced that the loyalty of even the great Chiefs was becoming somewhat brittle and would not bear any sudden strain put upon it. A successful raid of cattle such as was being proposed escaping the notice of the Police, or in the teeth of the Police, would have a disastrous effect upon the prestige of the whole Force, already shaken by the Duck Lake reverse. The effect of that skirmish was beyond belief. The victory of the half−breeds was exaggerated in the wildest degree. He must act and act quickly. His home and his family and those of his neighbors were in danger of the most horrible fate that could befall any human being. If the cattle−raid were carried through by the Piegan Indians its sweep would certainly include the Big Horn Ranch, and there was every likelihood that his home might be destroyed, for he was an object of special hate to Eagle Feather and to Little Thunder; and if Copperhead were in the business he had even greater cause for anxiety.

But what was to be done? The Indian boy had taken three days to bring the news. It would take a day and a night of hard riding to reach his home. Quickly he made his plans. He passed into the hotel, found the room of Billy the hostler and roused him up.

"Billy," he said, "get my horse out quick and hitch him up to the post where I can get him. And Billy, if you love me," he implored, "be quick!"

Billy sprang from his bed.

"Don't know what's eatin' you, boss," he said, "but quick's the word."

In another minute Cameron was pounding at Dr. Martin's door upstairs. Happily the doctor was in.

"Martin, old man," cried Cameron, gripping him hard by the shoulder. "Wake up and listen hard! That Indian boy you and Mandy pulled through has just come all the way from the Piegan Reserve to tell me of a proposed cattle−raid and a possible uprising of the Piegans in that South country. The cattle−raid is coming on at once. The uprising depends upon news from the Crees. Listen! I have promised Superintendent Strong to spend the next two days recruiting for his new troop. Explain to him why I cannot do this. He will understand. Then ride like blazes to Macleod and tell the Inspector all that I have told you and get him to send what men he can spare along with you. You can't get a man here. The raid starts from the Piegan Reserve. It will likely finish where the old Porcupine Trail joins the Sun Dance. At least so I judge. Ride by the ranch and get some of them there to show you the shortest trail. Both Mandy and Moira know it well."

"Hold on, Cameron! Let me get this clear," cried the doctor, holding him fast by the arm. "Two things I have gathered," said the doctor, speaking rapidly, "first, a cattle−raid, then a general uprising, the uprising dependent upon the news from the North. You want to block the cattle−raid? Is that right?"

"Right," said Cameron.

"Then you want me to settle with Superintendent Storm, ride to Macleod for men, then by your ranch and have them show me the shortest trail to the junction of the Porcupine and the Sun Dance?"

"You are right, Martin, old boy. It is a great thing to have a head like yours. I shall meet you somewhere at that point. I have been thinking this thing over and I believe they mean to make pemmican in preparation for their uprising, and if so they will make it somewhere on the Sun Dance Trail. Now I am off. Let me go, Martin."

"Tell me your own movements now."

"First, the ranch," said Cameron. "Then straight for the Sun Dance."

"All right, old boy. By−by and good−luck!"

Cameron found Billy waiting with Ginger at the door of the hotel.

"Thank you, Billy," he said, fumbling in his pocket. "Hang it, I can't find my purse."

"You go hang yourself!" said Billy. "Never mind your purse."

"All right, then," said Cameron, giving him his hand. "Good−by. You are a trump, Billy." He caught Ginger

by the mane and threw himself on the saddle.

"Now, then, Ginger, you must not fail me this trip, if it is your last. A hundred and twenty miles, old boy, and you are none too fresh either. But, Ginger, we must beat them this time. A hundred and twenty miles to the Big Horn and twenty miles farther to the Sun Dance, that makes a hundred and forty, Ginger, and you are just in from a hard two days' ride. Steady, boy! Not too hard at the first." For Ginger was showing signs of eagerness beyond his wont. "At all costs this raid must be stopped," continued Cameron, speaking, after his manner, to his horse, "not for the sake of a few cattle−−we could all stand that loss−−but to balk at its beginning this scheme of old Copperhead's, for I believe in my soul he is at the bottom of it. Steady, old boy! We need every minute, but we cannot afford to make any miscalculations. The last quarter of an hour is likely to be the worst."

So on they went through the starry night. Steadily Ginger pounded the trail, knocking off the miles hour after hour. There was no pause for rest or for food. A few mouthfuls of water in the fording of a running stream, a pause to recover breath before plunging into an icy river, or on the taking of a steep coulee side, but no more. Hour after hour they pressed forward toward the Big Horn Ranch. The night passed into morning and the morning into the day, but still they pressed the trail.

Toward the close of the day Cameron found himself within an hour's ride of his own ranch with Ginger showing every sign of leg weariness and almost of collapse.

"Good old chap!" cried Cameron, leaning over him and patting his neck. "We must make it. We cannot let up, you know. Stick to it, old boy, a little longer."

A little snort and a little extra spurt of speed was the gallant Ginger's reply, but soon he was forced to sink back again into his stumbling stride.

"One hour more, Ginger, that is all−−one hour only."

As he spoke he leapt from his saddle to ease his horse in climbing a long and lofty hill. As he surmounted the hill he stopped and swiftly backed his horse down the hill. Upon the distant skyline his eye had detected what he judged to be a horseman. His horse safely disposed of, he once more crawled to the top of the hill.

"An Indian, by Jove!" he cried. "I wonder if he has seen me."

Carefully his eye swept the intervening valley and the hillside beyond, but only this solitary figure could he see. As his eye rested on him the Indian began to move toward the west. Cameron lay watching him for some minutes. From his movements it was evident that the Indian's pace was being determined by some one on the other side of the hill, for he advanced now swiftly, now slowly. At times he halted and turned back upon his track, then went forward again.

"What the deuce is he doing?" said Cameron to himself. "By Jove! I have got it! The drive is begun. I am too late."

Swiftly he considered the whole situation. He was too late now to be of any service at his ranch. The raid had already swept past it. He wrung his hands in agony to think of what might have happened. He was torn with anxiety for his family−−and yet here was the raid passing onward before his eyes. One hour would bring him to the ranch, but if this were the outside edge of the big cattle raid the loss of an hour would mean the loss of everything.

"Oh, my God! What shall I do?" he cried.

With his eyes still upon the Indian he forced himself to think more quietly. The secrecy with which the raid was planned made it altogether likely that the homes of the settlers would not at this time be interfered with. This consideration finally determined him. At all costs he must do what he could to head off the raid or to break the herd in some way. But that meant in the first place a ride of twenty or twenty−five miles over rough country. Could Ginger do it?

He crawled back to his horse and found him with his head close to the ground and trembling in every limb.

"If he goes this twenty miles," he said, "he will go no more. But it looks like our only hope, old boy. We must make for our old beat, the Sun Dance Trail."

He mounted his horse and set off toward the west, taking care never to appear above the skyline and riding as rapidly as the uncertain footing of the untrodden prairie would allow. At short intervals he would dismount and crawl to the top of the hill in order to keep in touch with the Indian, who was heading in pretty much the same direction as himself. A little further on his screening hill began to flatten itself out and finally it ran down into a wide valley which crossed his direction at right angles. He made his horse lie down, still in the shelter of the hill,

and with most painful care he crawled on hands and knees out to the open and secured a point of vantage from which he could command the valley which ran southward for some miles till it, in turn, was shut in by a further range of hills.

He was rewarded for his patience and care. Far down before him at the bottom of the valley a line of cattle was visible and hurrying them along a couple of Indian horsemen. As he lay watching these Indians he observed that a little farther on this line was augmented by a similar line from the east driven by the Indian he had first observed, and by two others who emerged from a cross valley still further on. Prone upon his face he lay, with his eyes on that double line of cattle and its hustling drivers. The raid was surely on. What could one man do to check it? Similar lines of cattle were coming down the different valleys and would all mass upon the old Porcupine Trail and finally pour into the Sun Dance with its many caves and canyons. There was much that was mysterious in this movement still to Cameron. What could these Indians do with this herd of cattle? The mere killing of them was in itself a vast undertaking. He was perfectly familiar with the Indian's method of turning buffalo meat, and later beef, into pemmican, but the killing, and the dressing, and the rendering of the fat, and the preparing of the bags, all this was an elaborate and laborious process. But one thing was clear to his mind. At all costs he must get around the head of these converging lines.

He waited there till the valley was clear of cattle and Indians, then, mounting his horse, he pushed hard across the valley and struck a parallel trail upon the farther side of the hills. Pursuing this trail for some miles, he crossed still another range of hills farther to the west and so proceeded till he came within touch of the broken country that marks the division between the Foothills and the Mountains. He had not many miles before him now, but his horse was failing fast and he himself was half dazed with weariness and exhaustion. Night, too, was falling and the going was rough and even dangerous; for now hillsides suddenly broke off into sharp cut−banks, twenty, thirty, forty feet high.

It was one of these cut−banks that was his undoing, for in the dim light he failed to note that the sheep track he was following ended thus abruptly till it was too late. Had his horse been fresh he could easily have recovered himself, but, spent as he was, Ginger stumbled, slid and finally rolled headlong down the steep hillside and over the bank on to the rocks below. Cameron had just strength to throw himself from the saddle and, scrambling on his knees, to keep himself from following his horse. Around the cut−bank he painfully made his way to where his horse lay with his leg broken, groaning like a human being in his pain.

"Poor old boy! You are done at last," he said.

But there was no time to indulge regrets. Those lines of cattle were swiftly and steadily converging upon the Sun Dance. He had before him an almost impossible achievement. Well he knew that a man on foot could do little with the wild range cattle. They would speedily trample him into the ground. But he must go on. He must make the attempt.

But first there was a task that it wrung his heart to perform. His horse must be put out of pain. He took off his coat, rolled it over his horse's head, inserted his gun under its folds to deaden the sound and to hide those luminous eyes turned so entreatingly upon him.

"Old boy, you have done your duty, and so must I. Good−by, old chap!" He pulled the fatal trigger and Ginger's work was done.

He took up his coat and set off once more upon the winding sheep trail that he guessed would bring him to the Sun Dance. Dazed, half asleep, numbed with weariness and faint with hunger, he stumbled on, while the stars came out overhead and with their mild radiance lit up his rugged way.

Suddenly he found himself vividly awake. Diagonally across the face of the hill in front of him, a few score yards away and moving nearer, a horse came cantering. Quickly Cameron dropped behind a jutting rock. Easily, daintily, with never a slip or slide came the horse till he became clearly visible in the starlight. There was no mistaking that horse or that rider. No other horse in all the territories could take that slippery, slithery hill with a tread so light and sure, and no other rider in the Western country could handle his horse with such easy, steady grace among the rugged rocks of that treacherous hillside. It was Nighthawk and his master.

"Raven!" breathed Cameron to himself. "Raven! Is it possible? By Jove! I would not have believed it. The Superintendent was right after all. He is a villain, a black−hearted villain too. So, HE is the brains behind this thing. I ought to have known it. Fool that I was! He pulled the wool over my eyes all right."

The rage that surged up through his heart stimulated his dormant energies into new life. With a deep oath

Cameron pulled out both his guns and set off up the hill on the trail of the disappearing horseman. His weariness fell from him like a coat, the spring came back to his muscles, clearness to his brain. He was ready for his best fight and he knew it lay before him. Swiftly, lightly he ran up the hillside. At the top he paused amazed. Before him lay a large Indian encampment with rows upon rows of tents and camp fires with kettles swinging, and everywhere Indians and squaws moving about. Skirting the camp and still keeping to the side of the hill, he came upon a stout new−built fence that ran straight down an incline to a steep cut−bank with a sheer drop of thirty feet or more. Like a flash the meaning of it came upon him. This was to be the end of the drive. Here the cattle were to meet their death. Here it was that the pemmican was to be made. On the hillside opposite there was doubtless a similar fence and these two would constitute the fatal funnel down which the cattle were to be stampeded over the cut−bank to their destruction. This was the nefarious scheme planned by Raven and his treacherous allies.

Swiftly Cameron turned and followed the fence up the incline some three or four hundred yards from the cut−bank. At its upper end the fence curved outward for some distance upon a wide upland valley, then ceased altogether. Such was the slope of the hill that no living man could turn a herd of cattle once entered upon that steep incline.

Down the hill, across the valley and up the other side ran Cameron, keeping low and carefully picking his way among the loose stones till he came to the other fence which, curving similarly outward, made with its fellow a perfectly completed funnel. Once between the curving lips of this funnel nothing could save the rushing, crowding cattle from the deadly cut−bank below.

"Oh, if I only had my horse," groaned Cameron, "I might have a chance to turn them off just here."

At the point at which he stood the slope of the hillside fell somewhat toward the left and away slightly from the mouth of the funnel. A skilled cowboy with sufficient nerve, on a first−class horse, might turn the herd away from the cut−bank into the little coulee that led down from the end of the fence, but for a man on foot the thing was quite impossible. He determined, however, to make the effort. No man can certainly tell how cattle will behave when excited and at night.

As he stood there rapidly planning how to divert the rush of cattle from that deadly funnel, there rose on the still night air a soft rumbling sound like low and distant thunder. That sound Cameron knew only too well. It was the pounding of two hundred steers upon the resounding prairie. He rushed back again to the right side of the fenced runway, and then forward to meet the coming herd. A half moon rising over the round top of the hill revealed the black surging mass of steers, their hoofs pounding like distant artillery, their horns rattling like a continuous crash of riflery. Before them at a distance of a hundred yards or more a mounted Indian rode toward the farther side of the funnel and took his stand at the very spot at which there was some hope of diverting the rushing herd from the cut−bank down the side coulee to safety.

"That man has got to go," said Cameron to himself, drawing his gun. But before he could level it there shot out from the dim light behind the Indian a man on horseback. Like a lion on its prey the horse leaped with a wicked scream at the Indian pony. Before that furious leap both man and pony went down and rolled over and over in front of the pounding herd. Over the prostrate pony leaped the horse and up the hillside fair in the face of that rushing mass of maddened steers. Straight across their face sped the horse and his rider, galloping lightly, with never a swerve or hesitation, then swiftly wheeling as the steers drew almost level with him he darted furiously on their flank and rode close at their noses. "Crack! Crack!" rang the rider's revolver, and two steers in the far flank dropped to the earth while over them surged the following herd. Again the revolver rang out, once, twice, thrice, and at each crack a leader on the flank farthest away plunged down and was submerged by the rushing tide behind. For an instant the column faltered on its left and slowly began to swerve in that direction. Then upon the leaders of the right flank the black horse charged furiously, biting, kicking, plunging like a thing possessed of ten thousand devils. Steadily, surely the line continued to swerve.

"My God!" cried Cameron, unable to believe his eyes. "They are turning! They are turned!"

With wild cries and discharging his revolver fair in the face of the leaders, Cameron rushed out into the open and crossed the mouth of the funnel.

"Go back, you fool! Go back!" yelled the man on horseback. "Go back! I have them!" He was right. Cameron's sudden appearance gave the final and necessary touch to the swerving movement. Across the mouth of the funnel with its yawning deadly cut−bank, and down the side coulee, carrying part of the fence with them, the herd crashed onward, with the black horse hanging on their flank still biting and kicking with a kind of joyous

fury.

"Raven! Raven!" cried Cameron in glad accents. "It is Raven! Thank God, he is straight after all!" A great tide of gratitude and admiration for the outlaw was welling up in his heart. But even as he ran there thundered past him an Indian on horseback, the reins flying loose and a rifle in his hands. As he flashed past a gleam of moonlight caught his face, the face of a demon.

"Little Thunder!" cried Cameron, whipping out his gun and firing, but with no apparent effect, at the flying figure.

With his gun still in his hand, Cameron ran on down the coulee in the wake of Little Thunder. Far away could be heard the roar of the rushing herd, but nothing could be seen of Raven. Running as he had never run in his life, Cameron followed hard upon the Indian's track, who was by this time some hundred yards in advance. Suddenly in the moonlight, and far down the coulee, Raven could be seen upon his black horse cantering easily up the slope and toward the swiftly approaching Indian.

"Raven! Raven!" shouted Cameron, firing his gun. "On guard! On guard!"

Raven heard, looked up and saw the Indian bearing down upon him. His horse, too, saw the approaching foe and, gathering himself, in two short leaps rushed like a whirlwind at him, but, swerving aside, the Indian avoided the charging stallion. Cameron saw his rifle go up to his shoulder, a shot reverberated through the coulee, Raven swayed in his saddle. A second shot and the black horse was fair upon the Indian pony, hurling him to the ground and falling himself upon him. As the Indian sprang to his feet Raven was upon him. He gripped him by the throat and shook him as a dog shakes a rat. Once, twice, his pistol fell upon the snarling face and the Indian crumpled up and lay still, battered to death.

"Thank God!" cried Cameron, as he came up, struggling with his sobbing breath. "You have got the beast."

"Yes, I have got him," said Raven, with his hand to his side, "but I guess he has got me too. And−−" he paused. His eye fell upon his horse lying upon his side and feebly kicking−−"ah, I fear he has got you as well, Nighthawk, old boy." As he staggered over toward his horse the sound of galloping hoofs was heard coming down the coulee.

"Here are some more of them!" cried Cameron, drawing out his guns.

"All right, Cameron, my boy, just back up here beside me," said Raven, as he coolly loaded his empty revolver. "We can send a few more of these devils to hell. You are a good sport, old chap, and I want to go out in no better company."

"Hold up!" cried Cameron. "There is a woman. Why, there is a Policeman. They are friends, Raven. It is the doctor and Moira. Hurrah! Here you are, Martin. Quick! Quick! Oh, my God! He is dying!"

Raven had sunk to his knees beside his horse. They gathered round him, a Mounted Police patrol picked up on the way by Dr. Martin, Moira who had come to show them the trail, and Smith.

"Nighthawk, old boy," they heard Raven say, his hand patting the shoulder of the noble animal, "he has done for you, I fear." His voice came in broken sobs. The great horse lifted his beautiful head and looked round toward his master. "Ah, my boy, we have done many a journey together!" cried Raven as he threw his arm around the glossy neck, "and on this last one too we shall not be far apart." The horse gave a slight whinny, nosed into his master's hand and laid his head down again. A slight quiver of the limbs and he was still for ever. "Ah, he has gone!" cried Raven, "my best, my only friend."

"No, no," cried Cameron, "you are with friends now, Raven, old man." He offered his hand. Raven took it wonderingly.

"You mean it, Cameron?"

"Yes, with all my heart. You are a true man, if God ever made one, and you have shown it to−night."

"Ah!" said Raven, with a kind of sigh as he sank back and leaned up against his horse. "That is good to hear. It is long since I have had a friend."

"Quick, Martin!" said Cameron. "He is wounded."

"What? Where?" said the doctor, kneeling down beside him and tearing open his coat and vest. "Oh, my God!" cried the doctor. "He is−−" The doctor paused abruptly.

"What do you say? Oh, Dr. Martin, he is not badly wounded?" Moira threw herself on her knees beside the wounded man and caught his hand. "Oh, it is cold, cold," she cried through rushing tears. "Can you not help him? Oh, you must not let him die."

"Surely he is not dying?" said Cameron.

The doctor was silently and swiftly working with his syringe.

"How long, Doctor?" inquired Raven in a quiet voice.

"Half an hour, perhaps less," said the doctor brokenly. "Have you any pain?"

"No, very little. It is quite easy. Cameron," he said, his voice beginning to fail, "I want you to send a letter which you will find in my pocket addressed to my brother. Tell no one the name. And add this, that I forgive him. It was really not worth while," he added wearily, "to hate him so. And say to the Superintendent I was on the straight with him, with you all, with my country in this rebellion business. I heard about this raid; and I fancy I have rather spoiled their pemmican. I have run some cattle in my time, but you know, Cameron, a fellow who has worn the uniform could not mix in with these beastly breeds against the Queen, God bless her!"

"Oh, Dr. Martin," cried the girl piteously, shaking him by the arm, "do not tell me you can do nothing. Try−−try something." She began again to chafe the cold hand, her tears falling upon it.

Raven looked up quickly at her.

"You are weeping for me, Miss Moira?" he said, surprise and wonder in his face. "For me? A horse−thief, an outlaw, for me? I thank you. And forgive me−−may I kiss your hand?" He tried feebly to lift her hand to his lips.

"No, no," cried the girl. "Not my hand!" and leaning over him she kissed him on the brow. His eyes were still upon her.

"Thank you," he said feebly, a rare, beautiful smile lighting up the white face. "You make me believe in God's mercy."

There was a quick movement in the group and Smith was kneeling beside the dying man.

"God's mercy, Mr. Raven," he said in an eager voice, "is infinite. Why should you not believe in it?"

Raven looked at him curiously.

"Oh, yes," he said with a quaintly humorous smile, "you are the chap that chucked Jerry away from the door?"

Smith nodded, then said earnestly:

"Mr. Raven, you must believe in God's mercy."

"God's mercy," said the dying man slowly. "Yes, God's mercy. What is it again? 'God−−be−−merciful−−to me−−a sinner.'" Once more he opened his eyes and let them rest upon the face of the girl bending over him. "Yes," he said, "you helped me to believe in God's mercy." With a sigh as of content he settled himself quietly against the shoulders of his dead horse.

"Good old comrade," he said, "good−by!" He closed his eyes and drew a deep breath. They waited for another, but there was no more.

"He is gone," said the doctor.

"Gone?" cried Moira. "Gone? Ochone, but he was the gallant gentleman!" she wailed, lapsing into her Highland speech. "Oh, but he had the brave heart and the true heart. Ochone! Ochone!" She swayed back and forth upon her knees with hands clasped and tears running down her cheeks, bending over the white face that lay so still in the moonlight and touched with the majesty of death.

"Come, Moira! Come, Moira!" said her brother surprised at her unwonted display of emotion. "You must control yourself."

"Leave her alone. Let her cry. She is in a hard spot," said Dr. Martin in a sharp voice in which grief and despair were mingled.

Cameron glanced at his friend's face. It was the face of a haggard old man.

"You are used up, old boy," he said kindly, putting his hand on the doctor's arm. "You need rest."

"Rest?" said the doctor. "Rest? Not I. But you do. And you too, Miss Moira," he added gently. "Come," giving her his hand, "you must get home." There was in his voice a tone of command that made the girl look up quickly and obey.

"And you?" she said. "You must be done."

"Done? Yes, but what matter? Take her home, Cameron."

"And what about you?" inquired Cameron.

"Smith, the constable and I will look after−−him−−and the horse. Send a wagon to−morrow morning."

Without further word the brother and sister mounted their horses.

"Good−by, old man. See you to−morrow," said Cameron.

"Good−night," said the doctor shortly.

The girl gave him her hand.

"Good−night," she said simply, her eyes full of a dumb pain.

"Good−by, Miss Moira," said the doctor, who held her hand for just a moment as if to speak again, then abruptly he turned his back on her without further word and so stood with never a glance more after her. It was for him a final farewell to hopes that had lived with him and had warmed his heart for the past three years. Now they were dead, dead as the dead man upon whose white still face he stood looking down.

"Thief, murderer, outlaw," he muttered to himself. "Sure enough−− sure enough. And yet you could not help it, nor could she." But he was not thinking of the dead man's record in the books of the Mounted Police.

CHAPTER XIX. THE GREAT CHIEF

On the rampart of hills overlooking the Piegan encampment the sun was shining pleasantly. The winter, after its final savage kick, had vanished and summer, crowding hard upon spring, was wooing the bluffs and hillsides on their southern exposures to don their summer robes of green. Not yet had the bluffs and hillsides quite yielded to the wooing, not yet had they donned the bright green apparel of summer, but there was the promise of summer's color gleaming through the neutral browns and grays of the poplar bluffs and the sunny hillsides. The crocuses with reckless abandon had sprung forth at the first warm kiss of the summer sun and stood bravely, gaily dancing in their purple and gray, till whole hillsides blushed for them. And the poplars, hesitating with dainty reserve, shivered in shy anticipation and waited for a surer call, still wearing their neutral tints, except where they stood sheltered by the thick spruces from the surly north wind. There they had boldly cast aside all prudery and were flirting in all their gallant trappings with the ardent summer.

Seeing none of all this, but dimly conscious of the good of it, Cameron and his faithful attendant Jerry lay grimly watching through the poplars. Three days had passed since the raid, and as yet there was no sign at the Piegan camp of the returning raiders. Not for one hour had the camp remained unwatched. Just long enough to bury his new−made friend, the dead outlaw, did Cameron himself quit the post, leaving Jerry on guard meantime, and now he was back again, with his glasses searching every corner of the Piegan camp and watching every movement. There was upon his face a look that filled with joy his watchful companion, a look that proclaimed his set resolve that when Eagle Feather and his young men should appear in camp there would speedily be swift and decisive action. For three days his keen eyes had looked forth through the delicate green−brown screen of poplar upon the doings of the Piegans, the Mounted Police meantime ostentatiously beating up the Blood Reserve with unwonted threats of vengeance for the raiders, the bruit of which had spread through all the reserves.

"Don't do anything rash," the Superintendent had admonished, as Cameron appeared demanding three troopers and Jerry, with whom to execute vengeance upon those who had brought death to a gallant gentleman and his gallant steed, for both of whom there had sprung up in Cameron's heart a great and admiring affection.

"No, sir," Cameron had replied, "nothing rash; we will do a little justice, that is all," but with so stern a face that the Superintendent had watched him away with some anxiety and had privately ordered a strong patrol to keep the Piegan camp under surveillance till Cameron had done his work. But there was no call for aid from any patrol, as it turned out; and before this bright summer morning had half passed away Cameron shut up his glasses, ready for action.

"I think they are all in now, Jerry, he said. "We will go down. Go and bring in the men. There is that devil Eagle Feather just riding in." Cameron's teeth went hard together on the name of the Chief, in whom the leniency of Police administration of justice had bred only a deeper treachery.

Within half an hour Cameron with his three troopers and Jerry rode jingling into the Piegan camp and disposed themselves at suitable points of vantage. Straight to the Chief's tent Cameron rode, and found Trotting Wolf standing at its door.

"I want that cattle−thief, Eagle Feather," he announced in a clear, firm voice that rang through the encampment from end to end.

"Eagle Feather not here," was Trotting Wolf's sullen but disturbed reply.

"Trotting Wolf, I will waste no time on you," said Cameron, drawing his gun. "I take Eagle Feather or you. Make your choice and quick about it!" There was in Cameron's voice a ring of such compelling command that Trotting Wolf weakened visibly.

"I know not where Eagle Feather−−"

"Halt there!" cried Cameron to an Indian who was seen to be slinking away from the rear of the line of tents.

The Indian broke into a run. Like a whirlwind Cameron was on his trail and before he had gained the cover of the woods had overtaken him.

"Halt!" cried Cameron again as he reached the Indian's side. The Indian stopped and drew a knife. "You

would, eh? Take that, will you?" Leaning down over his horse's neck Cameron struck the Indian with the butt of his gun. Before he could rise the three constables in a converging rush were upon him and had him handcuffed.

"Now then, where is Eagle Feather?" cried Cameron in a furious voice, riding his horse into the crowd that had gathered thick about him. "Ah, I see you," he cried, touching his horse with his heel as on the farther edge of the crowd he caught sight of his man. With a single bound his horse was within touch of the shrinking Indian. "Stand where you are!" cried Cameron, springing from his horse and striding to the Chief. "Put up your hands!" he said, covering him with his gun. "Quick, you dog!" he added, as Eagle Feather stood irresolute before him. Upon the uplifted hands Cameron slipped the handcuffs. "Come with me, you cattle−thief," he said, seizing him by the gaudy handkerchief that adorned his neck, and giving him a quick jerk.

"Trotting Wolf," said Cameron in a terrible voice, wheeling furiously upon the Chief, "this cattle−thieving of your band must stop. I want the six men who were in that cattle−raid, or you come with me. Speak quick!" he added.

"By Gar!" said Jerry, hugging himself in his delight, to the trooper who was in charge of the first Indian. "Look lak' he tak' de whole camp."

"By Jove, Jerry, it looks so to me, too! He has got the fear of death on these chappies. Look at his face. He looks like the very devil."

It was true. Cameron's face was gray, with purple blotches, and distorted with passion, his eyes were blazing with fury, his manner one of reckless savage abandon. There was but little delay. The rumors of vengeance stored up for the raiders, the paralyzing effect of the failure of the raid, the condemnation of a guilty conscience, but above all else the overmastering rage of Cameron, made anything like resistance simply impossible. In a very few minutes Cameron had his prisoners in line and was riding to the Fort, where he handed them over to the Superintendent for justice.

That business done, he found his patrol−work pressing upon him with a greater insistence than ever, for the runners from the half− breeds and the Northern Indians were daily arriving at the reserves bearing reports of rebel victories of startling magnitude. But even without any exaggeration tales grave enough were being carried from lip to lip throughout the Indian tribes. Small wonder that the irresponsible young Chiefs, chafing under the rule of the white man and thirsting for the mad rapture of fight, were straining almost to the breaking point the authority of the cooler older heads, so that even that subtle redskin statesman, Crowfoot, began to fear for his own position in the Blackfeet confederacy.

As the days went on the Superintendent at Macleod, whose duty it was to hold in statu quo that difficult country running up into the mountains and down to the American boundary−line, found his task one that would have broken a less cool−headed and stout−hearted officer.

The situation in which he found himself seemed almost to invite destruction. On the eighteenth of March he had sent the best of his men, some twenty−five of them, with his Inspector, to join the Alberta Field Force at Calgary, whence they made that famous march to Edmonton of over two hundred miles in four and a half marching days. From Calgary, too, had gone a picked body of Police with Superintendent Strong and his scouts as part of the Alberta Field Force under General Strange. Thus it came that by the end of April the Superintendent at Fort Macleod had under his command only a handful of his trained Police, supported by two or three companies of Militia−−who, with all their ardor, were unskilled in plain− craft, strange to the country, new to war, ignorant of the habits and customs and temper of the Indians with whom they were supposed to deal−−to hold the vast extent of territory under his charge, with its little scattered hamlets of settlers, safe in the presence of the largest and most warlike of the Indian tribes in Western Canada.

Every day the strain became more intense. A crisis appeared to be reached when the news came that on the twenty−fourth of April General Middleton had met a check at Fish Creek, which, though not specially serious in itself, revealed the possibilities of the rebel strategy and gave heart to the enemy immediately engaged.

And, though Fish Creek was no great fight, the rumor of it ran through the Western reserves like red fire through prairie−grass, blowing almost into flame the war−spirit of the young braves of the Bloods, Piegans and Sarcees and even of the more stable Blackfeet. Three days after that check, the news of it was humming through every tepee in the West, and for a week or more it took all the cool courage and steady nerve characteristic of the Mounted Police to enable them to ride without flurry or hurry their daily patrols through the reserves.

At this crisis it was that the Superintendent at Macleod gathered together such of his officers and

non−commissioned officers as he could in council at Fort Calgary, to discuss the situation and to plan for all possible emergencies. The full details of the Fish Creek affair had just come in. They were disquieting enough, although the Superintendent made light of them. On the wall of the barrack−room where the council was gathered there hung a large map of the Territories. The Superintendent, a man of small oratorical powers, undertook to set forth the disposition of the various forces now operating in the West.

"Here you observe the main line running west from Regina to the mountains, some five hundred and fifty miles," he said. "And here, roughly, two hundred and fifty miles north, is the northern boundary line of our settlements, Prince Albert at the east, Battleford at the center, Edmonton at the west, each of these points the center of a country ravaged by half−breeds and bands of Indians. To each of these points relief−expeditions have been sent.

"This line represents the march of Commissioner Irvine from Regina to Prince Albert−−a most remarkable march that was too, gentlemen, nearly three hundred miles over snow−bound country in about seven days. That march will be remembered, I venture to say. The Commissioner still holds Prince Albert, and we may rely upon it will continue to hold it safe against any odds. Meantime he is scouting the country round about, preventing Indians from reinforcing the enemy in any large numbers.

"Next, to the west is Battleford, which holds the central position and is the storm−center of the rebellion at present. This line shows the march of Colonel Otter with Superintendent Herchmer from Swift Current to that point. We have just heard that Colonel Otter has arrived at Battleford and has raised the siege. But large bands of Indians are in the vicinity of Battleford and the situation there is extremely critical. I understand that old Oo−pee−too−korah−han−apee−wee−yin−−" the Superintendent prided himself upon his mastery of Indian names and ran off this polysyllabic cognomen with the utmost facility−−"the Pond−maker, or Pound−maker as he has come to be called, is in the neighborhood. He is not a bad fellow, but he is a man of unusual ability, far more able than of the Willow Crees, Beardy, as he is called, though not so savage, and he has a large and compact body of Indians under him.

"Then here straight north from us some two hundred miles is Edmonton, the center of a very wide district sparsely settled, with a strong half−breed element in the immediate neighborhood and Big Bear and Little Pine commanding large bodies of Indians ravaging the country round about. Inspector Griesbach is in command of this district, located at Fort Saskatchewan, which is in close touch with Edmonton. General Strange, commanding the Alberta Field Force and several companies of Militia, together with our own men under Superintendent Strong and Inspector Dickson, are on the way to relieve this post. Inspector Dickson, I understand, has successfully made the crossing of the Red Deer with his nine pr. gun, a quite remarkable feat I assure you.

"But, gentlemen, you see the position in which we are placed in this section of the country. From the Cypress Hills here away to the southeast, westward to the mountains and down to the boundary− line, you have a series of reserves almost completely denuded of Police supervision. True, we are fortunate in having at the Blackfoot Crossing, at Fort Calgary and at Fort Macleod, companies of Militia; but the very presence of these troops incites the Indians, and in some ways is a continual source of unrest among them.

"Every day runners from the North and East come to our reserves with extraordinary tales of rebel victories. This Fish Creek business has had a tremendous influence upon the younger element. On every reserve there are scores of young braves eager to rise. What a general uprising would mean you know, or think you know. An Indian war of extermination is a horrible possibility. The question before us all is−−what is to be done?"

After a period of conversation the Superintendent summed up the results of the discussion in a few short sentences:

"It seems, gentlemen, there is not much more to be done than what we are already doing. But first of all I need not say that we must keep our nerve. I do not believe any Indian will see any sign of doubt or fear in the face of any member of this Force. Our patrols must be regularly and carefully done. There are a lot of things which we must not see, a certain amount of lawbreaking which we must not notice. Avoid on every possible occasion pushing things to extremes; but where it is necessary to act we must act with promptitude and fearlessness, as Mr. Cameron here did at the Piegan Reserve a week or so ago. I mention this because I consider that action of Cameron's a typically fine piece of Police work. We must keep on good terms with the Chiefs, tell them what good news there is to tell. We must intercept every runner possible. Arrest them and bring them to the barracks. The situation is grave, but not hopeless. Great responsibilities rest upon us, gentlemen. I do not believe that we

shall fail."

The little company broke up with resolute and grim determination stamped on every face. There would be no weakening at any spot where a Mounted Policeman was on duty.

"Cameron, just a moment," said the Superintendent as he was passing out. "Sit down. You were quite right in that Eagle Feather matter. You did the right thing in pushing that hard."

"I somehow felt I could do it, sir," replied Cameron simply. "I had the feeling in my bones that we could have taken the whole camp that day."

The Superintendent nodded. "I understand. And that is the way we should feel. But don't do anything rash this week. This is a week of crisis. If any further reverse should happen to our troops it will be extremely difficult, if indeed possible, to hold back the younger braves. If there should be a rising−−which may God forbid−− my plan then would be to back right on to the Blackfeet Reserve. If old Crowfoot keeps steady−−and with our presence to support him I believe he would−−we could hold things safe for a while. But, Cameron, that Sioux devil Copperhead must be got rid of. It is he that is responsible for this restless spirit among the younger Chiefs. He has been in the East, you say, for the last three weeks, but he will soon be back. His runners are everywhere. His work lies here, and the only hope for the rebellion lies here, and he knows it. My scouts inform me that there is something big immediately on. A powwow is arranged somewhere before final action. I have reason to suspect that if we sustain another reverse and if the minor Chiefs from all the reserves come to an agreement, Crowfoot will yield. That is the game that the Sioux is working on now."

"I know that quite well, sir," replied Cameron. "Copperhead has captured practically all the minor Chiefs."

"The checking of that big cattle−run, Cameron, was a mighty good stroke for us. You did that magnificently."

"No, sir," replied Cameron firmly. "We owe that to Raven."

"Yes, yes, we do owe a good deal to−−to−−that−−to Raven. Fine fellow gone wrong. Yes, we owe a lot to him, but we owe a lot to you as well, Cameron. I am not saying you will ever get any credit for it, but−−well−−who cares so long as the thing is done? But this Sioux must be got at all costs−−at all costs, Cameron, remember. I have never asked you to push this thing to the limit, but now at all costs, dead or alive, that Sioux must be got rid of."

"I could have potted him several times," replied Cameron, "but did not wish to push matters to extremes."

"Quite right. Quite right. That has been our policy hitherto, but now things have reached such a crisis that we can take no further chances. The Sioux must be eliminated."

"All right, sir," said Cameron, and a new purpose shaped itself in his heart. At all costs he would get the Sioux, alive if possible, dead if not.

Plainly the first thing was to uncover his tracks, and with this intention Cameron proceeded to the Blackfeet Reserve, riding with Jerry down the Bow River from Fort Calgary, until, as the sun was setting on an early May evening, he came in sight of the Blackfoot Crossing.

Not wishing to visit the Militia camp at that point, and desiring to explore the approaches of the Blackfeet Reserve with as little ostentation as possible, he sent Jerry on with the horses, with instructions to meet him later on in the evening on the outside of the Blackfeet camp, and took a side trail on foot leading to the reserve through a coulee. Through the bottom of the coulee ran a little stream whose banks were packed tight with alders, willows and poplars. Following the trail to where it crossed the stream, Cameron left it for the purpose of quenching his thirst, and proceeded up−stream some little way from the usual crossing. Lying there prone upon his face he caught the sound of hoofs, and, peering through the alders, he saw a line of Indians riding down the opposite bank. Burying his head among the tangled alders and hardly breathing, he watched them one by one cross the stream not more than thirty yards away and clamber up the bank.

"Something doing here, sure enough," he said to himself as he noted their faces. Three of them he knew, Red Crow of the Bloods, Trotting Wolf of the Piegans, Running Stream of the Blackfeet, then came three others unknown to Cameron, and last in the line Cameron was startled to observe Copperhead himself, while close at his side could be seen the slim figure of his son. As the Sioux passed by Cameron's hiding−place he paused and looked steadily down into the alders for a moment or two, then rode on.

"Saved yourself that time, old man," said Cameron as the Sioux disappeared, following the others up the trail. "We will see just which trail you take," he continued, following them at a safe distance and keeping himself hidden by the brush till they reached the open and disappeared over the hill. Swiftly Cameron ran to the top, and,

lying prone among the prairie grass, watched them for some time as they took the trail that ran straight westward.

"Sarcee Reserve more than likely," he muttered to himself. "If Jerry were only here! But he is not, so I must let them go in the meantime. Later, however, we shall come up with you, gentlemen. And now for old Crowfoot and with no time to lose."

He had only a couple of miles to go and in a few minutes he had reached the main trail from the Militia camp at the Crossing. In the growing darkness he could not discern whether Jerry had passed with the horses or not, so he pushed on rapidly to the appointed place of meeting and there found Jerry waiting for him.

"Listen, Jerry!" said he. "Copperhead is back. I have just seen him and his son with Red Crow, Trotting Wolf and Running Stream. There were three others−−Sioux I think they are; at any rate I did not know them. They passed me in the coulee and took the Sarcee trail. Now what do you think is up?"

Jerry pondered. "Come from Crowfoot, heh?"

"From the reserve here anyway," answered Cameron.

"Trotting Wolf beeg Chief−−Red Crow beeg Chief−−ver' bad! ver' bad! Dunno me−−look somet'ing−−beeg powwow mebbe. Ver' bad! Ver' bad! Go Sarcee Reserve, heh?" Again Jerry pondered. "Come from h'east−− by Blood−−Piegan−−den Blackfeet−−go Sarcee. What dey do? Where go den?"

"That is the question, Jerry," said Cameron.

"Sout' to Weegwam? No, nord to Ghost Reever−−Manitou Rock−−dunno−− mebbe."

"By Jove, Jerry, I believe you may be right. I don't think they would go to the Wigwam−−we caught them there once−−nor to the canyon. What about this Ghost River? I don't know the trail. Where is it?"

"Nord from Bow Reever by Kananaskis half day to Ghost Reever−−bad trail−−small leetle reever−−ver' stony−−ver' cold−−beeg tree wit' long beard."

"Long beard?"

"Yes−−long, long gray moss lak' beard−−ver' strange place dat−−from Ghost Reever west one half day to beeg Manitou Rock−−no trail. Beeg medicine−dance dere−−see heem once long tam' 'go−−leetle boy me−−beeg medicine−−Indian debbil stay dere−−Indian much scare'−− only go when mak' beeg tam'−−beeg medicine."

"Let me see if I get you, Jerry. A bad trail leads half a day north from the Bow at Kananaskis to Ghost River, eh?"

Jerry nodded.

"Then up the Ghost River westward through the bearded trees half a day to the Manitou Rock? Is that right?"

Again Jerry nodded.

"How shall I know the rock?"

"Beeg rock," said Jerry. "Beeg dat tree," pointing to a tall poplar, "and cut straight down lak some knife−−beeg rock−−black rock."

"All right," said Cameron. "What I want to know just now is does Crowfoot know of this thing? I fancy he must. I am going in to see him. Copperhead has just come from the reserve. He has Running Stream with him. It is possible, just possible, that he may not have seen Crowfoot. This I shall find out. Now, Jerry, you must follow Copperhead, find out where he has gone and all you can about this business, and meet me where the trail reaches the Ghost River. Call in at Fort Calgary. Take a trooper with you to look after the horses. I shall follow you to−morrow. If you are not at the Ghost River I shall go right on−−that is if I see any signs."

"Bon! Good!" said Jerry. And without further word he slipped on to his horse and disappeared into the darkness, taking the cross− trail through the coulee by which Cameron had come.

Crowfoot's camp showed every sign of the organization and discipline of a master spirit. The tents and houses in which his Indians lived were extended along both sides of a long valley flanked at both ends by poplar−bluffs. At the bottom of the valley there was a series of "sleughs" or little lakes, affording good grazing and water for the herds of cattle and ponies that could be seen everywhere upon the hillsides. At a point farthest from the water and near to a poplar−bluff stood Crowfoot's house. At the first touch of summer, however, Crowfoot's household had moved out from their dwelling, after the manner of the Indians, and had taken up their lodging in a little group of tents set beside the house.

Toward this little group of tents Cameron rode at an easy lope. He found Crowfoot alone beside his fire, except for the squaws that were cleaning up after the evening meal and the papooses and older children rolling about on the grass. As Cameron drew near, all vanished, except Crowfoot and a youth about seventeen years of

age, whose strongly marked features and high, fearless bearing proclaimed him Crowfoot's son. Dismounting, Cameron dropped the reins over his horse's head and with a word of greeting to the Chief sat down by the fire. Crowfoot acknowledged his salutation with a suspicious look and grunt.

"Nice night, Crowfoot," said Cameron cheerfully. "Good weather for the grass, eh?"

"Good," said Crowfoot gruffly.

Cameron pulled out his tobacco pouch and passed it to the Chief. With an air of indescribable condescension Crowfoot took the pouch, knocked the ashes from his pipe, filled it from the pouch and handed it back to the owner.

"Boy smoke?" inquired Cameron, holding out the pouch toward the youth.

"Huh!" grunted Crowfoot with a slight relaxing of his face. "Not yet−−too small."

The lad stood like a statue, and, except for a slight stiffening of his tall lithe figure, remained absolutely motionless, after the Indian manner. For some time they smoked in silence.

"Getting cold," said Cameron at length, as he kicked the embers of the fire together.

Crowfoot spoke to his son and the lad piled wood on the fire till it blazed high, then, at a sign from his father, he disappeared into the tent.

"Ha! That is better," said Cameron, stretching out his hands toward the fire and disposing himself so that the old Chief's face should be set clearly in its light.

"The Police ride hard these days?" said Crowfoot in his own language, after a long silence.

"Oh, sometimes," replied Cameron carelessly, "when cattle−thieves ride too."

"Huh?" inquired Crowfoot innocently.

"Yes, some Indians forget all that the Police have done for them, and like coyotes steal upon the cattle at night and drive them over cut−banks."

"Huh?" inquired Crowfoot again, apparently much interested.

"Yes," continued Cameron, fully aware that he was giving the old Chief no news, "Eagle Feather will be much wiser when he rides over the plains again."

"Huh!" ejaculated the Chief in agreement.

"But Eagle Feather," continued Cameron, "is not the worst Indian. He is no good, only a little boy who does what he is told."

"Huh?" inquired Crowfoot with childlike simplicity.

"Yes, he is an old squaw serving his Chief."

"Huh?" again inquired Crowfoot, moving his pipe from his mouth in his apparent anxiety to learn the name of this unknown master of Eagle Feather.

"Onawata, the Sioux, is a great Chief," said Cameron.

Crowfoot grunted his indifference.

"He makes all the little Chiefs, Blood, Piegan, Sarcee, Blackfeet obey him," said Cameron in a scornful voice, shading his face from the fire with his hand.

This time Crowfoot made no reply.

"But he has left this country for a while?" continued Cameron.

Crowfoot grunted acquiescence.

"My brother has not seen this Sioux for some weeks?" Again Cameron's hand shaded his face from the fire while his eyes searched the old Chief's impassive countenance.

"No," said Crowfoot. "Not for many days. Onawata bad man−−make much trouble."

"The big war is going on good," said Cameron, abruptly changing the subject.

"Huh?" inquired Crowfoot, looking up quickly.

"Yes," said Cameron. "At Fish Creek the half−breeds and Indians had a good chance to wipe out General Middleton's column." And he proceeded to give a graphic account of the rebels' opportunity at that unfortunate affair. "But," he concluded, "the half−breeds and Indians have no Chief."

"No Chief," agreed Crowfoot with emphasis, his old eyes gleaming in the firelight. "No Chief," he repeated. "Where Big Bear−−Little Pine−−Kah−mee−yes−too−waegs and Oo−pee−too−korah−han−ap−ee−wee−yin?"

"Oh," said Cameron, "here, there, everywhere."

"Huh! No big Chief," grunted Crowfoot in disgust. "One big Chief make all Indians one."

It seemed worth while to Cameron to take a full hour from his precious time to describe fully the operations of the troops and to make clear to the old warrior the steady advances which the various columns were making, the points they had relieved and the ultimate certainty of victory.

"Six thousand men now in the West," he concluded, "besides the Police. And ten thousand more waiting to come."

Old Crowfoot was evidently much impressed and was eager to learn more.

"I must go now," said Cameron, rising. "Where is Running Stream?" he asked, suddenly facing Crowfoot.

"Huh! Running Stream he go hunt−−t'ree day−−not come back," answered Crowfoot quickly.

Cameron sat down again by the fire, poked up the embers till the blaze mounted high.

"Crowfoot," he said solemnly, "this day Onawata was in this camp and spoke with you. Wait!" he said, putting up his hand as the old Chief was about to speak. "This evening he rode away with Running Stream, Red Crow, Trotting Wolf. The Sioux for many days has been leading about your young men like dogs on a string. To−day he has put the string round the necks of Red Crow, Running Stream, Trotting Wolf. I did not think he could lead Crowfoot too like a little dog.

"Wait!" he said again as Crowfoot rose to his feet in indignation. "Listen! The Police will get that Sioux. And the Police will take the Chiefs that he led round like little dogs and send them away. The Great Mother cannot have men as Chiefs whom she cannot trust. For many years the Police have protected the Indians. It was Crowfoot himself who once said when the treaty was being made−− Crowfoot will remember−−'If the Police had not come to the country where would we all be now? Bad men and whisky were killing us so fast that very few indeed of us would have been left to−day. The Police have protected us as the feathers of the bird protect it from the frosts of winter.' This is what Crowfoot said to the Great Mother's Councilor when he made a treaty with the Great Mother."

Here Cameron rose to his feet and stood facing the Chief.

"Is Crowfoot a traitor? Does he give his hand and draw it back again? It is not good that, when trouble comes, the Indians should join the enemies of the Police and of the Great Mother across the sea. These enemies will be scattered like dust before the wind. Does Crowfoot think when the leaves have fallen from the trees this year there will be any enemies left? Bah! This Sioux dog does not know the Great Mother, nor her soldiers, nor her Police. Crowfoot knows. Why does he talk to the enemies of the Great Mother and of his friends the Police? What does Crowfoot say? I go to−night to take Onawata. Already my men are upon his trail. Where does Crowfoot stand? With Onawata and the little Chiefs he leads around or with the Great Mother and the Police? Speak! I am waiting."

The old Chief was deeply stirred. For some moments while Cameron was speaking he had been eagerly seeking an opportunity to reply, but Cameron's passionate torrent of words prevented him breaking in without discourtesy. When Cameron ceased, however, the old Chief stretched out his hand and in his own language began:

"Many years ago the Police came to this country. My people then were poor−−"

At this point the sound of a galloping horse was heard, mingled with the loud cries of its rider. Crowfoot paused and stood intently listening. Cameron could get no meaning from the shouting. From every tent men came running forth and from the houses along the trail on every hand, till before the horse had gained Crowfoot's presence there had gathered about the Chief's fire a considerable crowd of Indians, whose numbers were momentarily augmented by men from the tents and houses up and down the trail.

In calm and dignified silence the old Chief waited the rider's word. He was an Indian runner and he bore an important message.

Dismounting, the runner stood, struggling to recover his breath and to regain sufficient calmness to deliver his message in proper form to the great Chief of the Blackfeet confederacy. While he stood thus struggling with himself Cameron took the opportunity to closely scrutinize his face.

"A Sarcee," he muttered. "I remember him−−an impudent cur." He moved quietly toward his horse, drew the reins up over his head, and, leading him back toward the fire, took his place beside Crowfoot again.

The Sarcee had begun his tale, speaking under intense excitement which he vainly tried to control. He delivered his message. Such was the rapidity and incoherence of his speech, however, that Cameron could make nothing of it. The effect upon the crowd was immediate and astounding. On every side rose wild cries of fierce

exultation, while at Cameron angry looks flashed from every eye. Old Crowfoot alone remained quiet, calm, impassive, except for the fierce gleaming of his steady eyes.

When the runner had delivered his message he held up his hand and spoke but a single word. Immediately there was silence as of the grave. Nothing was heard, not even the breathing of the Indians close about him. In sharp, terse sentences the old Chief questioned the runner, who replied at first eagerly, then, as the questions proceeded, with some hesitation. Finally, with a wave of the hand Crowfoot dismissed him and stood silently pondering for some moments. Then he turned to his people and said with quiet and impressive dignity:

"This is a matter for the Council. To−morrow we will discuss it." Then turning to Cameron he said in a low voice and with grave courtesy, "It is wise that my brother should go while the trails are open."

"The trails are always open to the Great Mother's Mounted Police," said Cameron, looking the old Chief full in the eye.

Crowfoot stood silent, evidently thinking deeply.

"It is right that my brother should know," he said at length, "what the runner tells," and in his deep guttural voice there was a ring of pride.

"Good news is always welcome," said Cameron, as he coolly pulled out his pipe and offered his pouch once more to Crowfoot, who, however, declined to see it.

"The white soldiers have attacked the Indians and have been driven back," said Crowfoot with a keen glance at Cameron's face.

"Ah!" said Cameron, smiling. "What Indians? What white soldiers?"

"The soldiers that marched to Battleford. They went against Oo− pee−too−korah−han−ap−ee−wee−yin and the Indians did not run away." No words could describe the tone and attitude of exultant and haughty pride with which the old Chief delivered this information.

"Crowfoot," said Cameron with deliberate emphasis, "it was Colonel Otter and Superintendent Herchmer of the Mounted Police that went north to Battleford. You do not know Colonel Otter, but you do know Superintendent Herchmer. Tell me, would Superintendent Herchmer and the Police run away?"

"The runner tells that the white soldiers ran away," said Crowfoot stubbornly.

"Then the runner lies!" Cameron's voice rang out loud and clear.

Swift as a lightning flash the Sarcee sprang at Cameron, knife in hand, crying in the Blackfeet tongue that terrible cry so long dreaded by settlers in the Western States of America, "Death to the white man!" Without apparently moving a muscle, still holding by the mane of his horse, Cameron met the attack with a swift and well−placed kick which caught the Indian's right wrist and flung his knife high in the air. Following up the kick, Cameron took a single step forward and met the murderous Sarcee with a straight left−hand blow on the jaw that landed the Indian across the fire and deposited him kicking amid the crowd.

Immediately there was a quick rush toward the white man, but the rush halted before two little black barrels with two hard, steady, gray eyes gleaming behind them.

"Crowfoot!" said Cameron sharply. "I hold ten dead Indians in my hands."

With a single stride Crowfoot was at Cameron's side. A single sharp stern word of command he uttered and the menacing Indians slunk back into the shadows, but growling like angry beasts.

"Is it wise to anger my young men?" said Crowfoot in a low voice.

"Is it wise," replied Cameron sternly, "to allow mad dogs to run loose? We kill such mad dogs in my country."

"Huh," grunted Crowfoot with a shrug of his shoulders. "Let him die!" Then in a lower voice he added earnestly, "It would be good to take the trail before my young men can catch their horses."

"I was just going, Crowfoot," said Cameron, stooping to light his pipe at the fire. "Good−night. Remember what I have said." And Cameron cantered away with both hands low before him and guiding his broncho with his knees, and so rode easily till safely beyond the line of the reserve. Once out of the reserve he struck his spurs hard into his horse and sent him onward at headlong pace toward the Militia camp.

Ten minutes after his arrival at the camp every soldier was in his place ready to strike, and so remained all night, with pickets thrown far out listening with ears attent for the soft pad of moccasined feet.

CHAPTER XX. THE LAST PATROL

It was still early morning when Cameron rode into the barrack−yard at Fort Calgary. To the Sergeant in charge, the Superintendent of Police having departed to Macleod, he reported the events of the preceding night.

"What about that rumor, Sergeant?" he inquired after he had told his tale.

"Well, I had the details yesterday," replied the Sergeant. "Colonel Otter and a column of some three hundred men with three guns went out after Pound−maker. The Indians were apparently strongly posted and could not be dislodged, and I guess our men were glad to get out of the scrape as easily as they did."

"Great Heavens!" cried Cameron, more to himself than to the officer, "what will this mean to us here?"

The Sergeant shrugged his shoulders.

"The Lord only knows!" he said.

"Well, my business presses all the more," said Cameron. "I'm going after this Sioux. Jerry is already on his trail. I suppose you cannot let me have three or four men? There is liable to be trouble and we cannot afford to make a mess of this thing."

"Jerry came in last night asking for a man," replied the Sergeant, "but I could not spare one. However, we will do our best and send you on the very first men that come in."

"Send on half a dozen to−morrow at the very latest," replied Cameron. "I shall rely upon you. Let me give you my trail."

He left a plan of the Ghost River Trail with the Sergeant and rode to look up Dr. Martin. He found the doctor still in bed and wrathful at being disturbed.

"I say, Cameron," he growled, "what in thunder do you mean by roaming round this way at night and waking up Christian people out of their sleep?"

"Sorry, old boy," replied Cameron, "but my business is rather important."

And then while the doctor sat and shivered in his night clothes upon the side of the bed Cameron gave him in detail the history of the previous evening and outlined his plan for the capture of the Sioux.

Dr. Martin listened intently, noting the various points and sketching an outline of the trail as Cameron described it.

"I wanted you to know, Martin, in case anything happened. For, well, you know how it is with my wife just now. A shock might kill her."

The doctor growled an indistinct reply.

"That is all, old chap. Good−by," said Cameron, pressing his hand. "This I feel is my last go with old Copperhead."

"Your last go?"

"Oh, don't be alarmed," he replied lightly. "I am going to get him this time. There will be no trifling henceforth. Well, good−by, I am off. By the way, the Sergeant at the barracks has promised to send on half a dozen men to−morrow to back me up. You might just keep him in mind of that, for things are so pressing here that he might quite well imagine that he could not spare the men."

"Well, that is rather better," said Martin. "The Sergeant will send those men all right, or I will know the reason why. Hope you get your game. Good−by, old man."

A day's ride brought Cameron to Kananaskis, where the Sun Dance Trail ends on one side of the Bow River and the Ghost River Trail begins on the other. There he found signs to indicate that Jerry was before him on his way to the Manitou Rock. As Cameron was preparing to camp for the night there came over him a strong but unaccountable presentiment of approaching evil, an irresistible feeling that he ought to press forward.

"Pshaw! I will be seeing spooks next!" he said impatiently to himself. "I suppose it is the Highlander in me that is seeing visions and dreaming dreams. I must eat, however, no matter what is going to happen."

Leaving his horse saddled, but removing the bridle, he gave him his feed of oats, then he boiled his tea and made his own supper. As he was eating the feeling grew more strongly upon him that he should not camp but go

forward at once. At the same time he made the discovery that the weariness that had almost overpowered him during the last half−hour of his ride had completely vanished. Hence, with the feeling of half contemptuous anger at himself for yielding to his presentiment, he packed up his kit again, bridled his horse, and rode on.

The trail was indeed, as Jerry said, "no trail." It was rugged with broken rocks and cumbered with fallen trees, and as it proceeded became more indistinct. His horse, too, from sheer weariness, for he had already done his full day's journey, was growing less sure footed and so went stumbling noisily along. Cameron began to regret his folly in yielding to a mere unreasoning imagination and he resolved to spend the night at the first camping−ground that should offer. The light of the long spring day was beginning to fade from the sky and in the forest the deep shadows were beginning to gather. Still no suitable camping−ground presented itself and Cameron stubbornly pressed forward through the forest that grew denser and more difficult at every step. After some hours of steady plodding the trees began to be sensibly larger, the birch and poplar gave place to spruce and pine and the underbrush almost entirely disappeared. The trail, too, became better, winding between the large trees which, with clean trunks, stood wide apart and arranged themselves in stately high−arched aisles and long corridors. From the lofty branches overhead the gray moss hung in long streamers, as Jerry had said, giving to the trees an ancient and weird appearance. Along these silent, solemn, gray−festooned aisles and corridors Cameron rode with an uncanny sensation that unseen eyes were peering out upon him from those dim and festooned corridors on either side. Impatiently he strove to shake off the feeling, but in vain. At length, forced by the growing darkness, he decided to camp, when through the shadowy and silent forest there came to his ears the welcome sound of running water. It was to Cameron like the sound of a human voice. He almost called aloud to the running stream as to a friend. It was the Ghost River.

In a few minutes he had reached the water and after picketing his horse some little distance down the stream and away from the trail, he rolled himself in his blanket to sleep. The moon rising above the high tree−tops filled the forest aisles with a soft unearthly light. As his eye followed down the long dim aisles there grew once more upon him the feeling that he was being watched by unseen eyes. Vainly he cursed himself for his folly. He could not sleep. A twig broke near him. He lay still listening with every nerve taut. He fancied he could hear soft feet about him and stealing near. With his two guns in hand he sat bolt upright. Straight before him and not more than ten feet away the form of an Indian was plainly to be seen. A slight sound to his right drew his eyes in that direction. There, too, stood the silent form of an Indian, on his left also an Indian. Suddenly from behind him a deep, guttural voice spoke, "Look this way!" He turned sharply and found himself gazing into a rifle−barrel a few feet from his face. "Now look back!" said the voice. He glanced to right and left, only to find rifles leveled at him from every side.

"White man put down his guns on ground!" said the same guttural voice.

Cameron hesitated.

"Indian speak no more," said the voice in a deep growl.

Cameron put his guns down.

"Stand up!" said the voice.

Cameron obeyed. Out from behind the Indian with the leveled rifle glided another Indian form. It was Copperhead. Two more Indians appeared with him. All thought of resistance passed from Cameron's mind. It would mean instant death, and, what to Cameron was worse than death, the certain failure of his plans. While he lived he still had hope. Besides, there would be the Police next day.

With savage, cruel haste Copperhead bound his hands behind his back and as a further precaution threw a cord about his neck.

"Come!" he said, giving the cord a quick jerk.

"Copperhead," said Cameron through his clenched teeth, "you will one day wish you had never done this thing."

"No speak!" said Copperhead gruffly, jerking the cord so heavily as almost to throw Cameron off his feet.

Through the night Cameron stumbled on with his captors, Copperhead in front and the others following. Half dead with sleeplessness and blind with rage he walked on as if in a hideous nightmare, mechanically watching the feet of the Indian immediately in front of him and thus saving himself many a cruel fall and a more cruel jerking of the cord about his neck, for such was Copperhead's method of lifting him to his feet when he fell. It seemed to him as if the night would never pass or the journey end.

At length the throbbing of the Indian drum fell upon his ears. It was to him a welcome sound. Nothing could be much more agonizing than what he was at present enduring. As they approached the Indian camp one of his captors raised a wild, wailing cry which resounded through the forest with an unearthly sound. Never had such a cry fallen upon Cameron's ears. It was the old−time cry of the Indian warriors announcing that they were returning in triumph bringing their captives with them. The drum−beat ceased. Again the cry was raised, when from the Indian encampment came in reply a chorus of similar cries followed by a rush of braves to meet the approaching warriors and to welcome them and their captives.

With loud and discordant exultation straight into the circle of the firelight cast from many fires Copperhead and his companions marched their captive. On every side naked painted Indians to the number of several score crowded in tumultuous uproar. Not for many years had these Indians witnessed their ancient and joyous sport of baiting a prisoner.

As Cameron came into the clear light of the fire instantly low murmurs ran round the crowd, for to many of them he was well known. Then silence fell upon them. His presence there was clearly a shock to many of them. To take prisoner one of the Mounted Police and to submit him to indignity stirred strange emotions in their hearts. The keen eye of Copperhead noted the sudden change of the mood of the Indians and immediately he gave orders to those who held Cameron in charge, with the result that they hurried him off and thrust him into a little low hut constructed of brush and open in front where, after tying his feet securely, they left him with an Indian on guard in front.

For some moments Cameron lay stupid with weariness and pain till his weariness overpowered his pain and he sank into sleep. He was recalled to consciousness by the sensation of something digging into his ribs. As he sat up half asleep a low "hist!" startled him wide awake. His heart leaped as he heard out of the darkness a whispered word, "Jerry here." Cameron rolled over and came close against the little half−breed, bound as he was himself. Again came the "hist!"

"Me all lak' youse'f," said Jerry. "No spik any. Look out front."

The Indian on guard was eagerly looking and listening to what was going on before him beside the fire. At one side of the circle sat the Indians in council. Copperhead was standing and speaking to them.

"What is he saying?" said Cameron, his mouth close to Jerry's ear.

"He say dey keel us queeck. Indian no lak' keel. Dey scare Police get 'em. Copperhead he ver' mad. Say he keel us heemse'f−−queeck."

Again and again and with ever increasing vehemence Copperhead urged his views upon the hesitating Indians, well aware that by involving them in such a deed of blood he would irrevocably commit them to rebellion. But he was dealing with men well−nigh as subtle as himself, and for the very same reason as he pressed them to the deed they shrank back from it. They were not yet quite prepared to burn their bridges behind them. Indeed some of them suggested the wisdom of holding the prisoners as hostages in case of necessity arising in the future.

"What Indians are here?" whispered Cameron.

"Piegan, Sarcee, Blood," breathed Jerry. "No Blackfeet come−−not yet−−Copperhead he look, look, look all yesterday for Blackfeet coming. Blackfeet come to−morrow mebbe−−den Indian mak' beeg medicine. Copperhead he go meet Blackfeet dis day−−he catch you−− he go 'gain to−morrow mebbe−−dunno."

Meantime the discussion in the council was drawing to a climax. With the astuteness of a true leader Copperhead ceased to urge his view, and, unable to secure the best, wisely determined to content himself with the second−best. His vehement tone gave place to one of persuasion. Finally an agreement appeared to be reached by all. With one consent the council rose and with hands uplifted they all appeared to take some solemn oath.

"What are they saying?" whispered Cameron.

"He say," replied Jerry, "he go meet Blackfeet and when he bring 'em back den dey keel us sure t'ing. But," added Jerry with a cheerful giggle, "he not keel 'em yet, by Gar!"

For some minutes they waited in silence, then they saw Copperhead with his bodyguard of Sioux disappear from the circle of the firelight into the shadows of the forest.

"Now you go sleep," whispered Jerry. "Me keep watch."

Even before he had finished speaking Cameron had lain back upon the ground and in spite of the pain in his tightly bound limbs such was his utter exhaustion that he fell fast asleep.

It seemed to him but a moment when he was again awakened by the touch of a hand stealing over his face.

The hand reached his lips and rested there, when he started up wide−awake. A soft hiss from the back of the hut arrested him.

"No noise," said a soft guttural voice. Again the hand was thrust through the brush wall, this time bearing a knife. "Cut string," whispered the voice, while the hand kept feeling for the thongs that bound Cameron's hands. In a few moments Cameron was free from his bonds.

"Give me the knife," he whispered. It was placed in his hands.

"Tell you squaw," said the voice, "sick boy not forget."

"I will tell her," replied Cameron. "She will never forget you." The boy laid his hand on Cameron's lips and was gone.

Soon Jerry too was free. Slowly they wormed their way through the flimsy brush wall at the back, and, crouching low, looked about them. The camp was deep in sleep. The fires were smoldering in their ashes. Not an Indian was moving. Lying across the front of their little hut the sleeping form of their guard could be seen. The forest was still black behind them, but already there was in the paling stars the faint promise of the dawn. Hardly daring to breathe, they rose and stood looking at each other.

"No stir," said Jerry with his lips at Cameron's ear. He dropped on his hands and knees and began carefully to remove every twig from his path so that his feet might rest only upon the deep leafy mold of the forest. Carefully Cameron followed his example, and, working slowly and painfully, they gained the cover of the dark forest away from the circle of the firelight.

Scarcely had they reached that shelter when an Indian rose from beside a fire, raked the embers together, and threw some sticks upon it. As Cameron stood watching him, his heart−beat thumping in his ears, a rotten twig snapped under his feet. The Indian turned his face in their direction, and, bending forward, appeared to be listening intently. Instantly Jerry, stooping down, made a scrambling noise in the leaves, ending with a thump upon the ground. Immediately the Indian relaxed his listening attitude, satisfied that a rabbit was scurrying through the forest upon his own errand bent. Rigidly silent they stood, watching him till long after he had lain down again in his place, then once more they began their painful advance, clearing treacherous twigs from every place where their feet should rest. Fortunately for their going the forest here was largely free from underbrush. Working carefully and painfully for half an hour, and avoiding the trail by the Ghost River, they made their way out of hearing of the camp and then set off at such speed as their path allowed, Jerry in the lead and Cameron following.

"Where are you going, Jerry?" inquired Cameron as the little half− breed, without halt or hesitation, went slipping through the forest.

"Kananaskis," said Jerry. "Strike trail near Bow Reever."

"Hold up for a moment, Jerry. I want to talk to you," said Cameron.

"No! Mak' speed now. Stop in brush."

"All right," said Cameron, following close upon his heels.

The morning broadened into day, but they made no pause till they had left behind them the open timber and gained the cover of the forest where the underbrush grew thick. Then Jerry, finding a dry and sheltered spot, threw himself down and stretched himself at full length waiting for Cameron's word.

"Tired, Jerry?" said Cameron.

"Non," replied the little man scornfully. "When lie down tak' 'em easy."

"Good! Now listen! Copperhead is on his way to meet the Blackfeet, but I fancy he is going to be disappointed." Then Cameron narrated to Jerry the story of his recent interview with Crowfoot. "So I don't think," he concluded, "any Blackfeet will come. Copperhead and Running Stream are going to be sold this time. Besides that the Police are on their way to Kananaskis following our trail. They will reach Kananaskis to−night and start for Ghost River to−morrow. We ought to get Copperhead between us somewhere on the Ghost River trail and we must get him to−day. Where will he be now?"

Jerry considered the matter, then, pointing straight eastward, he replied:

"On trail Kananaskis not far from Ghost Reever."

"Will he be that far?" inquired Cameron. "He would have to sleep and eat, Jerry."

"Non! No sleep−−hit sam' tam' he run."

"Then it is quite possible," said Cameron, "that we may head him off."

"Mebbe−−dunno how fas' he go," said Jerry.

"By the way, Jerry, when do we eat?" inquired Cameron.

"Pull belt tight," said Jerry with a grin. "Hit at cache on trail."

"Do you mean to say you had the good sense to cache some grub, Jerry, on your way down?"

"Jerry lak' squirrel," replied the half−breed. "Cache grub many place−−sometam come good."

"Great head, Jerry. Now, where is the cache?"

"Halfway Kananaskis to Ghost Reever."

"Then, Jerry, we must make that Ghost River trail and make it quick if we are to intercept Copperhead."

"Bon! We mus' mak' beeg speed for sure." And "make big speed" they did, with the result that by midday they struck the trail not far from Jerry's cache. As they approached the trail they proceeded with extreme caution, for they knew that at any moment they might run upon Copperhead and his band or upon some of their Indian pursuers who would assuredly be following them hard. A careful scrutiny of the trail showed that neither Copperhead nor their pursuers had yet passed by.

"Come now ver' soon," said Jerry, as he left the trail, and, plunging into the brush, led the way with unerring precision to where he had made his cache. Quickly they secured the food and with it made their way back to a position from which they could command a view of the trail.

"Go sleep now," said Jerry, after they had done. "Me watch one hour."

Gladly Cameron availed himself of the opportunity to catch up his sleep, in which he was many hours behind. He stretched himself on the ground and in a moment's time lay as completely unconscious as if dead. But before half of his allotted time was gone he was awakened by Jerry's hand pressing steadily upon his arm.

"Indian come," whispered the half−breed. Instantly Cameron was wide−awake and fully alert.

"How many, Jerry?" he asked, lying with his ear to the ground.

"Dunno. T'ree−−four mebbe."

They had not long to wait. Almost as Jerry was speaking the figure of an Indian came into view, running with that tireless trot that can wear out any wild animal that roams the woods.

"Copperhead!" whispered Cameron, tightening his belt and making as if to rise.

"Wait!" replied Jerry. "One more."

Following Copperhead, and running not close upon him but at some distance behind, came another Indian, then another, till three had passed their hiding−place.

"Four against two, Jerry," said Cameron. "That is all right. They have their knives, I see, but only one gun. We have no guns and only one knife. But Jerry, we can go in and kill them with our bare hands."

Jerry nodded carelessly. He had fought too often against much greater odds in Police battles to be unduly disturbed at the present odds.

Silently and at a safe distance behind they fell into the wake of the running Indians, Jerry with his moccasined feet leading the way. Mile after mile they followed the trail, ever on the alert for the doubling back of those whom they were pursuing. Suddenly Cameron heard a sharp hiss from Jerry in front. Swiftly he flung himself into the brush and lay still. Within a minute he saw coming back upon the trail an Indian, silent as a shadow and listening at every step. The Indian passed his hiding−place and for some minutes Cameron lay watching until he saw him return in the same stealthy manner. After some minutes had elapsed a soft hiss from Jerry brought Cameron cautiously out upon the trail once more.

"All right," whispered Jerry. "All Indians pass on before." And once more they went forward.

A second time during the afternoon Jerry's warning hiss sent Cameron into the brush to allow an Indian to scout his back trail. It was clear that the presence of Cameron and the half−breed upon the Ghost River trail had awakened the suspicion in Copperhead's mind that the plan to hold a powwow at Manitou Rock was known to the Police and that they were on his trail. It became therefore increasingly evident to Cameron that any plan that involved the possibility of taking Copperhead unawares would have to be abandoned. He called Jerry back to him.

"Jerry," he said, "if that Indian doubles back on his track again I mean to get him. If we get him the other chaps will follow. If I only had a gun! But this knife is no use to me."

"Give heem to me," said Jerry eagerly. "I find heem good."

It was toward the close of the afternoon when again Jerry's hiss warned Cameron that the Indian was returning upon his trail. Cameron stepped into the brush at the side, and, crouching low, prepared for the encounter, but as

he was about to spring Jerry flashed past him, and, hurling himself upon the Indian's back, gripped him by the throat and bore him choking to earth, knocking the wind out of him and rendering him powerless. Jerry's knife descended once bright, once red, and the Indian with a horrible gasping cry lay still.

"Quick!" cried Cameron, seizing the dead man by the shoulders. "Lift him up!"

Jerry sprang to seize the legs, and, taking care not to break down the brush on either side of the trail, they lifted the body into the thick underwood and concealing themselves beside it awaited events. Hardly were they out of sight when they heard the soft pad of several feet running down the trail. Opposite them the feet stopped abruptly.

"Huh!" grunted the Indian runner, and darted back by the way he had come.

"Heem see blood," whispered Jerry. "Go back tell Copperhead."

With every nerve strung to its highest tension they waited, crouching, Jerry tingling and quivering with the intensity of his excitement, Cameron quiet, cool, as if assured of the issue.

"I am going to get that devil this time, Jerry," he breathed. "He dragged me by the neck once. I will show him something."

Jerry laid his hand upon his arm. At a little distance from them there was a sound of creeping steps. A few moments they waited and at their side the brush began to quiver. A moment later beside Cameron's face a hand carrying a rifle parted the screen of spruce boughs. Quick as a flash Cameron seized the wrist, gripping it with both hands, and, putting his weight into the swing, flung himself backwards; at the same time catching the body with his knee, he heaved it clear over their heads and landed it hard against a tree. The rifle tumbled from the Indian's hand and he lay squirming on the ground. Immediately as Jerry sprang for the rifle a second Indian thrust his face through the screen, caught sight of Jerry with the rifle, darted back and disappeared with Jerry hard upon his trail. Scarcely had they vanished into the brush when Cameron, hearing a slight sound at his back, turned swiftly to see a tall Indian charging upon him with knife raised to strike. He had barely time to thrust up his arm and divert the blow from his neck to his shoulder when the Indian was upon him like a wild cat.

"Ha! Copperhead!" cried Cameron with exultation, as he flung him off. "At last I have you! Your time has come!"

The Sioux paused in his attack, looking scornfully at his antagonist. He was dressed in a highly embroidered tight−fitting deerskin coat and leggings.

"Huh!" he grunted in a voice of quiet, concentrated fury. "The white dog will die."

"No, Copperhead," replied Cameron quietly. "You have a knife, I have none, but I shall lead you like a dog into the Police guard− house."

The Sioux said nothing in reply, but kept circling lightly on his toes waiting his chance to spring. As the two men stood facing each other there was little to choose between them in physical strength and agility as well as in intelligent fighting qualities. There was this difference, however, that the Indian's fighting had ever been to kill, the white man's simply to win. But this difference to−day had ceased to exist. There was in Cameron's mind the determination to kill if need be. One immense advantage the Indian held in that he possessed a weapon in the use of which he was a master and by means of which he had already inflicted a serious wound upon his enemy, a wound which as yet was but slightly felt. To deprive the Indian of that knife was Cameron's first aim. That once achieved, the end could not long be delayed; for the Indian, though a skillful wrestler, knows little of the art of fighting with his hands.

As Cameron stood on guard watching his enemy's movements, his mind recalled in swift review the various wrongs he had suffered at his hands, the fright and insult to his wife, the devastation of his home, the cattle−raid involving the death of Raven, and lastly he remembered with a deep rage his recent humiliation at the Indian's hands and how he had been hauled along by the neck and led like a dog into the Indian camp. At these recollections he became conscious of a burning desire to humiliate the redskin who had dared to do these things to him.

With this in mind he waited the Indian's attack. The attack came swift as a serpent's dart, a feint to strike, a swift recoil, then like a flash of light a hard drive with the knife. But quick as was the Indian's drive Cameron was quicker. Catching the knife− hand at the wrist he drew it sharply down, meeting at the same time the Indian's chin with a short, hard uppercut that jarred his head so seriously that his grip on the knife relaxed and it fell from his hand. Cameron kicked it behind him into the brush while the Indian, with a mighty wrench, released himself from

Cameron's grip and sprang back free. For some time the Indian kept away out of Cameron's reach as if uncertain of himself. Cameron taunted him.

"Onawata has had enough! He cannot fight unless he has a knife! See! I will punish the great Sioux Chief like a little child."

So saying, Cameron stepped quickly toward him, made a few passes and once, twice, with his open hand slapped the Indian's face hard. In a mad fury of passion the Indian rushed upon him. Cameron met him with blows, one, two, three, the last one heavy enough to lay him on the ground insensible.

"Oh, get up!" said Cameron contemptuously, kicking him as he might a dog. "Get up and be a man!"

Slowly the Indian rose, wiping his bleeding lips, hate burning in his eyes, but in them also a new look, one of fear.

"Ha! Onawata is a great fighter!" smiled Cameron, enjoying to the full the humiliation of his enemy.

Slowly the Indian gathered himself together. He was no coward and he was by no means beaten as yet, but this kind of fighting was new to him. He apparently determined to avoid those hammering fists of the white man. With extraordinary agility he kept out of Cameron's reach, circling about him and dodging in and out among the trees. While thus pressing hard upon the Sioux Cameron suddenly became conscious of a sensation of weakness. The bloodletting of the knife wound was beginning to tell. Cameron began to dread that if ever this Indian made up his mind to run away he might yet escape. He began to regret his trifling with him and he resolved to end the fight as soon as possible with a knock−out blow.

The quick eye of the Indian perceived that Cameron's breath was coming quicker, and, still keeping carefully out of his enemy's reach, he danced about more swiftly than ever. Cameron realized that he must bring the matter quickly to an end. Feigning a weakness greater than he felt, he induced the Indian to run in upon him, but this time the Indian avoided the smashing blow with which Cameron met him, and, locking his arms about his antagonist and gripping him by the wounded shoulder, began steadily to wear him to the ground. Sickened by the intensity of the pain in his wounded shoulder, Cameron felt his strength rapidly leaving him. Gradually the Indian shifted his hand up from the shoulder to the neck, the fingers working their way toward Cameron's face. Well did Cameron know the savage trick which the Indian had in mind. In a few minutes more those fingers would be in Cameron's eyes pressing the eyeballs from their sockets. It was now the Indian's turn to jibe.

"Huh!" he exclaimed. "White man no good. Soon he see no more."

The taunt served to stimulate every ounce of Cameron's remaining strength. With a mighty effort he wrenched the Indian's hand from his face, and, tearing himself free, swung his clenched fist with all his weight upon the Indian's neck. The blow struck just beneath the jugular vein. The Indian's grip relaxed, he staggered back a pace, half stunned. Summoning all his force, Cameron followed up with one straight blow upon the chin. He needed no other. As if stricken by an axe the Indian fell to the earth and lay as if dead. Sinking on the ground beside him Cameron exerted all his will−power to keep himself from fainting. After a few minutes' fierce struggle with himself he was sufficiently revived to be able to bind the Indian's hands behind his back with his belt. Searching among the brushwood, he found the Indian's knife, and cut from his leather trousers sufficient thongs to bind his legs, working with fierce and concentrated energy while his strength lasted. At length as the hands were drawn tight darkness fell upon his eyes and he sank down unconscious beside his foe.

"There, that's better! He has lost a lot of blood, but we have checked that flow and he will soon be right. Hello, old man! Just waking up, are you? Lie perfectly still. Come, you must lie still. What? Oh, Copperhead? Well, he is safe enough. What? No, never fear. We know the old snake and we have tied him fast. Jerry has a fine assortment of knots adorning his person. Now, no more talking for half a day. Your wound is clean enough. A mighty close shave it was, but by to−morrow you will be fairly fit. Copperhead? Oh, never mind Copperhead. I assure you he is safe enough. Hardly fit to travel yet. What happened to him? Looks as if a tree had fallen upon him." To which chatter of Dr. Martin's Cameron could only make feeble answer, "For God's sake don't let him go!"

After the capture of Copperhead the camp at Manitou Lake faded away, for when the Police Patrol under Jerry's guidance rode up the Ghost River Trail they found only the cold ashes of camp−fires and the debris that remains after a powwow.

Three days later Cameron rode back into Fort Calgary, sore but content, for at his stirrup and bound to his

saddle−horn rode the Sioux Chief, proud, untamed, but a prisoner. As he rode into the little town his quick eyes flashed scorn upon all the curious gazers, but in their depths beneath the scorn there looked forth an agony that only Cameron saw and understood. He had played for a great stake and had lost.

As the patrol rode into Fort Calgary the little town was in an uproar of jubilation.

"What's the row?" inquired the doctor, for Cameron felt too weary to inquire.

"A great victory for the troops!" said a young chap dressed in cow− boy garb. "Middleton has smashed the half−breeds at Batoche. Riel is captured. The whole rebellion business is bust up."

Cameron threw a swift glance at the Sioux's face. A fierce anxiety looked out of the gleaming eyes.

"Tell him, Jerry," said Cameron to the half−breed who rode at his other side.

As Jerry told the Indian of the total collapse of the rebellion and the capture of its leader the stern face grew eloquent with contempt.

"Bah!" he said, spitting on the ground. "Riel he much fool−−no good fight. Indian got no Chief−−no Chief." The look on his face all too clearly revealed that his soul was experiencing the bitterness of death.

Cameron almost pitied him, but he spoke no word. There was nothing that one could say and besides he was far too weary for anything but rest. At the gate of the Barrack yard his old Superintendent from Fort Macleod met the party.

"You are wounded, Cameron?" exclaimed the Superintendent, glancing in alarm at Cameron's wan face.

"I have got him," replied Cameron, loosing the lariat from the horn of his saddle and handing the end to an orderly. "But," he added, "it seems hardly worth while now."

"Worth while! Worth while!" exclaimed the Superintendent with as much excitement as he ever allowed to appear in his tone. "Let me tell you, Cameron, that if any one thing has kept me from getting into a blue funk during these months it was the feeling that you were on patrol along the Sun Dance Trail."

"Funk?" exclaimed Cameron with a smile. "Funk?" But while he smiled he looked into the cold, gray eyes of his Chief, and, noting the unwonted glow in them, he felt that after all his work as the Patrol of the Sun Dance Trail was perhaps worth while.

CHAPTER XXI. WHY THE DOCTOR STAYED

The Big Horn River, fed by July suns burning upon glaciers high up between the mountain−peaks, was running full to its lips and gleaming like a broad ribbon of silver, where, after rushing hurriedly out of the rock−ribbed foothills, it settled down into a deep steady flow through the wide valley of its own name. On the tawny undulating hillsides, glorious in the splendid July sun, herds of cattle and horses were feeding, making with the tawny hillsides and the silver river a picture of luxurious ease and quiet security that fitted well with the mood of the two men sitting upon the shady side of the Big Horn Ranch House.

Inspector Dickson was enjoying to the full his after−dinner pipe, and with him Dr. Martin, who was engaged in judiciously pumping the Inspector in regard to the happenings of the recent campaign−− successfully, too, except where he touched those events in which the Inspector himself had played a part.

The war was over. Batoche had practically settled the Rebellion. Riel was in his cell at Regina awaiting trial and execution. Pound−maker, Little Pine, Big Bear and some of their other Chiefs were similarly disposed of. Copperhead at Macleod was fretting his life out like an eagle in a cage. The various regiments of citizen soldiers had gone back to their homes to be received with vociferous welcome, except such of them as were received in reverent silence, to be laid away among the immortals with quiet falling tears. The Police were busily engaged in wiping up the debris of the Rebellion. The Commissioner, intent upon his duty, was riding the marches, bearing in grim silence the criticism of empty−headed and omniscient scribblers, because, forsooth, he had obeyed his Chief's orders, and, resisting the greatest provocation to do otherwise, had held steadfastly to his post, guarding with resolute courage what was committed to his trust. The Superintendents and Inspectors were back at their various posts, settling upon the reserves wandering bands of Indians, some of whom were just awakening to the fact that they had missed a great opportunity and were grudgingly surrendering to the inevitable, and, under the wise, firm, judicious handling of the Police, were slowly returning to their pre−rebellion status.

The Western ranches were rejoicing in a sense of vast relief from the terrible pall that like a death−cloud had been hanging over them for six months and all Western Canada was thrilling with the expectation of a new era of prosperity consequent upon its being discovered by the big world outside.

Upon the two men thus discussing, Mrs. Cameron, carrying in her arms her babe, bore down in magnificent and modest pride, wearing with matronly grace her new glory of a great achievement, the greatest open to womankind.

"He has just waked up from a very fine sleep," she exclaimed, "to make your acquaintance, Inspector. I hope you duly appreciate the honor done you."

The Inspector rose to his feet and saluted the new arrival with becoming respect.

"Now," said Mrs. Cameron, settling herself down with an air of determined resolve, "I want to hear all about it."

"Meaning?" said the Inspector.

"Meaning, to begin with, that famous march of yours from Calgary to the far North land where you did so many heroic things."

But the Inspector's talk had a trick of fading away at the end of the third sentence and it was with difficulty that they could get him started again.

"You are most provoking!" finally exclaimed Mrs. Cameron, giving up the struggle. "Isn't he, baby?"

The latter turned upon the Inspector two steady blue eyes beaming with the intelligence of a two months' experience of men and things, and announced his grave disapproval of the Inspector's conduct in a distinct "goo!"

"There!" exclaimed his mother triumphantly. "I told you so. What have you now to say for yourself?"

The Inspector regarded the blue−eyed atom with reverent wonder.

"Most remarkable young person I ever saw in my life, Mrs. Cameron," he asserted positively.

The proud mother beamed upon him.

"Well, baby, he IS provoking, but we will forgive him since he is so clever at discovering your remarkable

qualities."

"Pshaw!" said Dr. Martin. "That's nothing. Any one could see them. They stick right out of that baby."

"DEAR Dr. Martin," explained the mother with affectionate emphasis, "what a way you have of putting things. But I wonder what keeps Allan?" continued Mrs. Cameron. "He promised faithfully to be home before dinner." She rose, and, going to the side of the house, looked long and anxiously up toward the foothills. Dr. Martin followed her and stood at her side gazing in the same direction.

"What a glorious view it is!" she said. "I never tire of looking over the hills and up to the great mountains."

"What the deuce is the fellow doing?" exclaimed the doctor, disgust and rage mingling in his tone. "Great Heavens! She is kissing him!"

"Who? What?" exclaimed Mandy. "Oh!" she cried, her eyes following the doctor's and lighting upon two figures that stood at the side of the poplar bluff in an attitude sufficiently compromising to justify the doctor's exclamation.

"What? It's Moira−−and−−and−−it's Smith! What does it mean?" The doctor's language appeared unequal to his emotions. "Mean?" he cried, after an exhausting interlude of expletives. "Mean? Oh, I don't know−−and I don't care. It's pretty plain what it means. It makes no difference to me. I gave her up to that other fellow who saved her life and then picturesquely got himself killed. There now, forgive me, Mrs. Cameron. I know I am a brute. I should not have said that. Don't look at me so. Raven was a fine chap and I don't mind her losing her heart to him−−but really this is too much. Smith! Of all men under heaven−−Smith! Why, look at his legs!"

"His legs? Dr. Martin, I am ashamed of you. I don't care what kind of legs he has. Smith is an honorable fellow and−−and−−so good he was to us. Why, when Allan and the rest of you were all away he was like a brother through all those terrible days. I can never forget his splendid kindness−−but−−"

"I beg your pardon, Mrs. Cameron, I beg your pardon. Undoubtedly he is a fine fellow. I am an ass, a jealous ass−−might as well own it. But, really, I cannot quite stand seeing her throw herself at Smith−−Smith! Oh, I know, I know, he is all right. But oh−−well−− at any rate thank God I saw him at it. It will keep me from openly and uselessly abasing myself to her and making a fool of myself generally. But Smith! Great God! Smith! Well, it will help to cure me."

Mrs. Cameron stood by in miserable silence.

"Oh, Dr. Martin," at length she groaned tearfully, "I am so disappointed. I was so hoping, and I was sure it was all right−− and−−and−−oh, what does it mean? Dear Dr. Martin, I cannot tell you how I feel."

"Oh, hang it, Mrs. Cameron, don't pity me. I'll get over it. A little surgical operation in the region of the pericardium is all, that is required."

"What are you talking about?" exclaimed Mrs. Cameron, vaguely listening to him and busy with her own thoughts the while.

"Talking about, madam? Talking about? I am talking about that organ, the central organ of the vascular system of animals, a hollow muscular structure that propels the blood by alternate contractions and dilatations, which in the mammalian embryo first appears as two tubes lying under the head and immediately behind the first visceral arches, but gradually moves back and becomes lodged in the thorax."

"Oh, do stop! What nonsense are you talking now?" exclaimed Mrs. Cameron, waking up as from a dream. "No, don't go. You must not go."

"I am going, and I am going to leave this country," said the doctor. "I am going East. No, this is no sudden resolve. I have thought of it for some time, and now I will go."

"Well, you must wait at least till Allan returns. You must say good−by to him." She followed the doctor anxiously back to his seat beside the Inspector. "Here," she cried, "hold baby a minute. There are some things I must attend to. I would give him to the Inspector, but he would not know how to handle him."

"God forbid!" ejaculated the Inspector firmly.

"But I tell you I must get home," said the doctor in helpless wrath.

"Nonsense!" exclaimed Mrs. Cameron. "Look out! You are not holding him properly. There now, you have made him cry."

"Pinched him!" muttered the Inspector. "I call that most unfair. Mean advantage to take of the young person."

The doctor glowered at the Inspector and set himself with ready skill to remedy the wrong he had wrought in the young person's disposition while the mother, busying herself ostentatiously with her domestic duties, finally

disappeared around the house, making for the bluff. As soon as she was out of earshot she raised her voice in song.

"I must give the fools warning, I suppose," she said to herself. In the pauses of her singing, "Oh, what does she mean? I could just shake her. I am so disappointed. Smith! Smith! Well, Smith is all right, but−−oh, I must talk to her. And yet, I am so angry−− yes, I am disgusted. I was so sure that everything was all right. Ah, there she is at last, and−−well−−thank goodness he is gone.

"Oh−h−h−h−O, Moira!" she cried. "Now, I must keep my temper," she added to herself. "But I am so cross about this. Oh−h−h−h−O, Moira!"

"Oh−h−h−h−O!" called Moira in reply.

"She looks positively happy. Ugh! Disgusting! And so lovely too."

"Did you want me, Mandy? I am so sorry I forgot all about the tea."

"So I should suppose," snapped Mandy crossly. "I saw you were too deeply engaged to think."

"You saw?" exclaimed the girl, a startled dismay in her face.

"Yes, and I would suggest that you select a less conspicuous stage for your next scene. Certainly I got quite a shock. If it had been Raven, Moira, I could have stood it."

"Raven! Raven! Oh, stop! Not a word, Mandy." Her voice was hushed and there was a look of pain in her eyes.

"But Smith!" went on Mandy relentlessly. "I was too disgusted."

"Well, what is wrong with Mr. Smith?" inquired Moira, her chin rising.

"Oh, there is nothing wrong with Smith," replied her sister−in−law crossly, "but−−well−−kissing him, you know."

"Kissing him?" echoed Moira faintly. "Kissing him? I did not−−"

"It looked to me uncommonly like it at any rate," said Mandy. "You surely don't deny that you were kissing him?"

"I was not. I mean, it was Smith−−perhaps−−yes, I think Smith did−−"

"Well, it was a silly thing to do."

"Silly! If I want to kiss Mr. Smith, why is it anybody's business?"

"That's just it," said Mandy indignantly. "Why should you want to?"

"Well, that is my affair," said Moira in an angry tone, and with a high head and lofty air she appeared in the doctor's presence.

But Dr. Martin was apparently oblivious of both her lofty air and the angle of her chin. He was struggling to suppress from observation a tumult of mingled passions of jealousy, rage and humiliation. That this girl whom for four years he had loved with the full strength of his intense nature should have given herself to another was grief enough; but the fact that this other should have been a man of Smith's caliber seemed to add insult to his grief. He felt that not only had she humiliated him but herself as well.

"If she is the kind of girl that enjoys kissing Smith I don't want her," he said to himself savagely, and then cursed himself that he knew it was a lie. For no matter how she should affront him or humiliate herself he well knew he should take her gladly on his bended knees from Smith's hands. The cure somehow was not working, but he would allow no one to suspect it. His voice was even and his manner cheerful as ever. Only Mrs. Cameron, who held the key to his heart, suspected the agony through which he was passing during the tea−hour. And it was to secure respite for him that the tea was hurried and the doctor packed off to saddle Pepper and round up the cows for the milking.

Pepper was by birth and breeding a cow−horse, and once set upon a trail after a bunch of cows he could be trusted to round them up with little or no aid from his rider. Hence once astride Pepper and Pepper with his nose pointed toward the ranging cows, the doctor could allow his heart to roam at will. And like a homing pigeon, his heart, after some faint struggles in the grip of its owner's will, made swift flight toward the far−away Highland glen across the sea, the Cuagh Oir.

With deliberate purpose he set himself to live again the tender and ineffaceable memories of that eventful visit to the glen when first his eyes were filled with the vision of the girl with the sunny hair and the sunny eyes who that day seemed to fill the very glen and ever since that day his heart with glory.

With deliberate purpose, too, he set himself to recall the glen itself, its lights and shadows, its purple hilltops,

its emerald loch far down at the bottom, the little clachan on the hillside and up above it the old manor−house. But ever and again his heart would pause to catch anew some flitting glance of the brown eyes, some turn of the golden head, some cadence of the soft Highland voice, some fitful illusive sweetness of the smile upon the curving lips, pause and return upon its tracks to feel anew that subtle rapture of the first poignant thrill, lingering over each separate memory as a drunkard lingers regretful over his last sweet drops of wine.

Meantime Pepper's intelligent diligence had sent every cow home to its milking, and so, making his way by a short cut that led along the Big Horn River and round the poplar bluff, the doctor, suddenly waking from his dream of the past, faced with a fresh and sharper stab the reality of the present. The suddenness and sharpness of the pain made him pull his horse up short.

"I'll cut this country and go East," he said aloud, coming to a conclusive decision upon a plan long considered, "I'll go in for specializing. I have done with all this nonsense."

He sat his horse looking eastward over the hills that rolled far away to the horizon. His eye wandered down the river gleaming now like gold in the sunset glow. He had learned to love this land of great sunlit spaces and fresh blowing winds, but this evening its very beauty appeared intolerable to him. Ever since the death of Raven upon that tragic night of the cattle−raid he had been fighting his bitter loss and disappointment; with indifferent success, it is true, but still not without the hope of attaining final peace of soul. This evening he knew that, while he lived in this land, peace would never come to him, for his heart−wound never would heal.

"I will go," he said again. "I will say good−by to−night. By Jove! I feel better already. Come along, Pepper! Wake up!"

Pepper woke up to some purpose and at a smart canter carried the doctor on his way round the bluff toward a gate that opened into a lane leading to the stables. At the gate a figure started up suddenly from the shadow of a poplar. With a snort and in the midst of his stride Pepper swung on his heels with such amazing abruptness that his rider was flung from his saddle, fortunately upon his feet.

"Confound you for a dumb−headed fool! What are you up to anyway?" he cried in a sudden rage, recognizing Smith, who stood beside the trail in an abjectly apologetic attitude.

"Yes," cried another voice from the shadow. "Is he not a fool? You would think he ought to know Mr. Smith by this time. But Pepper is really very stupid."

The doctor stood speechless, surprise, disgust and rage struggling for supremacy among his emotions. He stood gazing stupidly from one to the other, utterly at a loss for words.

"You see, Mr. Smith," began Moira somewhat lamely, "had something to say to me and so we−−and so we came−−along to the gate."

"So I see," replied the doctor gruffly.

"You see Mr. Smith has come to mean a great deal to me−−to us−−"

"So I should imagine," replied the doctor.

"His self−sacrifice and courage during those terrible days we can never forget."

"Exactly so−−quite right," replied the doctor, standing stiffly beside his horse's head.

"You do not know people all at once," continued Moira.

"Ah! Not all at once," the doctor replied.

"But in times of danger and trouble one gets to know them quickly."

"Sure thing," said the doctor.

"And it takes times of danger to bring out the hero in a man."

"I should imagine so," replied the doctor with his eyes on Smith's childlike and beaming face.

"And you see Mr. Smith was really our whole stay, and−−and−−we came to rely upon him and we found him so steadfast." In the face of the doctor's stolid brevity Moira was finding conversation difficult.

"Steadfast!" repeated the doctor. "Exactly so," his eyes upon Smith's wobbly legs. "Mr. Smith I consider a very fortunate man. I congratulate him on−−"

"Oh, have you heard? I did not know that−−"

"Yes. I mean−−not exactly."

"Who told you? Is it not splendid?" enthusiasm shining in her eyes.

"Splendid! Yes−−that is, for him," replied the doctor without emotion. "I congratulate−−"

"But how did you hear?"

"I did not exactly hear, but I had no difficulty in−−ah−−making the discovery."

"Discovery?"

"Yes, discovery. It was fairly plain; I might say it was the feature of the view; in fact it stuck right out of the landscape−− hit you in the eye, so to speak."

"The landscape? What can you mean?"

"Mean? Simply that I am at a loss as to whether Mr. Smith is to be congratulated more upon his exquisite taste or upon his extraordinary good fortune."

"Good fortune, yes, is it not splendid?"

"Splendid is the exact word," said the doctor stiffly.

"And I am so glad."

"Yes, you certainly look happy," replied the doctor with a grim attempt at a smile, and feeling as if more enthusiasm were demanded from him. "Let me offer you my congratulations and say good−by. I am leaving."

"You will be back soon, though?"

"Hardly. I am leaving the West."

"Leaving the West? Why? What? When?"

"To−night. Now. I must say good−by."

"To−night? Now?" Her voice sank almost to a whisper. Her lips were white and quivering. "But do they know at the house? Surely this is sudden."

"Oh, no, not so sudden. I have thought of it for some time; indeed, I have made my plans."

"Oh−−for some time? You have made your plans? But you never hinted such a thing to−−to any of us."

"Oh, well, I don't tell my plans to all the world," said the doctor with a careless laugh.

The girl shrank from him as if he had cut her with his riding whip. But, swiftly recovering herself, she cried with gay reproach:

"Why, Mr. Smith, we are losing all our friends at once. It is cruel of you and Dr. Martin to desert us at the same time. Mr. Smith, you know," she continued, turning to the doctor with an air of exaggerated vivacity, "leaves for the East to−night too."

"Smith−−leaving?" The doctor gazed stupidly at that person.

"Yes, you know he has come into a big fortune and is going to be−−"

"A fortune?"

"Yes, and he is going East to be married."

"Going EAST to be married?"

"Yes, and I was−−"

"Going EAST?" exclaimed the doctor. "I don't understand. I thought you−−"

"Oh, yes, his young lady is awaiting him in the East. And he is going to spend his money in such a splendid way."

"Going EAST?" echoed the doctor, as if he could not fix the idea with sufficient firmness in his brain to grasp it fully.

"Yes, I have just told you so," replied the girl.

"Married?" shouted the doctor, suddenly rushing at Smith and gripping him by both arms. "Smith, you shy dog−−you lucky dog! Let me wish you joy, old man. By Jove! You deserve your luck, every bit of it. Say, that's fine. Ha! ha! Jeerupiter! Smith, you are a good one and a sly one. Shake again, old man. Say, by Jove! What a sell−−I mean what a joke! Look here, Smith, old chap, would you mind taking Pepper home? I am rather tired−−riding, I mean−− beastly wild cows−−no end of a run after them. See you down at the house later. No, no, don't wait, don't mind me. I am all right, fit as a fiddle−−no, not a bit tired−−I mean I am tired riding. Yes, rather stiff−−about the knees, you know. Oh, it's all right. Up you get, old man−−there you are! So, Smith, you are going to be married, eh? Lucky dog! Tell 'em I am−−tell 'em we are coming. My horse? Oh, well, never mind my horse till I come myself. So long, old chap! Ha! ha! old man, good−by. Great Caesar! What a sell! Say, let's sit down, Moira," he said, suddenly growing quiet and turning to the girl, "till I get my wind. Fine chap that Smith. Legs a bit wobbly, but don't care if he had a hundred of 'em and all wobbly. He's all right. Oh, my soul! What an ass! What an adjectival, hyphenated jackass! Don't look at me that way or I shall climb a tree and yell. I'm not mad, I assure you. I was on the verge of it a few moments ago, but it is gone. I am sane, sane as an old maid. Oh, my

God!" He covered his face with his hands and sat utterly still for some moments.

"Dr. Martin, what is the matter?" exclaimed the girl. "You terrify me."

"No wonder. I terrify myself. How could I have stood it."

"What is the matter? What is it?"

"Why, Moira, I thought you were going to marry that idiot."

"Idiot?" exclaimed the girl, drawing herself up. "Idiot? Mr. Smith? I am not going to marry him, Dr. Martin, but he is an honorable fellow and a friend of mine, a dear friend of mine."

"So he is, so he is, a splendid fellow, the finest ever, but thank God you are not going to marry him!"

"Why, what is wrong with−−"

"Why? Why? God help me! Why? Only because, Moira, I love you." He threw himself upon his knees beside her. "Don't, don't for God's sake get away! Give me a chance to speak!" He caught her hand in both of his. "I have just been through hell. Don't send me there again. Let me tell you. Ever since that minute when I saw you in the glen I have loved you. In my thoughts by day and in my dreams by night you have been, and this day when I thought I had lost you I knew that I loved you ten thousand times more than ever." He was kissing her hand passionately, while she sat with head turned away. "Tell me, Moira, if I may love you? And is it any use? And do you think you could love me even a little bit? I am not worthy to touch you. Tell me." Still she sat silent. He waited a few moments, his face growing gray. "Tell me," he said at length in a broken, husky voice. "I will try to bear it."

She turned her face toward him. The sunny eyes were full of tears.

"And you were going away from me?" she breathed, leaning toward him.

"Sweetheart!" he cried, putting his arms around her and drawing her to him, "tell me to stay."

"Stay," she whispered, "or take me too."

The sun had long since disappeared behind the big purple mountains and even the warm afterglow in the eastern sky had faded into a pearly opalescent gray when the two reached the edge of the bluff nearest the house.

"Oh! The milking!" cried Moira aghast, as she came in sight of the house.

"Great Caesar! I was going to help," exclaimed the doctor.

"Too bad," said the girl penitently. "But, of course, there's Smith."

"Why, certainly there's Smith. What a God−send that chap is. He is always on the spot. But Cameron is home. I see his horse. Let us go in and face the music."

They found an excited group standing in the kitchen, Mandy with a letter in her hand.

"Oh, here you are at last!" she cried. "Where have you−−" She glanced at Moira's face and then at the doctor's and stopped abruptly.

"Hello, what's up?" cried the doctor.

"We have got a letter−−such a letter!" cried Mandy. "Read it. Read it aloud, Doctor." She thrust the letter into his hand. The doctor cleared his throat, struck an attitude, and read aloud:

"My dear Cameron:

"It gives me great pleasure to say for the officers of the Police Force in the South West district and for myself that we greatly appreciate the distinguished services you rendered during the past six months in your patrol of the Sun Dance Trail. It was a work of difficulty and danger and one of the highest importance to the country. I feel sure it will gratify you to know that the attention of the Government has been specially called to the creditable manner in which you have performed your duty, and I have no doubt that the Government will suitably express its appreciation of your services in due time. But, as you are aware, in the Force to which we have the honor to belong, we do not look for recognition, preferring to find a sufficient reward in duty done.

"Permit me also to say that we recognize and appreciate the spirit of devotion showed by Mrs. Cameron during these trying months in so cheerfully and loyally giving you up to this service.

"May I add that in this rebellion to my mind the most critical factor was the attitude of the great Blackfeet Confederacy. Every possible effort was made by the half−breeds and Northern Indians to seduce Crowfoot and his people from their loyalty, and their most able and unscrupulous agent in this attempt was the Sioux Indian known among us as The Copperhead. That he failed utterly in his schemes and that Crowfoot remained loyal I believe is due to the splendid work of the officers and members of our Force in the South West district, but especially to your splendid services as the Patrol of the Sun Dance Trail."

"And signed by the big Chief himself, the Commissioner," cried Dr. Martin. "What do you think of that, Baby?" he continued, catching the baby from its mother's arms. "What do you think of your daddy?" The doctor pirouetted round the room with the baby in his arms, that young person regarding the whole performance apparently with grave and profound satisfaction.

"Your horse is ready," said Smith, coming in at the door.

"Your horse?" cried Cameron.

"Oh−−I forgot," said the doctor. "Ah−−I don't think I want him to−night, Smith."

"You are not going to−night, then?" inquired Mandy in delighted surprise.

"No−−I−−in fact, I believe I have changed my mind about that. I have, been−−ah−−persuaded to remain."

"Oh, I see," cried Mandy in supreme delight. Then turning swiftly upon her sister−in−law who stood beside the doctor, her face in a radiant glow, she added, "Then what did you mean by−−by−−what we saw this afternoon?"

A deeper red dyed the girl's cheeks.

"What are you talking about?" cried Dr. Martin. "Oh, that kissing Smith business."

"I couldn't just help it!" burst out Moira. "He was so happy."

"Going to be married, you know," interjected the doctor.

"And so−−so−−"

"Just so," cried the doctor. "Oh, pshaw! that's all right! I'd kiss Smith myself. I feel like doing it this blessed minute. Where is he? Smith! Where are you?" But Smith had escaped. "Smith's all right, I say, and so are we, eh, Moira?" He slipped his arm round the blushing girl.

"Oh, I am so glad," cried Mandy, beaming upon them. "And you are not going East after all?"

"East? Not I! The West for me. I am going to stay right in it−− with the Inspector here−−and with you, Mrs. Cameron−−and with my sweetheart−−and yes, certainly with the Patrol of the Sun Dance Trail."