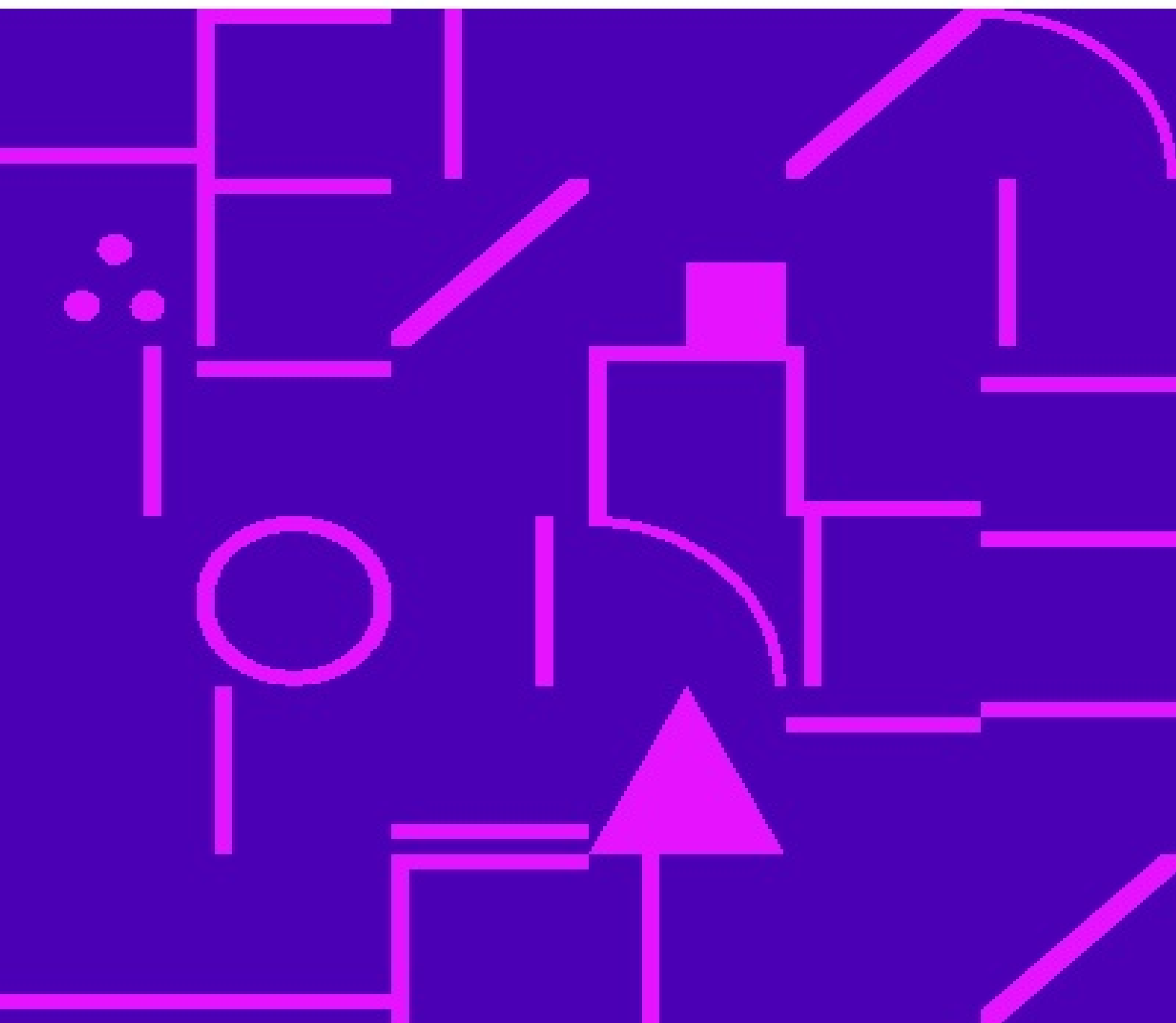


Rob Nixon, the Old White Trader

A Tale of Central British North America

William Henry Giles Kingston



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W.H.G. Kingston

"Rob Nixon"

"The Old White Trader - A Tale of Central British North Ame"

Chapter One.

Picture a wide, gently undulating expanse of land covered with tall grass, over which, as it bends to the breeze, a gleam of light ever and anon flashes brightly. It is a rolling prairie in North America, midway between the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. On either hand the earth and sky seem to unite, without an object to break the line of the horizon, except in the far distance, where some tall trees, by a river's side, shoot up out of the plain, but appear no higher than a garden hedge-row. It is truly a wilderness, which no wise man would attempt to traverse without a guide.

That man has wandered there, the remnants of mortality which lie scattered about—a skull and the bare ribs seen as the wind blows the grass aside,—afford melancholy evidence. A nearer inspection shows a rifle, now covered with rust, a powder-flask, a sheath-knife, a flint and steel, and a few other metal articles of hunter's gear. Those of more destructible materials have disappeared before the ravenous jaws of the hosts of locusts which have swept over the plain. Few portions of the earth's surface give a more complete idea of boundless extent than the American prairie. Not a sound is heard. The silence itself is awe-inspiring. The snows of winter have lain thickly on that plain, storms have swept over it, the rain has fallen, the lightning flashed, the thunder roared, since it has been trodden by the foot of man. Perhaps the last human being who has attempted to cross it was he whose bones lie blanching in the summer sun—that sun which now, having some time passed its meridian height, is sinking towards the west.

Southward appear, coming as it were from below the horizon, some dark specks, scattered widely from east to west, and moving slowly. On they come, each instant increasing in numbers, till they form one dark line. They are animals with huge heads and dark shaggy manes, browsing as they advance, clearing the herbage before them. They are a herd of bison, known by the wild hunters of the west as buffaloes—countless apparently in numbers—powerful and ferocious in appearance, with their short thick horns and long heads. Now they halt, as the richer pasturage entices; now again advance. A large number lie down to rest, while others, moving out of the midst, seem to be acting as scouts to give notice of the approach of danger. They go on as before, darkening the whole southern horizon. The wind is from the west; the scouts lift up their shaggy heads and sniff the air, but discover no danger. From the east another dark line rises quickly above the horizon: the ground shakes with the tramp of horses. It is a troop of huntsmen—savage warriors of the desert. What clothing they wear is of leather gaily adorned. Some have feathers in their heads, and their dark red skins painted curiously. Some carry bows richly ornamented: a few only are armed with rifles. A few, who, by their dress, the feathers and adornments of the head, appear to be chiefs, ride a-head and keep the line in order. Every man holds his weapon ready for instant use. They advance steadily, keeping an even line. Their leader waves his rifle. Instantly the steeds spring forward. Like a whirlwind they dash on: no want of energy now. The huntsmen are among the bewildered herd before their approach has been perceived. Arrows fly in quick succession from every bow—bullets from the rifles. The huntsmen have filled their mouths with the leaden messengers of death, and drop them into their rifles as they gallop on, firing right and left—singling out the fattest beasts at a glance—and never erring in their aim. In a few minutes the plain is thickly strewn with the huge carcasses of the shaggy buffaloes, each huntsman, as he

passes on, dropping some article of his property by which he may know the beast he has killed. Now the herd begin to seek for safety in flight, still keeping in the direction they had before been taking, some scattering, however, on each side. The eager hunters pursue till the whole prairie, from right to left, is covered with flying buffaloes and wild horsemen; the crack of the rifles sounding distinctly through the calm summer air, in which the tiny wreath of smoke ascends unbroken and marks the hunter's progress.

Among the huntsmen rides one distinguished from the rest by his more complete, yet less ornamented clothing; by a leather cap without feathers, and by the perfect order of his rifle and hunting accoutrements.

On a nearer inspection his skin—though tanned, and wrinkled, and furrowed, by long exposure to the weather, and by age and toil—might be discovered to have been of a much lighter hue originally than that of his companions. Old as he was, no one was more eager in the chase, and no one's rifle brought down so great a number of buffaloes as did his. To all appearance he was as active and strong as the youngest huntsman of the band. In the course of the hunt he had reached the extreme left of the line. A superb bull appeared before him. "I'll have you for your robe, if not for your meat, old fellow," exclaimed the hunter, galloping on towards the animal's right flank, so as to turn him yet further from the herd, and to obtain a more direct shot at his head or at his shoulders. There are occasions when the most practised of shots will find himself at fault—the firmest nerves will fail. The old hunter had reached a satisfactory position—he raised his rifle, and fired. At that instant, while still at full speed, his horse's front feet sunk into a hole made by a badger, or some other of the smaller creatures inhabiting the prairie; and the animal, unable to recover itself, threw the hunter violently forward over its head, where he lay without moving, and apparently dead. The horse struggled to free itself; and then, as it fell forward, gave utterance to one of those piercing cries of agony not often heard, and, when heard, not to be forgotten. Both fore legs were broken. Its fate was certain. It must become the prey of the ravenous wolves, who speedily scent out the spots where the hunters have overtaken a herd of buffaloes. Meantime the buffalo, who had been struck by the hunter's bullet, but not so wounded as to bring him instantly to the ground, galloped on for some distance in the direction he was before going, when, feeling the pain of his wound, or hearing the cry of the horse, he turned round to face his enemies. Seeing both steed and rider prostrate, he tossed his head, and then, lowering his horns close to the ground, prepared to charge. The last moments of the old hunter seemed approaching. The cry of agony uttered by his favourite steed roused him. He looked up and saw the buffalo about to make its charge. His hand had never relaxed its grasp of his rifle. To feel for his powder-flask and to load was the work of an instant; and, without an attempt to rise, he brought the muzzle of his piece to bear on the furious animal as it was within a few paces of him. "Rob Nixon never feared man nor beast, and will not this time; let an old bull bellow as loud as he may," he muttered, as he raised his rifle and fired. The bullet took effect, but did not stop the headlong career of the enraged monster, which came on, ploughing up the ground, towards him. The hunter saw his danger and tried to rise, but in vain. He then made a desperate endeavour to drag himself out of the way of the creature. He but partially succeeded, when the buffalo, sinking down, rolled over and over, crushing, with his huge carcass, the already injured legs and lower extremities of the unfortunate hunter. In spite of the pain he was enduring, the old man, raising himself on his elbow, grimly, surveyed his conquered foe—"You've the worst of it, though you nearly did for me, I own," he exclaimed, nodding his head; "but a miss is as good as a mile, and when I'm

free of you, maybe I'll sup off your hump."



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To liberate himself from the monster's carcass was, however, no easy task, injured as he was already by his fall, and by the weight of the buffalo pressing on him. He made several attempts, but the pain was very great, and he found that his strength was failing him. While resting, before making another attempt to move, he perceived his poor horse, whose convulsive struggles showed how much he had been injured. On looking round, also, he discovered that the accident had taken place in a slight hollow, which, shallow as it was, shut him out from the view of his companions, who were now pursuing the remainder of the herd at a considerable distance from where he lay. Again and again he tried to drag his injured limbs from beneath the buffalo. He had never given in while consciousness remained, and many were the accidents

which had happened to him during his long hunter's life. Would he give in now? "No, not I," he muttered; "Rob Nixon is not the boy for that." At length, however, his spirit succumbed to bodily suffering, and he sank back exhausted and fainting, scarcely conscious of what had happened, or where he was. Had he retained sufficient strength to fire his rifle he might have done so, and summoned some of the hunters to his assistance; but he was unable even to load it, so it lay useless by his side. Thus he remained; time passed by—no one approached him—the sun sank in the horizon—darkness came on. It appeared too probable that the fate of many a hunter in that vast prairie would be his. How long he had remained in a state of stupor he could not tell; consciousness returned at length, and, revived by the cool air of night, he sat up and gazed about him. The stars had come out and were shining brilliantly overhead, enabling him to see to the extent of his limited horizon. The dead buffalo still pressed on his legs—a hideous nightmare; his horse lay near giving vent to his agony in piteous groans, and every now and then making an attempt to rise to his feet. "My poor mustang, you are in a bad way I fear," said the hunter, in a tone of commiseration, forgetting his own sufferings; "I would put an end to thy misery, and so render thee the only service in my power, but that I cannot turn myself to load my rifle. Alack! alack! we shall both of us ere long be food for the wolves; but, though I must meet my fate as becomes a man, I would save you—poor, dumb brute that you are—from being torn by their ravenous fangs while life remains in you." Such were the thoughts which passed through the hunter's mind, for it can scarcely be said that he spoke them aloud.

He would probably again have relapsed into a state of stupor, but that a hideous howl, borne by the night breeze, reached his ears. "Wolves!" he exclaimed; "ah! I know you, you brutes." The howl was repeated again and again, its increased loudness showing that the creatures were approaching. The well-known terrible sounds roused up the old hunter to make renewed exertions to extricate himself. This time, by dint of dragging himself out with his arms, he succeeded in getting his feet from under the buffalo; but he then discovered, to his dismay, that his thigh had either been broken, or so severely sprained by his fall, that to walk would be impossible. He managed, however, to load his rifle. Scarcely had he done so when the struggles of his horse reminded him of the pain the poor animal was suffering. Although he knew that every charge of powder in his flask would be required for his own defence, he did not hesitate in performing the act of mercy which the case required. He uttered no sentimental speech, though a pang of grief passed through his heart as he pointed the weapon at the horse's head. His aim was true, and the noble animal fell dead. "He's gone; not long before me, I guess," he muttered, as he reloaded his piece. "Those brutes will find me out, there is no doubt about that; but I'll have a fight first—Rob Nixon will die game." The old hunter drew a long knife from a sheath at his side, and, deliberately examining its point, placed it on the ground near him while he reloaded his rifle. Thus did the old man prepare for an inevitable and dreadful death, as he believed; yet not a prayer did he offer up, not a thought did he cast at the future. Eternity, heaven, and hell, were matters unknown; or, if once known, long since forgotten. Yet forgetfulness of a fact will not do away with it. They are awful realities, and will assuredly be found such, however much men may strive to banish them from their thoughts. The young especially are surprised to hear that old men have forgotten what they learned in their youth, that they neglect to pray, to read the Bible, to think about God and their own souls; but let them be assured that if once they give up the habit of praying, of studying God's holy Word, of obeying His commands, there is one ever ready to persuade them that there is no harm in this neglect; that it will save them much trouble; and that it is far more manly to neglect prayers, to be irreligious and profane, than to love, serve, and obey their Maker. A downward course is

sadly easy; let them beware of taking the first step. Each step they take in the wrong direction they will find it more and more difficult to recover, till, like the old huntsman, they will cease to care about the matter, and God will no longer be in their thoughts. There lay that old man on the wild prairie, a melancholy spectacle,—not so much that he was surrounded by dangers—that he was wounded and crippled—that wild beasts were near him—that, if he escaped their fangs, starvation threatened him,—but that he had no hope for the future—that he had no trust in God—that he had not laid hold of the means of salvation.

As Rob Nixon lay on the ground supporting his head on his arm, he turned his gaze round and round, peering into the darkness to watch for any thing moving near him. He knew that before the sun set his Indian comrades would have carried off the flesh from the buffaloes they had killed, and that after that they, would move their camp to a distance, no one being likely to return. He probably would not be missed for some time, and when missed, it would be supposed that he had fallen into the hands of the Salteux, or Ojibways, the hereditary enemies of their nation, and that already his scalp had been carried off as a trophy by those hated foes. "They'll revenge me; that's one comfort, and the Ojibways will get paid for what the wolves have done." These were nearly the last thoughts which passed through the brain of the old hunter, as the howls and yelps of the wolves, which had formed a dreadful concert at a distance around him, approached still nearer. "I guessed the vermin wouldn't be long in finding me out," he muttered; and, on looking up, he saw through the darkness, glaring fiercely down on him from the edge of the hollow in which he lay, the eyes of a pack of wolves. "I'll stop the howling of some of you," he exclaimed, lifting his rifle. There was no cry; but a gap in the circle of eyes showed that a wolf had fallen, and instantly afterwards the loud barking and yelping proved that the savage creatures were tearing their companion to pieces. This gave time to the old man to re-load and to pick off another wolf. In this manner he killed several, and though he did not drive them away, they were prevented from approaching nearer. On finding that such was the case, his hopes of escaping their fangs rose slightly, at the same time that the lightness of his powder-flask and bullet bag, told him that his ammunition would soon fail, and that then he would have his hunting knife alone on which to depend. He accordingly waited, without again firing, watching his foes, who continued howling and wrangling over the bodies of their fellows. Now and then one would descend a short way into the hollow, attracted by the scent of the dead horse and buffalo, but a sudden shout from the old hunter kept the intruders at a respectful distance. He was well aware, however, that should exhausted nature for one instant compel him to drop asleep, the brutes would be upon him, and tear him limb from limb. Thus the hours of the night passed slowly along. Many men would have succumbed; but, hardened by a long life of danger and activity, Robert Nixon held out bravely, in spite of the pain, and thirst, and hunger, from which he was suffering. Never for one moment was his eye off his enemies, while his fingers were on the trigger ready to shoot the first which might venture to approach. More than once he muttered to himself, "It must be near morning, and then these vermin will take themselves off, and let me have some rest. Ah, rest! that's the very thing I have been wanting," he continued; "it's little enough I've ever had of it. I've been working away all my life, and where's the good I've got out of it? There's been something wrong, I suppose; but I can't make it out. Best! Yes, that's it. I should just like to find myself sitting in my lodge among a people who don't care, like these Dakotahs, to be always fighting or hunting: but they are not a bad people, and they've been good friends to me, and I've no fault to find with their ways, though I'll own they're more suited to young men than to an old one like me. But there's little use my thinking this. Maybe, I shall never see them or any other of my fellow-

creatures again.” It was only now and then that his mind framed any thoughts as coherent as these; generally he remained in a dreamy condition, only awake to the external objects immediately surrounding him. Gradually, too, his strength began to fail, though he was not aware of the fact. The howls, and barks, and snarling, and other hideous sounds made by the wolves, increased. He could see them moving about in numbers, around the edge of the basin, their red fiery eyes ever and anon glaring down on him. At last they seemed to be holding a consultation, and to have settled their disputes, probably from not having longer a bone of contention unpicked among them. They were evidently, once more, about to make an attack on him. A large brute, who had long been prowling round, first crept on, gnashing his teeth. The old man lifted his rifle and the creature, with a loud cry, fell dead. Another and another came on, and before he could load, the foremost had got close up to him. He fired at the animal’s head. It rolled over, and, the flash of his rifle scaring the rest, with hideous yelps, they took to flight, the old man firing after them directly he could re-load. He could scarcely believe that he was to remain unmolested, and once more loading his rifle, he rested as before on his arm, watching for their re-appearance. Gradually, however, exhausted nature gave way, and he sank down unconscious on the ground, to sleep, it might be, the sleep of death.

Chapter Two.

The sun rose and shone forth brightly on the earth. There was the sound of winged creatures in Robert Nixon's ears as he once more awoke and gazed languidly around. His first impulse was to attempt to rise, but the anguish he suffered the instant he moved reminded him of the injuries he had received. Vain were his efforts; to stand up was impossible. Although the wolves for the time were gone, they, to a certainty, would return at night, and thus, without ammunition, how could he defend himself against them? He might subsist on the meat of the buffalo for a day or two, but that would soon become uneatable, and as he could scarcely hope to recover from his hurt for many days, even if he escaped the wolves, he must die of starvation. Again he sank into a state of mental stupor, though his eye still remained cognisant of external objects. As the old hunter thus lay on the ground his eye fell on a horseman riding rapidly by. He was a Salteux, or Ojibway Indian, a people having a deadly feud with his friends, the Sioux. The sight roused him. To kill the man and capture his horse was the idea which at once occurred to him. Rousing himself by a violent exertion he levelled his rifle and fired. Not for an instant did he hesitate about taking the life of a fellow-creature. That fellow-creature was a foe of his friends, whose badge he wore, and would, he believed, kill him if he was discovered. He had miscalculated his powers—his eye had grown dim, his arm had lost its nerve; the bullet which once would have proved a sure messenger of death flew wide of its mark, and the Indian sat his horse unharmed. He turned, however, immediately, and galloped towards the spot whence the shot came. The old hunter had expended his last bullet. With grim satisfaction he awaited the Indian's approach, and the expected flourish of the scalping-knife, or the kinder blow of the tomahawk, which would deprive him at once of life. "Better so than be torn by the fangs of those vermin the wolves," he muttered, for though he clutched his knife to strike back, he well knew that he was at the mercy of his adversary. The Indian, though a rifle hung at his back, rode steadily up without unslinging it. "A friend!" he shouted in the Salteux, or Ojibway dialect,—"A friend! fire not again."



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"A friend! How so?" exclaimed the old hunter. "Your people and mine are mortal foes."

"I would be a friend to all the suffering and distressed," was the unexpected answer. "I see what has happened—you have fought bravely for your life; the remains of the wolves tell me that, but before another sun has risen you would have been torn limb from limb by their fellows. Truly I am thankful that I was sent to save you from death."

"Sent! Who sent you?" cried the old hunter, gazing up at the strange Indian. The other having just dismounted from his horse stood looking compassionately down on him. "He who watches over the fatherless and widows, and all who are distressed," answered the Indian. "A generous kind person I doubt not, but I know of none such in this land; he must live far away from here,"

said the old hunter. "He lives in Heaven, and His eye is everywhere," said the Indian solemnly. "He loves all mankind; without His will not a sparrow falls to the ground; and I am sure, therefore, that it was His will that I should come to you."

"Truly you speak strange words for a redskin!" exclaimed the hunter. "I have heard long ago white men talk as you, but never an Indian. You are one I see; there is no deceiving me. I cannot understand the matter."

"I will tell you as we go along," said the Indian; "but we must no longer delay, father; we have many miles to travel before we can reach my people, and I know not how I can restore you to your friends. It would be dangerous for me to approach them, for they could not understand how I can only wish them good."

"I will go with you, friend," said the old man. "I would gladly dwell with your people, and hear more of those strange matters of which you have been speaking."

Without further exchange of words the Indian, having examined the old man's hurts, gave him some dried meat and a draught from his water-flask, and lifted him with the utmost care on his horse; he then took the hunter's rifle and horse's trappings before moving off. He also secured the tongue and hump, and some slices from the buffalo's back, which he hung to his saddle-bow. "We may require more provision than our own rifles can supply before we reach our journey's end," he observed; as he did so, pointing to the north-east. Robert Nixon without hesitation yielded to all his suggestions.

The day was already considerably advanced, and the Indian seemed anxious to push on. Keeping up a rapid pace, he walked by the side of his companion, who, overcome by weakness and want of sleep would have fallen off, had not his strong arm held him on. Thus they journeyed hour after hour across the prairie. The Indian from the first employed various devices for rendering his trail invisible. On starting he moved for some distance westward, till he reached the bed of a small stream, on which even the sharp eye of a native could scarcely perceive a trace; then circling round, he commenced his intended course. Many miles were passed over; and the bank of a rapid river was reached, when the setting sun warned him that it was time to encamp. Instead, however, of doing so, he at once led his horse into the stream, and keeping close to the shore waded against the current, often having the water up to his waist, for a considerable distance, then coming to a ford he crossed over and continued along in the same direction till he once more returned to dry ground. The bank was fringed on each side by a belt of trees, which in the warm weather of summer afforded ample shelter from the dew, and concealment from any passing enemy. The chief trees were poplar, willow, and alder; but there were also spruce and birch. Bound the latter lay large sheets of the bark. A quantity of these the Indian at once collected, and with some thin poles which he cut with his hatchet he rapidly constructed a small hut or wigwam, strewing the floor with the young shoots of the spruce-fir. On this couch he placed his injured companion, putting his saddle under his head as a pillow. He then brought the old man some food and water, and next proceeded to examine his hurts with more attention than he had before been able to bestow. Bringing water from the river he fomented his bruises for a long time, and then searching for some leaves of a plant possessed of healing qualities, he bound them with strips of soft leather round his swollen limbs. More than once the old hunter expressed his surprise that a stranger should care so

much for him, and should actually feed and tend him before he had himself partaken of food and rested. "I serve a loving Master, and I am but obeying His wishes," was the laconic answer. "Very strange! very strange!" again and again muttered the old man; "you must tell me something about that Master of yours. I cannot understand who he can be."

"I will not disappoint you, father, for I love to speak of Him," said the Indian; "I will come anon and sit by your side and tell you what I know. It will interest you, I doubt not, and maybe you will wish to know more about Him." Some time passed, however, before the Indian was able to fulfil his promise. He had to tend his horse and to set some traps to catch any small game which might pass, and to search for certain roots and berries for food. He showed, too, by all his movements that he considered himself in an enemy's country, or in the neighbourhood of an enemy from whom it was necessary to keep concealed. When he came back the old man had fallen asleep. "Let him sleep on," said the Indian to himself: "our Father in Heaven will watch over and protect us both. I would that I could watch, but my body requires rest." Having tethered his horse close at hand, strewed the ground with a few spruce-fir tops, and placed his rifle by his side, he knelt down and prayed, not as once to Manitou, to the Great Spirit, the unknown God, but to the true God,—a God no longer feared as a worker of evil, but beloved as the source of all good, of all blessings, spiritual and temporal. His prayer finished, he stretched himself on his couch, and was in an instant asleep.

The silvery streaks of early dawn were just appearing in the eastern sky—seen amid the foliage of the wood, when the Indian, impulsively grasping his rifle, started to his feet. His quick ear had caught, even in his sleep, the sound of a distant shot. It might be fired by a friend, but very likely by a foe, and it behoved him to be on the alert. The old hunter heard it also, but it did not awake him. "Ah! they are on us. No matter, we'll fight for our lives," he muttered in his sleep. "Hurrah, lads! Rob Nixon will not yield—never while he's an arm to strike." He spoke in English, which the Indian seemed to understand, though the observation he made was in his own language. "Our own arms will do little for us, father, unless we trust in Him who is all-powerful to save." His voice awoke the old man, who sat up and looked around from out of his hut. Seeing the Indian in the attitude of listening, he at once comprehended the state of matters. "Few or many I'll stand by you, friend Redskin," he exclaimed, apparently forgetting his helpless condition; "load my rifle, and hand it to me. If foes are coming, they shall learn that Rob Nixon has not lost the use of his arms and eyes, whatever he may have of his legs."

"I doubt not your readiness to fight, father," said the Indian, addressing the old man thus to show his respect for age; "but we may hope to avoid the necessity of having to defend ourselves. Friends and not foes may be near us, or we may escape discovery; or, what is better still, we may overcome the enmity of those who approach us with bad intent."

"Your talk is again strange, as it was yesterday," answered the hunter; "I know not what you mean by overcoming enmity. There is only one way that I have ever found answer both with pale-faces and redskins, and that is by killing your enemy."

"Try what kindness will do, father. Love is the law of the true God," said the Indian; "but we will anon talk of these things. I will go forth and learn what the shot we heard just now means."

"Load my rifle, and give it me first, I pray you," said the white hunter; "I have great faith in my old way of doing things, and am not likely to change." The Indian loaded the rifle and handed it

to him, and without saying a word more set off through the wood, and was soon out of sight. Rob Nixon lay still, with his rifle resting across his body, ready to fire should an enemy appear. Over and over again he muttered: "Strange! strange! that a redskin should talk so. I cannot make it out." Several minutes passed by, and the Indian did not return. The old man grew more anxious than he would have acknowledged to himself. He had some natural feeling on his own account should his new friend have been cut off, but he was also anxious for that new friend, to whom he could not but be grateful for the service he had rendered him. At length he saw the bushes move, and the Indian appeared and crept close up to him. "There are foes, and many of them," he said in a low voice; "they are near at hand, but they are not seeking for us; and thus, if they do not cross our trail, we may yet escape discovery."

The Indian had already concealed his horse in a thicket, and, by carefully surrounding the spot where they lay with boughs, their little camp was completely hidden from the sight of any casual passer-by. The boughs he had cut from the interior part of a thicket, for, had they been taken from the outer side, the eye of an Indian would at once have observed the white stumps which were left. Again, by crossing the river in the mode they had done, there was no trail to lead to their camp. For these reasons the Indian and the white hunter had good cause to believe that they might escape discovery. As their enemies were as yet at some distance it was not deemed necessary to keep altogether silent. The old hunter was the most loquacious. "I would, friend Redskin," said he, "that I had the use of my legs and half a dozen of my old companions at my back, and I wouldn't fear as to holding my own against three-score or more of Crees, or Ojibways; no offence to you, friend; for there are not many like you, I guess."

"Your people fight bravely but foolishly, according to Indian notions," answered the Indian; "for, instead of advancing on their foes under shelter and trying to take them unawares, they dress themselves in fine clothes, make a great noise when going forth to battle, and expose their bodies to be shot at. I was once esteemed a mighty warrior, and was a man of blood; I have engaged in much fighting, but would now wish to bury the hatchet of war with all the world. I thank you for what you say of me; but things of which I once boasted, I boast of no longer. I am a chief of many people; but instead, as at one time, of wishing to lead them to war, I now desire to lead them to a knowledge of the Lord and Master whom I serve—the Saviour of the world."

"Every man to his taste, friend Redskin," said the old hunter; "when I was a young man like you I could not have fighting or hunting enough. Now, I own, I am growing somewhat weary of the work; and, if we get to the end of this journey with our scalps on, maybe I'll settle down with your people."

It may seem strange that the old man could not comprehend what was the meaning of the Indian when he spoke thus. If he had a glimmering of the truth, he turned away from it. Many do the same. Felix has numberless imitators. Both the Indian and Rob Nixon were silent for some minutes, attentively listening for the approach of the strangers. Not a sound, however, being heard, they began to hope that their enemies had gone a different way. "There'll be no fighting this time, I guess, friend Redskin," said the old man. "It's all the better, too, considering that you don't seem much inclined for it; and I'm not in the best trim for work of that sort, or any work, truth to say."

Rob Nixon had remarked that the Indian had winced more than once when addressed as Redskin, which was certainly not a respectful or complimentary mode of addressing him. The reason of this became still more evident when he spoke of himself as a chief. Chiefs in general would not for an instant have suffered such familiarity. Rob Nixon saw that it was time to apologise. He did so in his own way. "I say, friend, I've just a thing to ask you. You've a name, I doubt not, showing forth some of the brave deeds you have done, the enemies you have slain, the miles you have run, the rivers you have swam across, the bears you have captured, or the beavers you have trapped. Tell me, what is it? for I've a notion the one I've been giving you is not altogether the right or a pleasant one." The Indian smiled as he answered quietly, "The name I bear, and the only one by which I desire to be called, is Peter. It was given me, not for killing men or slaughtering beasts, but at my baptism, when I was received into the Church of Christ, and undertook to love, honour, serve, and obey Him in all things as my Lord and Master."

"Peter! Peter! that's a strange name for an Injun," said the white hunter half to himself. "Why, that's such a name as they give in the old country to a Christian."

"And I, too, am a Christian, though an unworthy one, father," answered the Indian humbly. "Never heard before of a Christian Injun!" exclaimed the old man bluntly; "but strange things happen I'll allow. I don't doubt your word; mind that, friend. It was strange that when you saw I was a friend of the Dakotahs you didn't scalp me, without asking questions, and leave me to be eaten by wolves. That's the true Injun way. It was strange that you should take me up, put me on your horse, walk yourself all these miles, with some hundreds more before you, and risk your own life to save mine. All that is strange, I say; and so, friend, I don't know what other strange things may happen. Well, if so you wish, I'll call you Peter; but I'd rather by far call you by your Injun name. It was a good one, I'll warrant. Come, tell it now. You need not be ashamed of it."

"In the sight of man I am not ashamed of it, for by most of my people I am called by it still; but in the sight of God I am ashamed of it, and still more am I ashamed of the deeds which gained it for me. How, think you, blood-stained and guilty as I was, could I stand in the presence of One pure, holy, loving, and merciful? I tell you, aged friend, neither you nor I, nor any man, could appear before God without fear and trembling, if it were not that He is a God of love, and that through His great love for us, His creatures, whom He has placed on the world, He sent His only Son, that all who believe in Him should not perish, but have eternal life."

The young Christian Indian warmed as he went on in his discourse, which was intermingled with many beautiful illustrations and figures of speech, which it would be vain to attempt to translate. Gradually he thus unfolded the fundamental truths of the Gospel. The old white hunter listened, and even listened attentively, but, far from warming, seemed scarcely to comprehend what was said. "Strange! very strange!" he muttered frequently; "and that an Injun should talk thus. Forty years have I lived among the redskins, and never believed that they knew more than their fathers." Peter,—as he desired to be called, though his heathen name was Aronhiakeura, or otherwise the Fiery Arrow, from the rapidity of his onslaught and the devastation he caused,—now stated his belief that they might venture to proceed without the likelihood of being molested. Scarcely, however, had he emerged from their leafy cover when another shot was fired close to them; and, before he could again seek concealment, three fully armed Dakotahs

appeared directly in front of him. The Dakotahs instantly rushed behind the trees, to serve as shields should he fire, but he held up his hands to show that he was unarmed, and in a low voice entreated his companion to remain quiet. That resistance would be hopeless was evident by the appearance directly afterwards of a dozen or more Indians, who were seen flitting amidst the wood, each man obtaining the best shelter in his power. Peter stood fully exposed to view, without flinching or even contemplating concealing himself. Fearless behaviour is sure to obtain the admiration of Indians. Naturally suspicious they possibly supposed that he had a strong force concealed somewhere near at hand, and that they had themselves fallen into an ambush. Had they found and followed up his trail they would have discovered exactly the state of the case. That he had a wounded companion would not have escaped their notice, and that he had but one horse, and travelled slowly would also have been known to them. By his having crossed the stream, however, and come along its bed for some distance they were at fault in this respect. Peter kept his post without flinching; he well knew that the Dakotahs were watching him; indeed, here and there he could distinguish the eye of a red-skinned warrior glimmering, or the top of a plume waving among the trunks of the trees or brushwood. All the time Rob Nixon on his part was watching his preserver with intense anxiety. He had conceived a warm regard for him, and, knowing the treachery so often exhibited by the natives, trembled for his safety. Peter at length waved his hand to show that he was about to speak; "What seek you, friends?" he said in a calm tone; "I am a man of peace, I desire to be friends with all men, and to injure no one; moreover, I would that you and all men had the wisdom and enjoyed the happiness which I possess. See, I cannot harm you;" as he spoke he raised up both his hands high in the air. The Dakotahs, totally unaccustomed to an address of this description, were greatly astonished. Their chief, not to be undone in fearlessness, stepped from behind his covert, completely exposing himself to view. "Who are you, friend? and whence do you come?" he asked; "you cannot be what you seem?"

"I am a man like yourself, friend, and I am truly what I seem—a native of this land, and of a tribe unhappily constantly at enmity with yours," answered Peter firmly; "but know, O chief, that I differ from many of my people; that I love you and your people, and all mankind. Will you listen to the reason of this? Let your people appear, there is no treachery intended them; I am in your power—why doubt my word?" One by one the Dakotahs crept from behind the trees which had concealed them, and a considerable number assembled in front of the Indian, who spoke to them of the Gospel of love, and of the glorious scheme of redemption. They listened attentively; most of them with mute astonishment. Now and then one of the chief men would give way to his feelings by a sound signifying either approbation or dissent, but not a remark was uttered till the speaker ceased. For a time all were silent, then with gravity and deliberation one of the chiefs waved his hand and observed, "These are strange words the man speaks—he must be a great medicine man."

"Truly he has the wisdom of the white-faces," said a second; "has he their treachery? Can he be trusted?"

"The things he says may be true, but they concern not us," remarked a third. "Wisdom is wisdom whoever speaks it," said a grave old warrior who had shown himself as active in his movements as the youngest of his companions. "What the stranger tells us of must be good for one man, as for another. Rest is good for the weary; who among my brothers, too, would not rather serve a powerful and kind chief than an inferior and merciless one. He tells us of rest for

the weary; of a great and good chief, who can give us all things to make us happy,—I like his discourse, my brothers.” The last speaker seemed to be carrying several with him, when another started up exclaiming, “What the stranger says comes from the pale-faces—it may be false; there must be some treacherous design in it. Let us rather dance this night the scalp-dance round his scalp than listen to his crafty tales. See, I fear him not.” The savage as he spoke lifted his rifle and was about to fire it at Peter, when the rest drew him back, crying out, “He is a medicine man—a great medicine man, and may work us ill; interfere not with him; though we do not listen to his counsel, let him go free. Even now, while we are speaking, we know not what injury he may be preparing to do us!” Thus the discussion went on for a considerable time, Peter waiting patiently for its result. Although the speakers had retired rather too far off for him to hear all that was said, he gathered sufficient to know the tenor of the discussion; still, no fear entered his bosom, he knew that his life was in the hand of One mighty to save. While he stood waiting the result he prayed for himself certainly, but yet more earnestly that the truth might be brought home to the dark hearts of his countrymen.

North American Indians are deliberate in their councils. Peter knew that his fate would not be decided quickly; but neither by word, look, nor action, did he show the slightest impatience. The old white hunter, meantime, had made up his mind to risk everything rather than allow any injury, which he could avert, to happen to his new friend. That they would recognise him he had no doubt; and the fact that he was found in company with a member of a hostile tribe would be considered so suspicious, that they would possibly put him to death without stopping to ask questions. However, should Peter be killed or made prisoner by the Dakotahs, he would be left to perish; so that he felt, indeed, that his fate depended on that of his friend. From where he lay he could see amid the branches the Indians holding their council. His trusty rifle was by his side, and noiselessly he brought it to cover their principal chief. His purpose was to fire at the first hostile movement, hoping that on the fall of their leader the Indians, fancying that they had got into a trap, would take to flight. At length the Dakotahs’ leader advanced a few steps. He little thought that the lifting his hand with a menacing gesture might cost him his life. “Stranger, with you we would gladly smoke the pipe of peace,” he began; “but your ways are not our ways, or your notions our notions—we have nothing in common. Go as you came, we wish to have no communication with you. We desire not to desert our fathers’ ways as you have done; yet, undoubtedly, the Spirit you serve will protect you—go—go—go.” In vain Peter entreated the savages to hear him once again, assuring them that he would tell them only what was for their good. One by one they quitted the spot where the council had been held; the first walked off with becoming dignity, but as more departed, the pace of each in succession increased, till the last scampered off almost as fast as his legs would carry him, fearful lest he should be overtaken by the strange medicine man, whose supposed incantations he dreaded. Peter was less astonished than a white man would have been at the behaviour of his countrymen. Still, he had gained an unexpected triumph. The Dakotahs did not stop, even to look behind them, but continued their course towards the west, through the wood and across the prairie, till they were lost to sight in the distance. The old hunter, to his surprise, saw Peter fall on his knees, on the spot where he had been standing, to return thanks to Heaven for his deliverance from a danger, far greater than it might appear to those unacquainted with Indian customs; for seldom or never do two parties of the Dakotahs and Ojibways encounter each other, without the stronger endeavouring to destroy the weaker with the most remorseless cruelty. Mercy is never asked for nor expected. The scalping-knife is employed on the yet living victim, should the tomahawk have left its work unfinished.



Chapter Three.

"Well, you are a wonderful man, friend Peter," exclaimed Robert Nixon, when the Indian returned to him and narrated what had occurred; "I never yet have seen the like of it."

"The reason is simply this, father, most men trust to their own strength and wisdom, and fail. I go forth in the strength of One all-powerful, and seek for guidance from One all-wise," answered the Indian humbly. "It is thus I succeed."

"That's curious what you say, friend Redskin," answered the old man in a puzzled tone; "it's beyond my understanding, that's a fact."

"The time will come shortly, I hope, father, when you will see the truth of what I say. But we must no longer delay here, we should be moving on." The mustang was caught and saddled, the old hunter placed on it, and once more the two travellers were on their way eastward, or rather to the north-east, for that was the general direction of their course. They were compelled, however, to diverge considerably, in order to keep along the course of streams, where many important advantages could be obtained: water, wood for firing, shelter, and a greater supply of game. On the open prairie there was no want of deer of several descriptions, and of small animals, like rabbits or hares; but, unless by leaving the horse with his burthen, the Indian could seldom get near enough to shoot them. For some distance the open country was of a sterile and arid description, but as they got farther away from the United States border it greatly improved, and a well-watered region, with rich grass and vetches, was entered, which extended north, and east, and west, in every direction, capable of supporting hundreds and thousands of flocks and herds, for the use of man, although now roamed over only by a comparatively few wild buffalo, deer, and wolves, and bears. Although they were in British territory, the arm of British law did not extend over this wild region, and Peter, therefore, kept a constant look-out to ascertain that no lurking enemies were near at hand. When he camped at night, also, he selected the most sheltered spot he could find, and concealed his companion and himself amid some thicket or rock, where any casual passer-by would not be likely to discover them.

"At first, as Peter watched his companion, he thought that he would scarcely reach a place of safety where he might die in peace among civilised men, but gradually the old hunter's strength returned, and each day, as he travelled on, his health seemed to improve. He also became more inclined to talk; not only to ask questions, but to speak of himself. Religious subjects, however, he avoided as much as possible; indeed, to human judgment, his mind appeared too darkened, and his heart too hardened, to enable him to comprehend even the simplest truths. "You'd like to know something about me, friend Redskin, I've no doubt," said the old man to Peter, when one day he had got into a more than usually loquacious mood. "It's strange, but it's a fact, I've a desire to talk about my early days, and yet, for forty years or more, maybe, I've never thought of them, much less spoken about them. I was raised in the old country—that's where most of the pale-faces you see hereabouts came from. My father employed a great many men, and so I may say he was a chief; he was a farmer of the old style, and hated anything new. He didn't hold education in any great esteem, and so he took no pains to give me any, and one thing I may say, I took no pains to obtain it. My mother, of that I am certain, was

a kind, good woman, and did her best to instruct me. She taught me to sing little songs, and night and morning made me kneel down, with my hands put together, and say over some words which I then thought! very good—and I am sure they were, as she taught me them; but I have long, long ago forgotten what they were. She also used to take me with her to a large, large house, where there were a great number of people singing and often talking together; and then there was one man in a black dress, who got up in a high place in the middle, and had all the talk to himself for a long time, I used to think; but I didn't mind that, as I used generally to go to sleep when he began, and only woke up when he had done.

"I was very happy whenever I was with my mother, but I didn't see her for some days, and then they took me into the room where she slept, and there I saw her lying on a bed; but she didn't speak me, she didn't even look at me, for her eyes were closed, and her cheek was cold—very cold. I didn't know then what had happened, though I cried very much. I never saw her again. From that time I began to be very miserable; I don't know why; I think it was not having my mother to go to and talk to. After that I don't know exactly what happened to me; for some time I got scolded, and kicked, and beaten, and then I was sent to a place where there were a good many other boys; and, thinks I to myself, I shall be happier here; but instead of that I was much more beaten and scolded, till I got a feeling that I didn't care what I did, or what became of me. That feeling never left me. I was always ready to do anything proposed by other boys, such as robbing orchards, or playing all sorts of pranks. I now and then went home to see my father; but I remember very little about him, except that he was a stout man, with a ruddy countenance. If he did not scold me and beat me, he certainly did not say much to me; I never felt towards him as I had done towards my mother. I must have been a biggish boy, though I was still nearly at the bottom of the school, when another lad and I got into some scrape, and were to be flogged. He proposed that we should run away, and I at once agreed, without considering where we should run to, or what we should gain by our run. There is a saying among the pale-faces, 'out of the frying pan into the fire.' We soon found that we had got into a very hot fire. After many days' running, sleeping under hedges and in barns, and living on turnips and crusts of bread, which we bought with the few pence we had in our pockets, we reached a sea-port town. Seeing a large ship about to sail, we agreed that we would be sailors, if any one would take us. We were very hungry and hadn't a coin left to buy food, so aboard we went. The ship was just sailing,—the cook's boy had run away and the captain's cabin boy had just died,—and so we were shipped, without a question being asked, to take their places. They didn't inquire our names, but called us Bill and Tom, which were the names of the other boys. The captain took me into his service, and called me Bill, and my companion, who fell to the cook, was called Tom. I don't know which was the most miserable. Tom had the dirtiest and hardest work, and was not only the cook's but everybody else's servant. I received the most kicks and thrashings, and had the largest amount of oaths and curses showered down on my head. We were both of us very ill, but our masters didn't care for that, and kicked us up to work whenever they found us lying down. Away we sailed; we thought that we should never come to land again. I didn't know where we were going, but I found we were steering towards the south and west. Week after week I saw a wild, high headland on our right hand, and then we had mist, and snow, and heavy weather, and were well nigh driven back; but at last we were steering north, and the weather became fine and pleasant. The ship put into many strange ports; some were in this big country of America, and some were in islands, so we heard; but neither Tom nor I was ever for one moment allowed to set foot on shore.

“Often and often did we bitterly repent our folly, and wish ourselves back home; but wishing was of no use. We found that we were slaves without the possibility of escape. Tom, who had more learning by a great deal than I had, said one day that he would go and appeal to the Consul,—I think he was called, a British officer at the port where we lay,—when the mate, who heard him, laughed, and told him, with an oath, that he might go and complain to whomsoever he liked; but that both he and Bill had signed papers, and had no power to get away. By this Tom knew that if we complained the captain would produce the papers signed by the other boys, and that we should be supposed to be them, and have no remedy. Tom then proposed that we should play all sorts of pranks, and behave as badly as we could. We tried the experiment, but we soon found that we had made a mistake; for our masters beat and starved us till we were glad to promise not again to do the same. Our only hope was that we should some day get a chance of running away; and, if it hadn't been for that, we should, I believe, have jumped overboard and drowned ourselves. Month after month passed by, the ship continued trading from port to port in the Pacific Ocean,—as the big lake you've heard speak of, friend Redskin, is called,—over to the west there; but the chance we looked for never came. We then hoped that the ship would be cast away, and that so we might be free of our tyrants. If all had been drowned but ourselves we shouldn't have cared. At last, after we'd been away three years or more, we heard that the ship was going home. We didn't conceal our pleasure. It didn't last long. Another captain came on board one day. I heard our captain observe to him, ‘You shall have them both a bargain. Thrash them well, and I'll warrant you'll get work out of them.’ I didn't know what he meant at the time. In the evening, when the strange captain's boat was called away, Tom and I were ordered to get up our bags and jump in. We refused, and said we wanted to go home. We had better have kept silence. Down came a shower of blows on our shoulders, and, amid the jeers and laughter of our shipmates, we were forced into the boat. We found ourselves aboard a whaler just come out, with the prospect of remaining in those parts three years at least. You've heard speak, Peter, of the mighty fish of the big lake. The largest sturgeon you ever set eyes on is nothing to them—just a chipmunk to a buffalo. We had harder and dirtier work now than before—catching, cutting out, and boiling down the huge whales—and our masters were still more cruel and brutal. We were beaten and knocked about worse than ever, and often well nigh starved by having our rations taken from us. How we managed to live through that time I don't know. I scarcely like to think of it. The ship sailed about in every direction; sometimes where the sun was so hot that we could scarce bear our clothes on our backs, and sometimes amid floating mountains of ice, with snow and sleet beating down on us. At last, when we had got our ship nearly full of oil, and it was said that we should soon go home, we put into a port, on the west coast of this continent, to obtain fresh provisions. There were a few white people settled there, but most of the inhabitants were redskins. The white men had farms, ranchos they were called, and the natives worked for them.

“Tom and I agreed that, as the ship was soon going home, the captain would probably try to play off the same trick on us that our first captain had done, and so we determined to be beforehand with him. We were now big, strongish fellows; not as strong as we might have been if we had been better fed and less knocked about; but still we thought that we could take good care of ourselves. We hadn't much sense though, or knowledge of what people on shore do; for how should we, when you see that since the day we left our native country, when we were little ignorant chaps, we hadn't once set our feet on dry land. Tom swore, and so did I, that if we once did reach the shore, we'd get away as far from the ocean as we could, and never

again smell a breath of it as long as we lived. How to get there was the difficulty. We had always before been watched; and so, to throw our shipmates off their guard, we pretended to think of nothing but about going home, and our talk was all of what we would do when we got back to old England. We said that we were very much afraid of the savages on shore, and wondered any one could like to go among them. After a time, we found that we were no longer watched as we used to be. This gave us confidence. The next thing was to arrange how we were to get on shore. We neither of us could swim; and, besides, the distance was considerable, and there were sharks—fish which can bite a man's leg off as easily as a white fish bites a worm in two. We observed that, in the cool of the evening, some boats and canoes used to pull round the ship, and sometimes came alongside to offer things for sale to the men. Tom and I agreed that if we could jump into one of them while the owner was on board, we might get off without being discovered. Night after night we waited, till our hearts sunk within us, thinking we should never succeed; but, the very night before the ship was to sail, several people came below, and, while they were chaffering with the men, Tom and I slipped up on deck. My heart seemed ready to jump out of my skin with anxiety as I looked over the side. There, under the fore-chains, was a canoe with a few things in her, but no person. I glanced round. The second mate was the only man on deck besides Tom, who had gone over to the other side. I beckoned to Tom. The mate had his back to us, being busily engaged in some work or other, over which he was bending. Tom sprang over to me, and together we slid down into the canoe. The ship swung with her head towards the shore, or the mate would have seen us. We pulled as for our lives; not, however, for the usual landing-place, but for a little bay on one side, where it appeared that we could easily get on shore. Every moment we expected to see a boat put off from the ship to pursue us, or a gun fired; but the sun had set, and it was growing darker and darker, and that gave us some hope. Still we could be seen clearly enough from the ship if anybody was looking for us. The mate had a pair of sharp eyes. 'He'll flay us alive if he catches us,' said I. 'Never,' answered Tom, in a low tone; 'I'll jump overboard and be drowned whenever I see a boat make chase after us.' 'Don't do that, Tom,' said I; 'hold on to the last. They can but kill us in the end, and we don't know what may happen to give us a chance of escape.' You see, friend Peter, that has been my maxim ever since, and I've learned to know for certain that that is the right thing.

"Well, before long we did see a boat leave the ship. It was too dark to learn who had gone over the side into her. We pulled for dear life for a few seconds, when Tom cried out that he knew we should be taken. I told him to lie down in the bottom of the canoe, and that if the ship's boat came near us I would strip off my shirt and pretend to be an Injun. At first he wouldn't consent; but, as the boat came on, some muskets were fired, and suddenly he said he'd do as I proposed, and he lay down, and I stripped off my shirt and smoothed down, my hair, which was as long as an Injun's. On came the boat; I pulled coolly on as if in no way concerned. The boat came on—she neared us. Now or never, I thought; so I sang out, in a feigned voice, and pointed with my paddle towards the other side of the harbour. I don't think I ever felt as I did at that moment. Did they know me? or should I deceive them? If the mate was there I knew that we should have no chance. The people in the boat ceased pulling. I didn't move either, though the canoe, with the last stroke I had given, slid on. Again I pointed with my paddle, gave a flourish with it, and away I went as if I had no business with them. I could not understand how I had so easily deceived my shipmates, and every instant I expected them to be after us. At last we lost sight of them in the gloom; but Tom, even then, was unwilling to get up and take his paddle. I told him that, if he didn't, we should have a greater chance of being caught. The

moment I said that, up he jumped, and paddled away so hard that I could scarcely keep the canoe in the right course for the place where we wanted to land. The stars helped us with their light; and, as we got close in with the shore, we found the mouth of a stream.

"Though we had so longed to get on shore we felt afraid to land, not knowing what we should do with ourselves. The shore looked so strange, and we expected to see all sorts of wild animals and snakes which we had heard talk of. Tom was the most timid, 'It was bad aboard, Bill,' said he, 'but if we was to meet a bear or a buffalo what what should we do?' I couldn't just answer him; but when we found the river we agreed that we would pull up it as far as we could go, and it would carry us some way into the country at all events. We little knew the size of this mighty land, or of the big, long, long rivers running for hundreds of miles through it. This America of yours is a wonderful country, friend Redskin, if you did but know it. Well, up the river we pulled for some miles; it was but a mere brook, you'll understand, but we thought it a great river. It was silent enough, for there were no habitations except a few native wigwams. We had all the night before us, that was one thing in our favour. As on we went we heard a roaring, splashing noise, which increased. 'Hillo! here's a heavy sea got up; I see it right-a-head,' cried Tom. 'We must go through it, however,' said I; and so I tried to paddle the canoe through it. We very nearly got swamped; it was, you see, a waterfall and rapid, and higher up even our canoe could not have floated. We now agreed that go on shore we must, like it or not; I stepped out first, and then helped Tom, or in his fright he would have capsized the canoe. There we were both of us on firm ground for the first time since, as little boys, we left old England. I did feel strange, and when I tried to walk, I could scarcely get along.

"Tom rolled about as if he was drunk, hardly able to keep his feet. The rough ground hurt us, and we were every instant knocking our toes and shins against stumps and fallen branches. We both of us sat down ready to cry. 'How shall we ever get along?' asked Tom. 'We shall get accustomed to it,' I answered; 'but it does make me feel very queer.' We found a good supply of provisions in the canoe, and we loaded ourselves with as much as we could carry, and we then had the sense to lift our canoe out of the water, and to carry her some way till we found a thick bush in which we hid her. 'If they find out we got away in the canoe they'll think we are drowned, and not take the trouble to look for us,' observed Tom, as we turned our backs on the spot. We were pretty heavily laden, for we didn't know where we might next find any food; and as we walked on we hurt our feet more and more, till Tom roared out with pain, and declared he would go no further. 'Then we shall be caught and flayed alive, that's all, Tom,' said I. 'But let us see if we can't mend matters; here, let us cut off the sleeves of our jackets and bind them round our feet.' We did so, and when we again set off we found that we could walk much better than before. We hadn't been so many years at sea without learning how to go by the stars. What we wanted was to get to the east; as far from the sea and our hated ship as possible: that one thought urged us on. Through brushwood which tore our scanty clothes to shreds, and over rough rocks which wounded our feet, and across marshes and streams which wetted us well nigh from head to foot, we pushed our way for some hours—it seemed to us the whole night—till we got into an Indian track. We didn't know what it was at the time, but found it was an easy path, so we followed it up at full speed. On we ran; we found that it led in the right direction, and that's all we thought of. Unaccustomed to running or walking as we were, it seems surprising how we should have held out; but the truth is it was fear helped us along, and a burning desire to be free.

"Daylight found us struggling up a high hill or ridge, rather running north and south; we reached the top just as the sun rose above a line of lofty and distant mountains. We turned round for a moment to look on the far-off blue waters which lay stretched out below us, and on which we had spent so large a portion of our existence. 'I've had enough of it,' cried Tom, fiercely shaking his fist; and then we turned along again, and rushed down the ridge towards the east. It was the last glimpse I ever had of the wide ocean. Still we did not consider ourselves safe. We should have liked to have put a dozen such ridges between our tyrants and ourselves. On we went again till at last our exhausted strength failed, and we stopped to take some food. Once having sat down it was no easy matter to get up again, and before we knew what was happening we were both fast asleep. We must have slept a good many hours, and I dreamed during that time that the mate, and cook, and a dozen seamen were following us with flensing-knives, and handspikes, and knotted ropes, shrieking and shouting at our heels. We ran, and ran for our lives, just as we had been running all night, but they were always close behind us. The mate—oh! how I dreaded him—had his hand on my shoulder, and was giving a growl of satisfaction at having caught me, when I awoke; and, looking up, saw not the mate, but the most terrible-looking being I had ever set eyes on, so I thought.

"I had, to be sure, seen plenty of savages who came off to the ship from the islands at which we used to touch, but they were none of them so fierce as he looked. I won't describe him, because he was simply a redskin warrior in his war paint and feathers. It was his hand that was on my shoulder; his grunt of surprise at finding us awoke me. I cried out, and Tom and I jumped to our feet and tried to run away; a dozen Indians however surrounded us, and escape was impossible. 'Let us put a bold face on the matter, Tom,' I sang out; 'I don't think they mean to kill us.' Our captors talked a little together and they seemed pleased with the way we looked at them, for they showed us by signs that they meant us no evil. They were a portion of a war party on their way to destroy the pale-face settlement on the coast. They guessed by our dress and looks, and from our clothes being torn, that we were runaway English seamen; and, knowing that we should not wish to go back to our ship, considered that we should prove of more value to them alive than our scalps would be if they took them. We understood them to say that they wanted us to go with them to attack their enemies, but we showed them by our feet that we could not walk a step, and as they were not ill-tempered people they did not insist on it. After a talk they lifted us up—two taking Tom, and two me between them—and carried us along at a quick rate for some miles to their camp; there we saw a large number of Indians collected, some armed with bows, and some few with fire-arms.



"There were a few women, in whose charge we were placed. We could not make out whether we were considered prisoners or not; at all events, we could not run away. Leaving us, the whole party set forth towards the west on their expedition. Two days passed, and then, with loud shoutings, and shriekings, and firing of muskets, the party appeared, with numerous scalps at the end of their spears, and some wretched captives driven before them, I remember, even now, how I felt that night, when the war-dance was danced, and the prisoners tortured; how fearfully the men, and even the women, shrieked, and how the miserable people who had been taken, as they were bound to stakes, writhed under the tortures inflicted on them. While we looked on, Tom and I wished ourselves back again, even on board the ship, thinking that we ourselves might next be treated in the same manner. At last the savages brought fire, and then, as the flames blazed up, we saw three people whom we knew well,—the captain, and mate,

and one of the men, who had been among the worst of our tyrants. Though their faces were distorted with agony and horror, as the light fell on them, there was no doubt about the matter. They might have seen us. If they did, it must have added to their misery. They had come on shore to visit some of the settlers, we concluded, and, at all events, were found fighting with them. We got accustomed, after a time, to such scenes, and learned to think little of them, as you doubtless do, friend Peter; but at that time, I went off in a sort of swoon, as the shrieks and cries for mercy of the burning wretches reached my ears. The Indians had got a great deal of booty, and having taken full revenge for the injury done them, and expecting that they would be hunted out if they remained in the neighbourhood, they judged it wise to remove to another part of the country. Our feet had sufficiently recovered during the rest of two days to enable us to walk, or I am not certain that we should not have been killed, to save our captors the trouble of carrying us. It took us a week to reach the main camp, where most of the women and children were collected. We limped on, with difficulty and pain, thus far concealing our sufferings as much as we could. We could not have gone a mile further, had not the tribe remained here to decide on their future course. The rest, and the care the women took of us, sufficiently restored our strength to enable us to move on with the tribe to the new ground they proposed taking up. Your Indian ways, friend Peter, were very strange to us at first, but by degrees we got into them, and showed that we were every bit as good men as the chief braves themselves. Whatever they did, we tried to do, and succeeded as well as they, except in tracking an enemy, and that we never could come up with. They, at first, treated us as slaves, and made us work for them, as they did their women; but when they saw what sort of lads we were, they began to treat us with respect, and soon learned to look upon us as their equals. We both of us became very different to what we were at sea, Tom especially. There we were cowed by our task-masters, here we felt ourselves free men; and Tom, who was looked upon as an arrant coward on board ship, was now as brave as the bravest warrior of the tribe. We were braver, indeed; for while they fought Indian-fashion, behind trees, we would rush on, and never failed to put our enemies to flight.

“We were of great service to our friends in assisting them to establish themselves in their new territory, and to defend themselves against the numerous foes whom they very soon contrived to make. Still we held our own, and our friends increased in numbers and power. Our chief was ambitious, and used every means to add fresh members to his tribe, by inducing those belonging to other tribes to join us. His object, which was very clear, excited the jealousy of a powerful chief, especially, of the great Dakota nation, inhabiting the country north-east of our territory. He, however, disguised his intentions, and talked us into security by pretending the greatest friendship. Through his means, our other enemies ceased to attack us, and we began to think that the hatchet of war was buried for ever. Tom and I had been offered wives—daughters of chiefs—and we had agreed to take them to our lodges, when we both of us set out on a hunting expedition, to procure game for our marriage feast, and skins to pay for the articles we required. We had great success, and were returning in high spirits, when night overtook us, within a short distance of the village. We camped where we were, as we would not travel in the dark, hoping to enter it the next morning in triumph. About midnight, both Tom and I started from our sleep, we knew not why. Through the night air there came faint sounds of cries, and shrieks, and shouts, and warlike noises. We thought it must be fancy; but presently, as we stood listening, there burst forth a bright light in the direction of the village, which went on increasing, till it seemed that every lodge must be on fire. What could we do? Should we hasten on to help our friends? It was too late to render them any assistance. We

must wait till daylight to learn what way the foe had gone, and how we could best help our friends; so we stood watching the flames with grief and anger, till they sunk down for want of fuel. We had not lived so long with Indians, without having learned some of their caution; and concealing our game and skins, as soon as it was dawn we crept on towards the village. As we drew near, not a sound was heard—not even the bark of a dog. We crept amid the bushes on hands and feet, closer and closer, when from a wooded knoll we could look down on the lately happy village, or, I should say, on the spot where it lately stood.

“By the grey light of the morning a scene of desolation and bloodshed was revealed to us, which, in all my experience of warfare, I have never seen equalled. Every lodge was burnt to the ground; here and there a few blackened posts alone remaining to show where they once stood: but a burnt village I have often seen. It was the sight of the mangled and blackened bodies of our late friends and companions thickly strewn over the ground which froze the blood in our veins. For some moments we could scarcely find breath to whisper to each other. When we did, we reckoned up the members of the tribe, men, women, and children, and then counting the bodies on the ground, we found that our foes had killed every one of them, with the exception of perhaps a dozen, who might have been carried off. This told us, too correctly, how the event had occurred. In the dead of night the village had been surrounded, torches thrown into it, and, as the people rushed out confused, they were murdered indiscriminately—old and young, women and children. Were our intended wives among them? we almost wished they were; but we dared not descend to ascertain. The place was no longer for us. ‘I wish that I was back in England, Tom,’ said I. ‘So do I, Bill, right heartily,’ said he. ‘East or west, Tom?’ said I. ‘Not west! no, no!’ he answered, with a shudder; ‘we might be caught by another whaler.’ ‘East, then,’ said I, pointing to the rising sun; ‘we may get there some day, but it’s a long way, I’ve a notion.’ ‘If we keep moving on, we shall get there though, long as it may be,’ said Tom. So we crept back to where we had left our goods, and having taken food for a couple of days, we went and hid ourselves in some thick bushes, where we hoped our enemies would not find us. For two days and nights we lay hid, and on the third morning we agreed that we might as well chance it as stay where we were, when the sound of voices, and of people moving through the woods reached our ears, and, peeping out, we saw several warriors passing along at no great distance. From the way they moved we knew that they were not looking for any one, nor believing that any enemy was near; but still, should any one of their quick eyes fall on our trail, they would discover us in an instant. I never felt my scalp sit more uneasy on my head. Suddenly they stopped and looked about; I thought that it was all over with us; the keen eyes of one of them, especially, seemed to pierce through the very thicket where we lay. We scarcely dared to breathe, lest we should betray ourselves. Had there been only five or six we might have sprung out and attacked them with some chance of success, but there were a score at least, and more might be following, and so the odds were too great. They were most of them adorned with scalps—those of our slaughtered friends, we did not doubt, and we longed to be avenged on them. On they came, and just as we thought that we had seen the end of them, more appeared, and several of them looked towards us. How we escaped discovery I do not know. Long after the last had passed on into the forest we came out of our hiding-place, and gathering up all our property, prepared to commence our journey. We pushed on as fast as our legs would carry us, every moment expecting to come upon some of our enemies, or to have them pouncing out upon us from among the trees or rocks. All day we pushed on, almost without stopping, and for several days resting only during the hours of darkness, till at last we hoped that we had put a sufficient distance between our enemies and ourselves to escape an

attack. We now camped to catch more game, and to make arrangements for our course. We had got some little learning at school, though most of it was forgotten; but we remembered enough to make us know that England was to the north-east of us, and so we determined to travel on in that direction. I won't tell you now all about our journey. We had not got far before we found the country so barren that we were obliged to keep to the north, which brought us into the territory owned by the Dakotah people. We knew nothing of the way then, except from the accounts picked up over the camp fires of our former friends, and we had managed hitherto to keep out of the way of all strangers. We were ignorant, too, of the great distance we were from England; and of another thing we were not aware, and that was of the cold of winter. We were still travelling on, when the nights became so cold that we could scarcely keep ourselves from freezing, though sleeping close to our camp fires. It got colder and colder, and then down came the snow, and we found that winter had really set in. To travel on was impossible, so we built ourselves a lodge, and tried to trap and kill animals enough to last us for food till the snow should disappear. They became, however, scarcer and scarcer, and we began to fear that the supply of food we had collected would not last us out till summer. We had, however, a good number of skins, and though we had intended to sell them, we made some warm clothing of them instead.

"We had too much to do during the day in hunting and collecting wood for our fire to allow of the time hanging very heavy on our hands. At first we got on very well, but our food decreased faster than we had calculated; and then Tom fell down from a rock, and hurt himself so much that I could scarcely get him home. While he was in this state I fell sick, and there we two were, in the middle of a desert, without any one to help us. Tom grew worse, and I could just crawl out from our bed of skins and leaves to heap up wood on our fire, and to cook our food. That was growing less and less every day, and starvation stared us in the face. Our wood, too could not hold out much longer, and though there was plenty at a little distance, I was too weak to go out and fetch it and cut it up, and poor Tom could not even stand upright. Day by day our stock of food decreased. All was gone! There was wood enough to keep our fire alight another day, and then we knew that in one, or, at most, two days more, we must be starved or frozen to death. Tom groaned out that he wished we had but a bottle of rum to keep us warm, and drive away dreadful thoughts. So did I wish we had. That was a hard time, friend Peter."

"Fire water! was that all you thought of? Did you never pray? Did you never ask God to deliver you?" inquired the Indian in a tone of astonishment. "No! What had God to do with us poor chaps in that out-of-the-way place? He wouldn't have heard us if we had prayed; and, besides, we had long ago forgotten to pray," answered the old man in an unconcerned tone. "Ah! but He would have heard you, depend on that. The poor and destitute are the very people He delights to help," observed the Indian. "Ah! old friend, you little know what God is when you fancy that He would not have heard you." As he spoke he produced a Testament in the Ojibway tongue, from which he read the words, "God is love," and added, "This is part of the Bible, which your countrymen, the missionaries, have translated for us into our tongue."

"Ay! maybe," remarked the old man, after considering a time; "I remember about the Bible when I was a boy, and it's all true; but I don't fancy God could have cared for us."

"Why? is that wisdom you speak, old friend?" exclaimed Peter. "See, God did care for you, though you did not even ask Him, or you wouldn't be alive this day. He has cared for you all

your life long. You have already told me many things which showed it, and I doubt not if you were to tell me everything that has happened to you since you can remember up to the present day, many, many more would be found to prove it. Was it God's love which sent me to you when you were on the point of death, or was it His hatred? Was it God's love which softened the hearts of the Sioux towards us? Come, go on with your history. I doubt not that the very next thing that you have to tell me will prove what I say."

"Well, friend Redskin, what you say may be true, and I don't wish to differ with you," answered the hunter, still apparently unmoved. "As I was saying, Tom and I expected nothing but starvation. It was coming, too, I have an idea; for my part I had got so bad that I did not know where we were or what had happened. The hut was dark, for I had closed up the hole we came in and out at with snow and bundles of dry grass, or we should very quickly have been frozen to death.

"The last thing I recollect was feeling cold—very cold. Suddenly a stream of light burst in on my eyes, and, that waking me up, I saw several Indians, in full war-dress, standing looking at Tom and me. I felt as if I did not care whether they scalped me or not: I was pretty well past all feeling. One of them, however, poured something down my throat, and then down Tom's throat: it did not seem stronger than water though it revived me. I then saw that their looks were kind, and that they meant us no harm. The truth was that our forlorn condition touched their hearts: it is my opinion, friend Peter, that nearly all men's hearts can be moved, if touched at the right time. These men were Sioux—very savage, I'll allow—but just then they were returning home from a great meeting, where, by means of a white man, certain matters were settled to their satisfaction, and they felt, therefore, well disposed towards us. Who the white man was I don't know, except that he was not a trader, and was a friend of the Indians. The Sioux gave us food, and lighted our fire, and camped there for two days, till we were able to move on, and then took us along with them. We lived with them all the winter, and soon got into their ways. When we proposed moving on, they would, on no account, hear of it, telling us that the distance was far greater than we supposed, and that there were cruel, treacherous white men between us and the sea, who were always making war on their people to drive them off their lands, and that they would certainly kill us. The long and the short of it is that Tom and I gave up our intention of proceeding, and, having wives offered to us much to our taste, we concluded to stay where we were. Every day we got more accustomed to the habits of our new friends; and we agreed also, that our friends in England would not know us, or own us, if we went back. We were tolerably happy; our wives bore us children; and, to make a long story short, we have lived on with the same tribe ever since. Tom has grown stout and cannot join in the hunt, but his sons do, and supply him with food. If Tom had been with the rest, he would not have left the neighbourhood of the ground where I fell without searching for me. It is through he and I being together that I can still speak English, and recollect things about home and our early days. We have been friends ever since we were boys, and never have we had a dispute. Four of my children died in infancy, and I have a son and a daughter. The only thing that tries me is leaving Tom and them, for their mother is dead; and yet I should like to go and hear more of the strange things you have told me about, and see some of my countrymen again before I die. They won't mourn long for the old man: it is the lot of many to fall down and die in the wilds, as I should have died if you had not found me. Tom, maybe, will miss me; but of late years, since he gave up hunting, we have often been separate, and he'll only feel as if I had been on a longer hunt than usual."

“And your children?” said Peter. “They’ll feel much like Tom, I suppose,” answered the white hunter. “You know, friend Redskin, that Injun children are not apt to care much for their old parents. Maybe I will send for them, or go for them, if I remain with the pale-faces.”

The Indian was silent for some time. He then observed gravely, “Maybe, old friend, that the merciful God, who has protected you throughout your life, may have ordered this event also for your benefit; yet why do I say ‘maybe.’ He orders all things for the best: this much I have learned respecting Him—the wisest man can know no more.”

Were not the Indians of North America indued with a large amount of patience they could not get through the long journeys they often perform, nor live the life of trappers and hunters, nor execute the curious carved work which they produce. Patience is a virtue they possess in a wonderful degree. Day after day Peter travelled on, slowly, yet patiently, with his charge, at length reaching the banks of the Assiniboine River, a large and rapid stream which empties itself into the Red River, at about the centre of the Selkirk settlement. The banks, often picturesque, were, in most places, well clothed with a variety of trees, while the land on either side, although still in a state of nature, showed its fertility by the rich grasses and clover which covered it. The old hunter gazed with surprise. “Why, friend Peter, here thousands and thousands of people might live in plenty, with countless numbers of cattle and sheep!” he exclaimed. “I knew not that such a country existed in tiny part of this region.”

“We are now on the territory of the English, a people who treat the red man as they should—as fellow men, and with justice,” answered the Indian. “It may be God’s will that, ere many years are over, all this vast land, east and west, may be peopled by them, still leaving ample room for the red men, who, no longer heathen hunters, may settle down in Christian communities as cultivators of the soil, or keepers of flocks and herds.”

Still more surprised was the old hunter when, a few days after this, they came upon several well cultivated fields, and saw beyond them a widely-scattered village of neat cottages, and the spire of a church rising amid them towards the blue sky. “What! are those the houses of English settlers?” asked the old man; “it will do my heart good to see some of my own countrymen again.”

“You will see few of your countrymen here, father; the inhabitants are settlers, truly, but nearly all my people. There is, however, here a good minister, and a school-master, white men, who will welcome you gladly. Their hearts are full of Christian love, or they would not come to live out here, far removed from relatives and friends, labouring for the souls’ welfare of my poor countrymen.”

The old man shook his head, “No, no; I have no desire to see a parson. I remember well the long sermons—the last I ever heard was when I was at school—the parson used to give, and I used to declare that when I was a man I would keep clear of them, on this account.”

“You would not speak so of our minister here, were you to hear him,” said the Indian. “I will not ask you to do what you dislike—but here is my house—those within will give you a hearty welcome.” An Indian woman, neatly dressed, with a bright, intelligent countenance, came forth with an infant in her arms, to meet Peter, several children following her, who clung around him with affectionate glee. A few words, which Peter addressed to his wife, made her come

forward, and, with gentle kindness, assist the old man into the cottage, where the elder children eagerly brought a chair and placed him on it. One boy ran off with the horse to a stable close at hand, and another assisted his mother to prepare some food, and to place it on a table before his father and their guest.

The old man's countenance exhibited pleased surprise. "Well! well! I shouldn't have believed it if I had heard it," he muttered. "I remember many a cottage in the old country that did not come up to this." Many and many a cottage very far behind it, the old hunter might have said—and why? Because in them the blessed Gospel was not the rule of life; while in that of the Indian God's law of love was the governing principle of all. Christ's promised gift—the gift of gifts—rested on that humble abode of His faithful followers.

Several days passed by, and, to Peter's regret, the old hunter showed no desire to converse with the devoted missionary minister of the settlement. He came more than once, but the old man, shut up within himself, seemed not to listen to anything he said. At length he recovered sufficiently to go out, and one evening, wandering forth through the village, he passed near the church. The sound of music reached his ears as he approached the sacred edifice; young voices are raised together in singing praises to God for His bounteous gifts bestowed on mankind:—

"Glory to Thee, my God, this night,
For all the blessings of the light;
Keep me, O keep me, King of Kings!
Beneath Thine own Almighty wings."

The old hunter stopped to listen: slowly, and as if in awe, he draws near the open porch. Again he stops, listening still more earnestly. The young Christians within are singing in the Indian tongue. Closer he draws—his lips open—his voice joins in the melody. Words long, long forgotten, come unconsciously from his lips. They are the English words of that time-honoured hymn, often sung by children in the old country. Scarcely does his voice tremble: it sounds not like that of a man, but low and hushed, as it might have been when he first learned, from his long-lost mother, to lisp those words of praise. The music ceases. The old hunter bursts into tears—tears unchecked. Now he sinks on his knees, with hands uplifted—"Our Father, which art in Heaven,"—he is following the words of the missionary within. Are a mother's earnest, ceaseless prayers heard—prayers uttered ere she left this world of trial? Yes; undoubtedly. But God's ways are not man's ways: though He tarry long, yet surely He will be found—aye, "Found of them who sought Him not."

The children's prayer meeting is over. The old man remains on his knees, with head bent down, and hands clasped, till the shades of evening close over him.

Chapter Four.

That was the turning-point; from that day Rob Nixon was an altered man. Of course, I do not mean that he at once found all his difficulties gone, his heart full of love, his prayers full of devotion; but from this time he felt, as he had never felt before, that he was “blind, and poor, and naked,” and far away from his home. His good and faithful friend, Peter, had given him wise and good advice, and had introduced him to the excellent minister of the settlement, Archdeacon Hunter, who soon became a daily visitor at Peter’s cottage.

Skilful in imparting religious knowledge, he was able, by slow degrees, to instruct the old hunter in the leading truths of Christianity. Once comprehended, the old man grasped them joyfully; and though long unaccustomed to the sight of a book, he set to work again to learn to read, that he might himself peruse the sacred volume. He, of course, learned in English, and it was curious to remark, how his countenance beamed with pleasure as he recognised once familiar, but long forgotten, letters and words, and how rapidly he recovered the knowledge he had possessed as a boy. His great delight was to attend the school-children’s service, and to hear them afterwards catechised by the minister; and the greyheaded, gaunt old man, might have been seen constantly sitting among them, truly as a little child, imbibing the truths of the Gospel. But, after a time, a change came over him. He appeared no longer content to remain, as hitherto, quietly in the cottage of his friend Peter, but spoke of wishing, once more, to be in the saddle, following his calling of a hunter. His rifle and accoutrements had carefully been brought home by Peter; but they would be of no use without a horse, powder and shot, and provisions. The autumn hunt, in which a large number of the natives of the Red River settlement engage every year, was about to commence; and, to Peter’s surprise and regret, Rob Nixon expressed his intention of accompanying them, should he be able to obtain the means of so doing. Peter trembled lest his old friend’s conversion should not have been real—lest the seed, which he had hoped would have borne good fruit, had, after all, been sown on stony ground. He delicately expressed his fears, describing the temptations to which a hunter is exposed. A tear appeared in the old man’s eye, as he called Peter’s eldest boy to him. “Friend, you love this boy?” he said. “I do, fondly,” was the natural answer. “And you love his soul?” he asked. “Far more surely. It is the most precious part of him,” said the Christian father. “I, too, have a son, and I love him; but I knew that he could take good care of himself, and so I left him with little regret,” said the hunter. “But now, friend, I know that he has a soul which is in danger of perishing, I long to seek him out, to tell him of his danger, to win him back to that Saviour from whom he has strayed so far. I have a daughter and a friend too, and that friend has children. To all I would show how they may be saved. I loved them once, thinking nothing of their souls. How much more do I love their souls now that I know their value!” Peter warmly grasped the old hunter’s hand, as he exclaimed, “Pardon me, father, that I had hard thoughts of you. I understand your object, and I doubt not that aid will be afforded you to carry it out, for it is surely one well pleasing in God’s sight. ‘He who converteth a sinner from the error of his way, shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins.’”

The whole matter being laid before the missionary minister the next day, he highly approved of the old hunter’s intention, and promised to aid him as far as he had the power. He was on the point of setting out to visit the settlements, as the Red River colony is called, and he invited Robert Nixon to accompany him, that he might there obtain the necessary aid for the

accomplishment of his enterprise. It was agreed, in the first place, that the old man should not undertake the journey alone. The difficulty was to find a companion for him. Fortunately, two years before, a young Sioux had been taken prisoner by a party of Crees, a numerous people, who inhabit the country round Lake Winnipeg, their lodges being found far in other directions. They, like the heathen Ojibways, are always at war with the Sioux, and no opportunity is lost of taking each others' scalps. This young Sioux, to whom the name of Joseph had been given, was anxious to carry the glad tidings of salvation to his countrymen, and hearing of the old hunter's wish, gladly volunteered to accompany him. Peter would willingly himself have been his companion, but that he had his duties as a teacher to attend to, and his family to care for; besides which, a Sioux would be able to enter the country of his people with less risk of being killed by them, than would one of the Cree, or Ojibway nation. Peter, however, insisted on Nixon taking his horse. "You can repay me for the hire some day, or your son can repay my children, should you bring him back. If it is not God's will that you should succeed in your mission, yet I fear not that He will repay me, as the loan is for an object well pleasing in His sight."

A horse for the young Sioux, as well as provisions and articles as gifts to propitiate any chiefs of tribes who might not know him, were still considered necessary, and these could only be procured at the Red River. The distance between the little colony of Prairie Portage and Red River is about sixty-five miles, but this neither the old hunter nor his companions thought in any way a long journey. The astonishment of Robert Nixon was very great on finding a well-beaten road the whole distance, over which wheeled carriages could pass with perfect ease; still more when he passed several farms, even to the west of Lane's Post, which formed the termination of their first day's journey. Their course was in the same direction as that of the Assiniboine, which very winding river they occasionally sighted. The banks were generally well clothed with fine wood, and the soil everywhere appeared to be of the richest quality. Considerably greater than before was the old man's astonishment when, on the second day about noon, the party arrived at a comfortable farm, where the owner hospitably invited them to rest, and placed before them the usual luxuries to be found in a well-ordered farm-house in the old country, such as good wheat and maize bread, cheese, butter, bacon and eggs, with capital beer, and in addition, preserves and fruit, several vegetables, and fresh maize boiled, answering the purpose of green peas. A joint of mutton was roasting at the fire, and potatoes were boiling. After this repast, the farmer brought out a supply of tobacco which, he told his guests, grew on the farm. "Indeed, gentlemen, I may say we here live in plenty," he observed; "and all we want are people to settle down about us, and make our lives more sociable than they now are. We have drawbacks, I'll allow; and what farmer, even in the old country, can say that he has not? Ours are—early and late frosts, though chiefly the latter; grasshoppers, which will clear a field of every green thing in a night; and, occasionally, wolves and bears; but those gentry don't like the smell of our gunpowder, and have mostly taken their departure. On the Red River farms they seldom or never hear of one, and the injury they can do us is but slight."

This was the commencement of a long line of farms which extends, with few breaks, the whole distance to the Red River, into which the Assiniboine falls. Often the old hunter was silent, considering the unexpected scenes which met his sight, though he occasionally indulged in quiet remarks on them; but when, at length, the lofty and glittering spire of a large cathedral, (note) appearing, as the rays of the evening sun shone on it, as if formed of burnished silver—numerous edifices, some of considerable dimensions, scattered about—public buildings and dwelling houses—other churches in the distance—several windmills, with their white arms

moving in the breeze, high above the richly tinted foliage of the trees, which formed an irregular fringe to the banks of the river flowing beneath them, while near at hand, at the point where the Assiniboine flows into the larger stream, rose the walls and battlements of a strong fort, whose frowning guns commanded the surrounding plains,—when he saw all this, the scene appeared to his bewildered eyes as if it had sprung up by the touch of the enchanter's wand, in the midst of the desert. "Well! well!" he exclaimed, "and I have been living all this time, but a few weeks' journey from this place, and never should have thought of it." The sight of the large sails of the freighters' boats made him somewhat uncomfortable, lest he should be carried off to sea, and he could scarcely be persuaded that he was still not far short of two thousand miles from the Atlantic ocean, and that there was no chance of his being kidnapped. He was even more frightened than his steed when a steamer came puffing up to a wharf below Fort Garry. "What creature is that they have aboard there?" he exclaimed, "Where does the strange craft come from? What is she going to do?" He sprang from his horse, and stood looking over the cliff at the steamer. He at once recognised her as a vessel, though of a construction wonderfully strange to his eyes, as no steamers had been built when he left England, and he had never heard of their invention. The stream of steam puffed off, and the loud screams accompanying it made him somewhat incredulous as to the nature of the vessel. When, however, all was quiet, and he saw a stream of people issuing from her side, he was satisfied that she was of mortal build, and he was at length persuaded to go down and examine her himself. It almost took away his breath, as he said, to find that vessels of far greater size now ploughed the ocean in every direction, and that continents were traversed by long lines of carriages, dragged by single locomotives, at the rate of forty miles an hour. After hearing of this, he was scarcely surprised at any of the wonders which were told him, and of the numerous discoveries and inventions which have been brought into practical use during half-a-century. At the close of the day the travellers reached a well-built rectory, on the banks of the river, where they were hospitably received and entertained. While seated in the evening before the fire with his host, the old man, as he looked round the room and observed the various comforts which it contained, heaved a deep sigh. "Ah! I feel now how sadly I have thrown my life away," he exclaimed. "I might, but for my early folly, have enjoyed all the comforts of civilisation, and played my part as a civilised man, instead of living the life of a savage among savages."

"Friend," observed the minister, "this is not the only life. There is another and a better—to last for ever."

"Then you have no desire to return to your former friends, the Sioux?" the minister continued, after a pause. "Ah! yes; but not for the pleasure such a life as they lead could give me. There is the friend of my youth, and there are his children, and my children. My great desire is to return to them to tell them that they have souls, and what the Lord, in His loving kindness, has done for their souls." The object of the old hunter was no sooner known in the settlement than he obtained all the assistance he could require. Few persons who had for so long led a savage life could have appreciated more fully than he now seemed to do the advantages of civilisation, and yet none of them could turn him from his purpose. Within five days he and his young Sioux companion, Joseph, were ready to set out. They had a led-horse to carry their provisions and presents, and they had arms, though rather to enable them to kill game for their support than for the purpose of fighting. "I pray that our hands may be lifted up against no man's life, even though we may be attacked by those who are what we ourselves were but a short time back, and should still be, but for God's grace," said the old man, as he slung his rifle to his saddle-

bow. Once more Robert Nixon turned his back on the abodes of civilised men. Had it not been for the object in view it would have been with a heavy heart. "If Tom and I had remained at school, and laboured on steadily, we might have been like one of those ministers of the Gospel, or settlers, and our children the same, instead of the young savages they now are, ignorant of God and His holy laws." Thus he mused as he rode along. He and his young companion did not neglect the usual precautions, when they camped at night, to avoid discovery by any wandering natives who might be disposed to molest them.

The young Indian, though possessing much less religious knowledge than Peter, yet showed a sincere anxiety to fulfil his religious duties, and, without fail, a hymn was sung and prayer was offered up before starting on their day's journey, and when they lay down on their beds of spruce, fir-twigs, or leaves, or dry grass, at night.

The travellers rode on day after day without encountering any material impediments to their progress. There were no rugged mountains to ascend, no dense forests to penetrate, or wild defiles amid which they had to find their way. There were rivers and streams; but some were easily forded, across others they swam their horses, and passed their provisions and goods on small rafts, which they towed behind them.

Leaving British territory, and moving west, the country had a barren and arid appearance. In many districts sand predominated, with sand-hills of more or less elevation; in others grass, growing in tufts out of the parched-up, stony ground, was the only herbage. Indeed, from north to south and east to west, for many hundred miles, there exists an extent of country, known as the Dakotah territory, unfitted, from the absence of water, to become the permanent abode of civilised man. Here, however, at certain seasons, herds of buffalo find pasturage on their way to and from the more fertile regions of the north; and thus, with the aid of fish, and other wild animals, and roots and berries, considerable tribes of the Dakotah nation find a precarious existence.

Note. This cathedral belongs to the Roman Catholics, who have also a large convent near at hand. They maintain a considerable number of Missionary Stations in different parts of the country.

Chapter Five.

It was in the western portion of the Dakota territory, described in the last chapter, that a numerous band of the lords of the soil had pitched their skin tents by the side of a stream, whose grassy banks, fringed with trees, contrasted strongly with the dry and hilly ground before mentioned, which, as far as the eye could reach, extended on either side of them. Yet the scene was animated in the extreme. In the centre of a wide basin, into which a valley opened from the distant prairie, was erected a high, circular enclosure of stakes, and boughs, and skins. There was but one entrance towards the valley, and on either side of this entrance commenced a row of young trees, or branches of trees, the distance between each line becoming greater and greater the further off they were from the enclosure. The figure formed by the lines was exactly that of a straight road drawn in perspective on paper: being very wide at one end, and narrowing gradually till it became only the width of the entrance to the enclosure at the other. Between each of the trees or bushes was stationed an Indian armed with bow or spear, and having a cloak, or a thick mass of branches in his hand. Outside the enclosure were numerous persons, chiefly women and old men and boys, the latter armed with bows and arrows, and the former having cloaks or boughs. They were flitting to and fro, apparently waiting some event of interest. As the travellers reached the top of a hill overlooking the enclosure, a cloud of dust was seen approaching the further end. "There they come, there they come!" exclaimed the old hunter, with difficulty refraining from dashing down the hill, as, at the instant, a herd of some three or four hundred buffaloes burst, at headlong speed, from out of the dust—tossing their heads and tails, tearing up the earth with their horns, trampling, in their terror, over each other—followed closely by a band of red-skinned huntsmen, with bow or spear in hand, most of them free of clothing, and uttering the wildest cries and shouts, now galloping here, now there, as some fierce bull turned and stood at bay, sending an arrow into the front of one, dashing a spear into the side of another, while they hung on the flanks of the herd, keeping the animals, as nearly as possible, in the centre of the road. Whenever any of the herd approached the line of bushes on either side, the Indians stationed there shook the cloaks or the boughs they held in their hands, and shouted and shrieked, thus effectually turning the bewildered animals into the main stream. Sometimes the whole herd attempted to break through, but were turned with equal facility. If they attempted to stop, the hunters behind, closing in on them, urged them on until, still more and more compressed, those in the interior of the herd being utterly unable to see where they were going, they were forced, by redoubled shouts and shrieks in their rear, through the narrow gateway into the enclosure. Through it they dashed, a dark stream of wild, fierce heads and manes surging up and down, till the whole were driven in, and the hunters themselves, leaping the bar across the entrance, followed close in their rear. Now, round and round the confined pound, the affrighted creatures rushed, not discovering a single opening which might afford them a chance of escape, bellowing and roaring, the strong trampling on the young and weak, the calves soon falling and being crushed to death; showers of arrows from the hunters' bows bringing many low, while others, wounded by the darts and spears of the people outside, or gored by their fellows, sunk down exhausted from loss of blood.

It was truly a spectacle of wanton and barbarous slaughter, which none but those accustomed to it could have watched unmoved. Even Robert Nixon, though he had often joined in similar scenes, regarded it with feelings very different to what he would formerly have done. "Alas!

alas! is it thus God's creatures are destroyed to no purpose by these poor savages?" he exclaimed to his companion. "Not one-twentieth part of the meat can be consumed by them; and the lay will come when they will seek for food and there will be none for them, and they themselves must vanish away out of the land." The two travellers had been moving along the height above the valley, but so entirely engaged were the Indians in the work of entrapping the buffalo, that they were observed by no one. They now descended towards the tents. In front of one of them sat a somewhat portly man, his countenance, and the hue of his complexion, rather than his costume, showing that he was of the white race. The tents were pitched on a spot sufficiently elevated above the valley to enable him to watch all that was taking place within the pound. His attention also was so completely absorbed by the proceedings of his companions, that he did not perceive, for some time, the approach of the horsemen. When he did, starting to his feet, and upsetting the three-legged stool on which he was sitting, he exclaimed, "What, old chum! is it you—you, indeed? I made sure that what they told me was true, and that you were long, long ago food for the wolves. Let me look at you. I cannot yet believe my senses." Rob Nixon having dismounted, the two old men stood for some moments grasping each other's hands.



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It was some time before old Tom could persuade himself that his friend was really alive; not, indeed, till the latter had given a brief account of the way he had been found and rescued by the Indian, Peter, and the chief events which had occurred to him. "Well, well! I'm right glad to get you back; and now you must give up hunting, as I have done, and just take your ease for the rest of your days," said old Tom. "Hunting I have done with; but I have yet much work to do before I die," answered the old hunter. "You and I are great sinners; we were brought up in a Christian land, and still we have been living the lives of heathens. But, Tom, since I have been away I have read the Bible; I have there learned about Christ; and I see that we have been living lives as different from His as black is from white, as light is from darkness. Tom, would you like to learn about Him?" Tom signified his readiness with a nod. It was all Robert Nixon required, and he at once opened on the subject of God's love, and man's sin, and Christ the

Saviour from sin. The young Indian stood by holding the horses, and watching the countenances of the speakers. It must have been a great trial for him to remain thus inactive while his countrymen were engaged in their exciting occupation; but a new rule of life had become his, and duty had taken the place of inclination. "There, Tom; I've just said a little about the chiefest thing I've got to say to you," were the words with which Rob wound up his address. Tom looked puzzled, but not displeased, as some men might have been.

His friend was prevented from saying more by the loud shouts of the Indians as the last bull of a herd of nearly three hundred animals sunk, overcome by loss of blood from numberless arrows and darts, to the saturated ground. There lay the shaggy monsters in every conceivable attitude into which a violent death could throw them, some on their backs as they had rolled over, others with the young calves, which they had run against in their mad career round the pound, impaled on their horns; many had fallen over each other, and, dying from their wounds, had formed large heaps in every direction. It was truly a sickening spectacle. (Note.) The old hunter after a pause pointed towards it;—"There Tom, that's just a picture of what has been going on in the world time without mind," he remarked; "the Indians are doing what the spirits of evil do, and the poor buffaloes are like the people in the world, all driven madly together, destroying one another till none remain alive; but Christ delivers men from the spirits of evil, and leads them into safety and rest." Hitherto the new comers had escaped observation, but now numerous Indians crowded round, some to welcome the old white hunter, others to inquire the cause which brought the young man with him. The first to approach the old man was a young girl; her complexion was fairer than that of several other girls who accompanied her, and her dress was more ornamented with beads and feathers than theirs. She stopped timidly at a short distance—Indian etiquette would not allow her to approach nearer. She was very beautiful, but her beauty was that of the wild gazelle, it had not yet been destroyed by the hard toil and often cruel usage to which the older women of her people were exposed. "Come daughter, come," said the old man in the Dakotah tongue, holding out his arms, "I have good tidings for thee." The young girl bounded forward, and Rob Nixon, taking her in his arms, imprinted a kiss on her brow. "Father, father, that you have come back when we thought you lost, is good news enough; you cannot bring me better," looking up into the old man's face, not without some surprise, however, at the affectionate manner in which she was treated, contrasted with the stern way in which the Indians treat the females of their people. "I will tell thee of the good news anon. You might not value it as it deserves," said Robert Nixon. "Thy brother, where is he?"

"He left the camp with a score more of our young braves nearly ten moons ago, to make war on the Crees of the plain, and he has not yet returned. Scouts have been sent out, but no tidings have been received of the party." The father did not conceal his disappointment. "I have a rich gift to offer him," he thought; "would that he had been here to have accepted it. Alas! alas! how great is my sin, who was born a Christian, to have allowed my children to grow up ignorant heathens." It is sad to think that many white men in many parts of the vast territory known as Rupert's land, may have cause to feel as did Robert Nixon. Two of old Tom's sons were also away on the same hazardous expedition, but though anxious about them, for he was a kind-hearted man, he could not enter into Rob Nixon's feelings in the matter. Now as the evening came on the people crowded into the encampment, all eager to hear how their white friend and one of their chief, as well as the oldest, of their leaders had escaped death. He used no bitter expressions, but he could not help asking, ironically, how it was that—among so many

who professed regard for him—no one had thought of turning back to look for him when he was missed? Numerous were the excuses offered, and all were glad when he dropped the subject, and held up a book out of which he proposed to read to them in their own language. Not knowing the nature of a book, they naturally supposed it to be some powerful charm, and declared that he had become a great medicine man. “If it is a charm, and I do not say that it is not, it is one that, if you will listen, may do you good, and will make you wiser than you have ever before been,” he answered. “Do you, or do you not wish to hear me?” There were no dissentient voices, and he then read to them how God, the Great Spirit, so loved the world, that He sent His Son into the world that all who believe in Him should not perish but have eternal life,—“men, women, and children, old and young alike,” he added. “I will tell you more about the matter by-and-by, friends. Talk over now what I have said. This book, though small, contains a great deal; many a day must pass before you know its contents. Those who wish to know more may come to my lodge when they will, and I will read to them.”

Bob Nixon made a very efficient missionary in his humble, unpretending way. He did not attack Manitou or any of the superstitions, but he placed the better way before them, that they might have the opportunity of comparing it with their own foolish customs and notions. With his own daughter and his old friend, whom he knew he could trust, he proceeded in a different method; his friend he reminded of what he had been taught in his youth, how he had spent his life, and again and again inquired what hope he had for the future. To his daughter he pointed out the folly of the religious belief and the customs of the red people, and showed her the advantages of those of true Christians. To an artless, unsophisticated mind, where sin has not ruled triumphantly, the Gospel will always prove attractive, if offered—as its Divine Originator intended it should be offered—as a blessing—as a charter of freedom, not a code of legal restrictions. The young girl received it joyfully, and day by day increased in knowledge and grace. He was, however, often in despair with regard to old Tom. His friend listened to what he read and said, but the truth did not appear to find an entrance into his mind; still he listened and tried to pray, and as he tried he found praying less difficult; and when he listened he comprehended better and better what he heard. Tom’s sons and daughters still remaining with him began also to listen, and came oftener and oftener to the old hunter’s lodge, as their interest increased, till they declared that they were ready to go wherever they could constantly hear the Word of God, and be more fully instructed in its truths. A large part of Robert Nixon’s object was accomplished, but not the whole. A great grief lay at his heart—the loss and probable death of his son. The winter had now set in, snow covered the whole face of nature in every direction for many hundreds of miles. Travelling, though not impracticable, had become more difficult and dangerous; it could, however, be accomplished by means of dog-sleighs or carioles, though all the wealth possessed by Nixon and his friend could scarcely furnish dogs sufficient to transport all the party and provisions to the banks of the Assiniboine. No news had been received of the missing band. Old Tom shared his friend’s grief, and now he began to dread their loss for the most important reason. Nixon’s time was also engaged among the tribe generally; even the chief listened to him attentively, and offered no opposition to his proceedings. For himself he said that he was too old to change, but that his people might follow the new way, if they found it better than the old. Joseph, the young Sioux, was a great assistance to him. Nixon offered to allow him to go back to his own people, but he declined, saying that he was not strong enough to resist temptations, and might be inclined to go back to their evil ways, if he found himself among them; an example which more civilised youths might wisely follow—not to run into temptation.

Note. The chief object of the Indians in thus slaughtering so large a number of buffalo is to lay in a store of their flesh, which they preserve and call pemmican. It is first cut off free of fat and hung up in thin strips to dry in the sun. It is then pounded between stones and put into leathern bags, with the boiled fat of the animal poured in and mixed with it. The white fur traders also purchase this pemmican, as well as the skins known as robes, and also the sinews. Very many more animals are killed than can be used by the thoughtless savages, and thus thousands are left to rot uselessly on the prairie. As the buffaloes decrease in number, so do the red men disappear from the face of the earth. The settlement of civilised men in the territory appears to be the only mode of saving the natives by affording them the means of subsistence.

Chapter Six.

It was during the short spring of the North American continent, which so suddenly breaks into perfect summer, that a camp might have been seen pitched on the side of the bank of a broad and rapid river. The spot selected for the camp formed a bay of the river, or it might be called a nook in the bank. It appeared to have been chosen for the purpose of concealment: for only from one point on the opposite bank could it be seen, while above it was completely sheltered by the thick growth of trees which fringed each side of the river. From the conical shape of the skin-covered tents, the accoutrements of the steeds tethered near, the dog-sleds, for carrying goods and provisions, and the people standing or sitting about, it would have been known at once to be a Sioux encampment. On a nearer inspection, however, several points of difference would have been discovered. In front of one of the tents sat two old men whose complexion showed that they were not Indians, while the dress of one of them was that of a civilised man. Several young women and girls were busily preparing the evening meal, some young men were bringing them a supply of fire-wood and water, while others were engaged in fishing in the river. Several, both of the young men and girls, had complexions much lighter than those of Indians, though others, from their dark colour, were evidently of the native race. They seemed to be fearless of interruption; indeed, they probably relied on due notice of danger being given them by their scouts or sentries, who were watching from some of the more elevated spots in the neighbourhood.

One of the old men had been reading to the other from the Bible. He closed the sacred volume—"Let us thank God, old friend, that within a week we may hope once more to be among our Christian countrymen, and be able to join with them in His worship and praise, and to thank Him for His loving mercy to us," said Robert Nixon. "For my part I have only one desire: to recover my boys and yours, and to see them be longing to Christ's flock."

"Ah, Bill!" Tom always called his friend by that name, "I, too, should like to see the day; but it's far off, I fear. But I hope they'll go to Heaven somehow." This conversation was interrupted by a loud cry of alarm from the young women of the party; and, looking up, they saw a dozen redskin warriors, who had just issued from among the trees on the summit of the bank above them. Several had rifles, others were armed only with bows. They were in the act of taking aim with their weapons when Nixon saw them. Forgetting the native language in his agitation, he shouted out to them, in English, to desist. They hesitated. Some of the girls took the opportunity of rushing off to seek for shelter behind the trees. Tom went into the tent for his gun. Nixon advanced towards the Indians, whom he perceived to be Crees, the mortal enemies of the Dakotahs. His daughter, believing him to be in danger, instead of running for shelter, like her companions, flew after him. Old Tom re-appeared at the moment with his rifle. The Crees, believing that resistance was about to be offered, fired. Their powder or weapons were bad: some did not go off, the bullets, generally, flew wide, but one, alas! took effect. It was in the bosom of Rob Nixon's daughter. Her cry made him turn round, and, forgetting all else, he caught her in his arms as she was sinking to the ground. Before the savages had time to re-load, and as they were about to rush down the hill, scalping-knife in hand, to complete their cruel work, they were set upon by an equal number of Sioux, who sprang so suddenly on them from behind that not one of them had time to use his weapon in self-defence. A desperate struggle ensued, each man trying to pin his antagonist to the ground. Two Crees, desperately

wounded, lay fainting from loss of blood. Tom, climbing up the hill, still further turned the balance in favour of the Sioux. The Sioux were, Tom perceived, of his own party. They had been warned by one of their scouts that an enemy was at hand, and without disturbing the rest of the camp had gone out to intercept them. They had, however, missed them, but again discovering their trail, had followed close in their rear, though not fast enough to prevent the unhappy catastrophe which had occurred.

The struggle was fierce and desperate. Neither party expected any mercy from the victors. Three of the Crees were killed, and this releasing three of the Sioux party, aided by old Tom, the latter were able to assist their companions. Their aim was, however, not to kill. The Crees were quickly disarmed, and being bound, stood expecting the usual fate of the vanquished. At a signal from Nixon they were led down the bank to where he knelt by the side of his daughter, in vain attempting to staunch the life-blood streaming from her wound. "Father!" she whispered; "I am leaving you. I feel death coming, but I am happy, for I know One powerful to save is ready to receive me. I would have lived to have comforted you, but I believe my prayers are heard, and that my brother will yet be restored to you." She was silent for some time; then her eyes, opening, fell on the prisoners as they stood bound on the top of the bank, and she continued: "I have but one petition to make. It is that those ignorant men may not be punished. They followed but the ways of their people, and thought not of the wicked act they were doing. I would speak to them." In a faint voice the dying girl addressed the prisoners, and urged them to listen to the words her father would speak to them, adding: "Truly do I forgive you, and may you find forgiveness from the Great Good Spirit whom you know not." It would be difficult to describe the astonishment of the Crees when they found that not only were they not to undergo torment before being killed, but that they were actually freely pardoned. After consulting for some time, one of them, who appeared to be the leader, stepped forward and said:—"We have heard that there are praying men among the pale-faces, but that their praying made their people different to us we did not know, for most of the things we do they do; they fight with each other and with us, they drive us from our lands, they cheat us when trading, they shoot us without pity whenever they catch us, and they bring disease and death among us, so that, though once we were numerous as the stones which strew the prairie lands of the Dakotahs, now we can count our people while the sun rests at its mid-day height in the sky. Such was our notion of the pale-faces, but you have given us a different notion. Though we have done you a great injury, though our weapons have cruelly cut down one who is surely the most lovely of the flowers of the prairie, instead of slaying us, you forgive us; she too, even, not only forgives us, but prays to the Great Spirit for us. Our minds are astonished; our hearts are softened, melted within us. We would be your friends, and we wish to prove it. We know the pale-faces who dwell towards the rising of the sun, and we will accompany you on your way to them, and guard you from further attacks. You doubt us. You fear treachery. You are wise. We will prove that we are honest. Some moons past, ere the snows of winter had covered the ground, our tribe was assailed by a party of Dakotah braves. We had notice of their coming, and had an ambush prepared for them. Among them we discerned three whom we knew by their colour to be the children of the pale-faces. We judged that they had been carried off when young, and we hoped to obtain a reward by restoring them to their parents or countrymen, our friends. The Dakotahs we slew, but, though they fought desperately and were much wounded, we succeeded in saving the three young men alive. We could not then travel with them, so we kept them in our lodges while the snow remained. We were on our way to the east with them when, in our folly, we resolved to attack your camp. Our prisoners we left with a small number of our

band who are but a short way from this.”

“Oh! bring them—haste!—haste!” exclaimed the wounded girl, alone divining who they were of whom the Cree spoke; “I would see my brother ere I die. I have much—much to say to him.”

Anxious to gratify his daughter, and satisfied that the Cree chief spoke the truth, and would not prove treacherous, Robert Nixon allowed two of his followers, known as fleet of foot, to hasten to his camp to bring in the young men spoken of, having no doubt that his own son, and his friend’s two sons, were the prisoners spoken of. Meantime, it appeared doubtful whether the dying girl would survive till their arrival. While the rest of the party stood round grieving, she reclined in her father’s arms, occasionally whispering a few words of comfort in his ear, and assuring him of her happiness. At length she lifted up her head in the attitude of listening. Her quick ear had caught the sound of approaching footsteps, even before the rest of the party. It was some time before any one appeared. “I knew it—I knew it—my brother!” she cried out, as several young men, running at full speed, burst from among the trees at the top of the bank. One of them, who was leading, taking a hurried glance around, rushed down, and, with an expression in which surprise and grief were mingled, threw himself by her side. She took his hand, and strange to his ear were the communications she made. Another of the youths approached her. She gave him her other hand, and turned her countenance towards him as she did so. “I was the cause of your going on that expedition. I was ignorant, dark-minded, wicked. I knew well that you loved me. I know it now; but, oh! listen to my father. He will tell you of One who loves you far more than I could do, whose love will make ample amends for the loss of mine; and then we may meet in the realms of happiness, to dwell for ever and ever together.” To the young heathen this language was an enigma. Ere it was solved, the speaker had ceased to breathe. “The Lord’s will be done!” said the old hunter: and those who knew how he loved his child understood what a mighty change religion had wrought in his heart. They buried her in that secluded spot, beneath the green turf, on which she had lately trod so full of life and beauty; and those who had loved her, and their late foes, assisted to raise a monument, of materials furnished by the river bed and the surrounding trees, above her tomb.

Rob Nixon and all the party reached the settlements in safety. He mourned as a father for his daughter, but his mourning was full of hope. Her dying words were not thrown away on her brother, or on his companions. Before long, they were all baptised, and admitted to the privileges and blessings of Christ’s church. When the father knelt at the Lord’s table, for the first time after his daughter’s death, and thought of the dead for whom thanks had been given, because they had died in Christ’s faith and fear, he felt that his beloved daughter had not died in vain. He declared that he had not been preserved from so many and great dangers of body and spirit, to lead a life of idleness, and while life remained, he never wearied in striving to bring others to a knowledge of Him, whom he had found to be so precious to his own soul.

The End.

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