

ADVENTURES AMONG THE RED INDIANS



H.W.G. HYRST

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Adventures Among the Red Indians
H.W.G. Hyrst



A STARTLING EXPERIENCE

The world seemed to turn over and slip from under him, his head struck the gunwale smartly, and he gradually got a dim notion that he was standing with his back against something hard, and his body at right angles to that of the Indian in the bows.

ADVENTURES AMONG THE RED INDIANS

ROMANTIC INCIDENTS AND PERILS AMONGST THE INDIANS OF NORTH AND SOUTH
AMERICA

BY

H. W. G. HYRST

AUTHOR OF

“ADVENTURES IN THE GREAT FORESTS,” “ADVENTURES IN THE ARCTIC REGIONS”
&c. &c.

WITH SIXTEEN ILLUSTRATIONS

LONDON

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ADVENTURES AMONG THE
RED INDIANS

BY

H. W. G. HYRST

With Sixteen Illustrations

PREFACE

These pages describe the adventures of men whom duty or inclination has brought into contact with the Indians of the entire American continent; and, since every day sees the red race diminishing, or abandoning the customs and mode of life once characteristic of it, such adventures must necessarily relate mainly to a bygone generation.

To-day the Indians form a bare sixtieth of the American population, a falling off for which the colonist has been responsible both actively and involuntarily. The history of the red man's relations to those who ultimately were to be his rulers is a painful one; massacres and cruelties on the one side led to reprisals of a similar nature on the other. Happily the days of persecution and revolt are now ended; some few of the natives have intermarried with whites and have adapted themselves to the conditions of modern civilisation; others have settled down to an inoffensive and gypsy-like life on reserves granted by the white governments. Meanwhile the whole race—particularly in the north—continues to diminish. It is not improbable that in the days of Cortez and Pizarro the Indians were already a dying people; and that collision with the white invaders only hastened their demise. The result of this collision is melancholy, and the author of "Westward Ho!" has put it all into a nutshell. "The mind of the savage, crushed by the sight of the white man's superior skill, and wealth, and wisdom, loses at first its self-respect, while his body, pampered with easily-obtained luxuries, instead of having to win the necessities of life by heavy toil, loses its self-helpfulness; and with self-respect and self-help vanish all the savage virtues."

Bishop Bompas, who spent his life among the Indians of the far north, says, "the whole of the Tenni race seem to be of a sickly habit, and are dwindling in numbers. They are not much addicted to ardent spirits, nor are these now supplied to them, but they have an inveterate propensity to gamble. Though almost wholly free from crimes of violence, and not much inclined to thieve, yet heathen habits still cling to them, and they exhibit the usual Indian deficiency in a want of stability and firmness of character.... In sickness the Indians are very pitiful. They soon lose heart, and seem to die more from despondency than disease. The constant removals are trying to the weak and infirm, and in times of distress those who cannot follow the band are left behind to perish.... The old women employ themselves in twisting grass or roots or sinew into twine for sewing or fishing-nets. The men and boys are often busied in shaping bows, arrows, snowshoes, and sledges.... Their capacity for civilisation is very limited; none become business men."

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ADVENTURES AMONG RED INDIANS

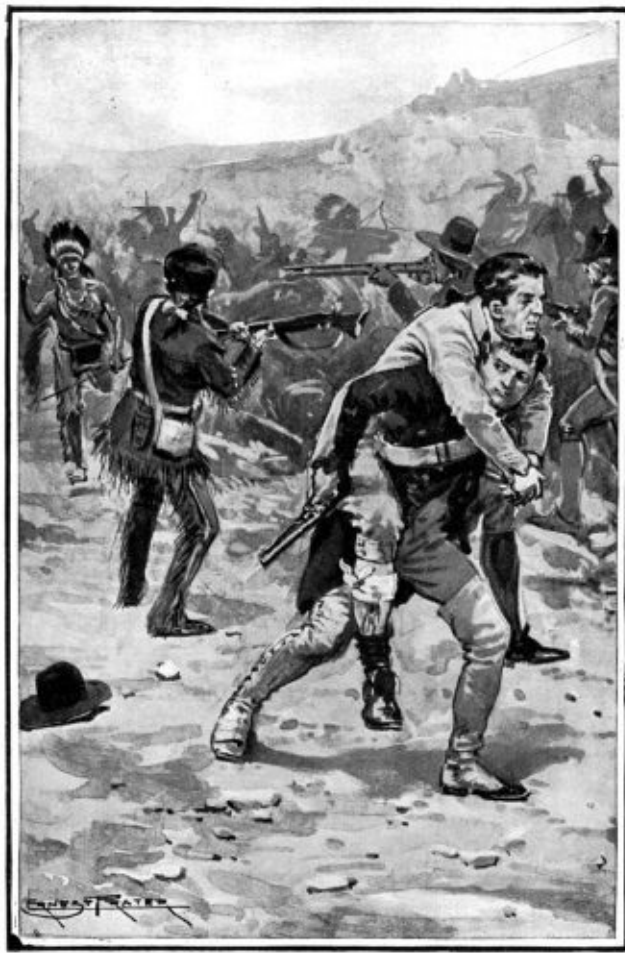
CHAPTER I

CHEROKEE WARFARE

It has been said by certain historians that, after the American War of Independence, British agents were employed not only to poison the minds of those Siouan and Iroquoian tribes that dwelt on the United States side of the Boundary, but even to keep them supplied with rifles and ammunition.

Be that as it may, it is certainly a fact that, in 1793, the Cherokee and Seneca tribes of the Iroquois were not only at war with the Crows, Iowas, etc., of the rival Sioux faction, but were turning their mysteriously obtained rifles on the white people of the States; and the celebrated General Wayne was sent into Ohio with a strong force of cavalry and infantry to restore order. He pitched his camp near Fort Jefferson, on Lake Erie, and having driven away the insurgents, sent a hundred foot-soldiers, under Lieutenants Lowry and Boyd, across the lake to a fort near Detroit, to bring back by road three hundred horses and extra provisions, and, incidentally, to disarm any quarrelsome redskins they might meet with.

The return march was destined to be a very unpleasant one. Large and small bodies of the Indians whom Wayne had driven to the forests persistently harried the column, flank and rear, firing from behind rocks and among the trees, till, in a couple of days, the hundred men had become only seventy, and many of the horses had escaped or been stolen. At noon on the third day the men halted for dinner on a barren tract between a range of hills and a thick forest; and, in order to guard against a surprise, Lieutenant Boyd with twenty men was sent to patrol the woods while the rest ate their meal in comfort. Half an hour later, while Lieutenant Lowry was preparing to send another twenty men to relieve the scouts, the report of a gun, followed quickly by a dozen others, warned him that the day was not to be gone through without further trouble.



A GALLANT RESCUE

Lieutenant Boyd had been sent with twenty men to patrol the wood while the main body ate their meal. Presently shots were heard, and Sergeant Munson was sent to bring back an immediate report. He found the Lieutenant trying to bind his shattered leg. Shooting the foremost redskin, the Sergeant mounted the officer on his back and, after several narrow escapes, brought him into camp.

Every soldier caught up his rifle and made ready to defend the horses and stores which had been placed in the centre of the camp. Lowry called a couple of sergeants to him and pointed to the new patrol.

“Take these to Mr. Boyd’s assistance; and you, Munson” (to the younger sergeant) “bring me back word of what is going on. Hark at that!” A rapid, running fire was beginning, and above Boyd’s voice, which was shouting directions or encouragement to his men, there rose the truly fearful war-whoop peculiar to the Cherokee Indians. “Hurry; off with you! I’ve enough men here to guard the horses in case——”

The little squad plunged into the wood and made for the scene of action, which could not be far away, judging by the distinctness of the voices. They arrived after a minute’s quick double, and the sight that awaited them was not an encouraging one. Ten of their comrades were already dead or dying; the rest were fighting desperately against a score of Indians, most of whom were armed with rifles in addition to their bows and hatchets, while, leaning back against a tree, and doing his best to cheer on the survivors, sat Lieutenant Boyd, his shin-bone shattered by a bullet.

The new-comers fired a volley; several Indians fell, and the rest were speedily charged with fixed bayonets. Again came the horrible war-whoop, this time from a second batch of Indians who either had just arrived or had been in hiding, and these hastened to pour flight after flight of arrows into the rescuers from behind.

Young Munson, who was now fighting on the right wing of the little force, turned swiftly, and, firing off

the charge which he had just rammed down, shot the foremost of the bowmen. But, even as he started to reload, he remembered his officer's command to return at once with news; in the hurry and excitement of the last few minutes he had forgotten all about it. He looked round for the quickest exit from the wood, and, in so doing, caught sight of Boyd who, faint with the loss of blood, had been feebly endeavouring to bandage his wound with a handkerchief. The sergeant threw one more glance back at the soldiers; many of them had already fallen before the Indian arrows, and the rest, paying no attention to their new assailants, were pursuing those who had guns. Then he turned again to the officer. To leave him here was to abandon him to death, perhaps by torture.

"Can you get on my back, sir?" he said hurriedly. Quick; the redskins'll be on us in another minute. Here, give me a hold of your pistol; I must leave my rifle unless you can carry it for me."

But the officer had scarcely strength enough to enable him to stand. With difficulty Munson hauled him upright against the tree-trunk, snatched up the pistol in case he should need it on the perilous little journey which he was undertaking, and, hoisting Boyd on his back, darted among the trees out of sight of the approaching Indians. On every side of him shooting seemed to be going on; an arrow fell at his very feet, and the next moment a stray musket-ball flattened itself against the tree which he was passing. What he could not understand was that, the nearer he came with his burden to the camp, the louder and more frequent did the firing sound. Had his mates already driven the enemy into the open?

A few steps more and he would be out of the wood. But what was all this prancing and stamping? The horses could hardly have broken loose, for, since his recent losses, Lowry had had them tethered in batches whenever a halt of any length was made. The firing grew louder and faster than ever, and all doubt in his mind was ended when he heard the lieutenant's voice ordering the men to charge.

While the two bodies of Indians worked such fearful havoc among the patrols, a third and stronger party—fifty in number, and many of them mounted—had worked round to the open and were attacking the remainder of the company with tomahawks and spears. The horses, many of them already liberated by the savages, were plunging and screaming. Lowry, who had leapt on to the back of one of them, was cutting right and left with his sword at the mounted Indians, while his men, though they fought furiously, were retreating rather than charging, for these Cherokee redskins, unlike the timid, treacherous bullies of the southern and western tribes, knew no such thing as fear; moreover, in addition to their unquestioned bravery, they often displayed, in their warfare, an amount of forethought and method that would not have discredited a white regiment.

Naturally, Munson's first care was to get rid of his burden; and he resolutely turned his back on the fighting and made for the little tent that had been hastily rigged up for the two officers when the company halted. Depositing the wounded man here, he snatched up a rifle and hurried breathlessly back to take part in the fray, which was but a small part, for, all in a moment, a spear, thrown with terrific force, struck him in the shoulder and he dropped to the ground, striking his head on a boulder so violently that he lost consciousness.

When he recovered himself, some Indians were bending over him, and one of them asked him, by signs, if he could stand. He contrived to stagger to his feet; then, finding that his water-flask was still at his belt, took a long drink from it, for his lips and throat seemed as dry as the back of his hand.

"Well done, sergeant; bravo!" said someone behind him; and other voices echoed the sentiment. He turned his head dazedly, and gave a start of astonishment. Under a tree near him stood ten men of his company, some of them with heads or limbs roughly bandaged.

"What's up?" he asked. "What's happened, anyhow?"

One of the Indians here took him by the arm, led him over to the tree, and signified that he must take his stand with the rest; and now he could see that those of his comrades who were not wounded had their hands bound, and that every man had a lasso-like thong tied about his waist, the other end of which at present trailed loosely on the ground.

“We’re all on us prisoners; that’s what’s happened,” said a corporal by whose side he had been placed. “I thought *you* was done for; ’pon my word I did.”

“Where’s all the rest?”

“Dead, or else cut their lucky. Lowry, he’s gone out, poor feller.”

“How about Left’nant Boyd?”

“Guess he got clear after all. I seen two o’ the boys gettin’ him on to a saddle-horse. There’s one thing, them as got away on horseback’ll soon take the news to Wayne, so if these varmints don’t tomahawk us or set light to us, I surmise he’ll soon be along to rescue us.... What’s their game now?”

Several mounted redskins were coming over to the prisoners, and after a few words with those who had been taking charge of them, made a sign to the Yankees that they must be prepared to march. The loose ends of the thongs that bound them were handed up to one or other of the horsemen, and they were soon being dragged forward at a brisk walking pace. Munson indicated that he could not walk far till his wound had received attention, whereupon, instead of treating him like the rest, the Indians lifted him on to a spare horse, fastened his ankles under the animal’s belly, and one of the mounted Cherokees, seizing the bridle, rode on with his captive.

The procession turned at once into the thickest part of the forest, the horses stepping along so quickly, nevertheless, that those on foot could scarcely keep up with them. Although there was no visible track for them to follow, the redskins appeared to know quite well where they were going; they conversed very little among themselves, and Munson was riding too far away from his comrades to be able to communicate with them. As nearly as he could guess by the light, it must have been after five o’clock, and he had eaten nothing since midday. He signed to his companion that he was hungry, but the Indian merely shook his head. In about an hour from the time of starting the horses were stopped, a short conversation ensued among the riders, and then, to the sergeant’s dismay, all moved on again, every one of the prisoners being taken in a different direction.

Munson’s captor, who was now joined by two other savages, turned in the direction of the lake shore, and, quickening their pace to a canter, they rode a good twelve miles without stopping. By dark they arrived at an encampment where there were at least sixty wigwams pitched. The horses were pulled up, the prisoner’s feet were freed, and he was ordered to dismount. He again made signs that he was hungry, and this time one of the Indians pointed encouragingly to a cooking-pot that hung over the nearest fire, and bade him sit down on the grass.

Presently a squaw brought a kind of meal cake, and, plunging a wooden fork into the pot, brought out a bird rather larger than a pigeon, which she laid on the cake and handed to the captive, the three Indians helping themselves in a similar manner. After a while, voices and the tramp of more horses became audible, and about fifty Indians, seemingly of the same tribe as those who had attacked the soldiers, marched or rode into the camp. Many of these must have been away on a hunting expedition, for they had with them a good supply of birds, deer, hares, and foxes.

Feeling considerably stronger and more hopeful after his meal, the American cast his eyes round in search of a way of escape. He was unbound, and might possibly succeed in crawling, inch by inch, down to the

water-side; yet, with his shoulder in its present condition, he could neither swim nor—supposing he should have the luck to find a canoe—work a paddle; reason, moreover, suggested that a semi-permanent camp such as this appeared to be, would assuredly be far enough away from any white station or boat-route.

While he was still revolving plans, two redskins crossed over to him, made him stand, seized his arms and bound them securely, though not unmercifully, behind his back, and motioned to him to follow them. They conducted him towards the largest of the wigwams, outside which sat the chief of the tribe, solemnly smoking. After an interval of dead silence, that personage gave a little shout, and all the men in the camp collected round about the prisoner. A lengthy harangue followed, addressed partly to Munson, partly to the bystanders; and, at the close of this, one of the Indians drew a knife and whetted it on his moccasin.

Young Munson pulled himself together and endeavoured to take courage from the fact that, if death had now come, it had come while he was doing his duty; a man of his calling must expect to meet it any day of the week; indeed, how many of his old comrades-in-arms had met it within the last few hours? At least the savages should see that he could die like a man, without making a fuss.

The Indians nearest to him took him by the shoulders and forced him into a sitting posture, and the man with the knife walked slowly up to him and stood grinning over him. Then a horrible thought came to him; they were going to give him a punishment almost worse than death—to scalp him, in fact—an indignity which only a man who had lived all his life in the neighbourhood of Indians could fully appreciate. He wriggled himself free and, springing up again, kicked out fiercely at his tormentors. For this they seemed to care little; the man's hands were tied and he was at their mercy. He was forced down again and held motionless; then, while one man gripped him by the back of his neck so that he could not possibly move his head, the operator with the knife entered upon his task.

But he whom Munson had regarded as the public executioner was but the barber to the tribe; the formidable-looking knife had no more terrible work to perform than that of shaving the unfortunate man's head, and this in token that henceforth he was the chief's bond-slave.

So much relieved that he laughed loudly at himself for his idle fears, the sergeant was then liberated, and taken to a wigwam where he found a fellow-slave, a Crow Indian, who had been captured some few weeks earlier; and both occupied the tent that night, by no means cheered by the fact that an armed redskin stood at the entrance all night long.

Apart from his anxiety to let his friends know of his whereabouts, the young man was not unhappy among the Cherokees. For the first month or two of his captivity a very close watch was kept upon him, and, even later, it was at all times difficult for him to be away from observation for many consecutive minutes; but gradually he was given more liberty, was allowed to go fishing and hunting within certain limits, and was not again subjected to the disgrace of having his head shaved. His principal duties were to carry water from the lake, collect firewood, tend the fires, and do such other menial work as the squaws were not strong enough for, and as the men were too proud to do. Having no one to converse with in his own language, he rapidly picked up theirs, more rapidly indeed than they realised, for they would often talk of their war plans in his presence as though he would not understand their talk. From the more approachable of the Cherokees he occasionally learned news of the outside world; heard that General Wayne was still fighting against their people, and that "they themselves didn't care a button for him." He never saw, among them, any of the horrible scenes of blood and torture which other captives among Indians have described; they were ignorant and superstitious, but neither lazy nor drunken nor particularly cruel. Sometimes the "war-arrow" was brought into the camp by some fleet messenger, and then the majority of the braves would gallop away or set off in their canoes, and, after an absence of hours or days, would return—often laden with spoil taken from the Sioux or the whites, and sometimes leaving some of their number behind.

We may be sure that, all this while, Munson had worked out a good many schemes for effecting his escape; but, like a wise man, he knew that one unsuccessful attempt would infallibly result in prolonging his captivity and rendering it more severe, if not actually in his death. When he started, there must be no half-measures; all hindrances and difficulties must be foreseen and allowed for. He practised assiduously the art of following a trail, whether by land or water; already he had become very handy with a bow and arrow, for he was never allowed firearms; he did his best to become an expert canoeman, and lost no opportunity, in fact, of learning to outwit the enemy with their own weapons, all the while telling himself that, sooner or later, the golden opportunity must come.

It did come, but not till he had been in the Cherokee camp for nearly eight months. One morning, in the summer of 1794, three Indians whom he had never seen before and who, he learned, were of the Huron tribe, rode into the camp and held a short parley with the chief. Very soon the place was in an uproar, and Munson was easily able to find out the news. The Iowas had spied out this camp and that of some neighbouring Hurons, had betrayed the secret to the Yankee general, and he was now on his way to attack the Hurons' stronghold. In an hour's time all the men, save three aged braves, had left the wigwams and were on the war-path.

For a while the sergeant hesitated. If the soldiers really knew how to find the camp they would force their way to it before long, cost them what it might; and he would be set at liberty. But the chances were that he might be either shot down before he could make himself known to them, or be killed by the Indians the moment he endeavoured to do so. He would never get a better opportunity of escaping than this, for the weather was warm, there was no one to stop him from going, and the canoes were all at his service, as the braves had gone in the opposite direction to the water.

He waited five days, for the old men left behind had shown a certain amount of suspicion of him for the first day or two. Then, with a plentiful supply of food, arrows, and fish-spears, he stole away soon after sundown, crept into a canoe and paddled away from the shore. His object was to reach Buffalo if possible, but that was over a hundred miles away, and he could not paddle day and night without rest. Knowing that he must husband his strength, he confined himself to an easy rate of about three miles an hour; and even then, by the time he had gone thirty miles, he could hardly keep his eyes open.

He had recourse to the good old specific of cold water, took a header into the lake and, after a short swim, returned to his post, ate a cold but hearty breakfast, and began again, all the while keeping his eyes open for any white men's boat that might come along. But the hours went by and he saw nothing, and the desire for sleep became as pressing—and just now as much to be dreaded—as though he had been lost in a snow-drift. He took a second dip and, clambering back into the canoe, began paddling again, though his muscles were now so stiff that he could scarcely move his arms.

He was nodding over his now almost useless labour when a light splash, like the bob of a fish, made him look round him. The splash had been caused by an arrow. Behind him, two canoes, each with three Indians in it, were coming along at a speed that he could not have beaten even had he been perfectly fresh. For just one second there was the hope that the redskins might be of some tribe hostile to the Cherokees, who would be willing to help him in return for promises of money, which he could easily obtain from some charitable person at Buffalo. But he knew the build, the costume, the very method of using the paddles, too well; these men were Cherokees. He turned round to pick up his bow, and, in so doing, looked over the side. Floating within a yard or two of him was an arrow, lying perfectly horizontal! He stared at it open-mouthed; an arrow, if the weight of its head did not sink it entirely, must float perpendicularly, showing but very little of its length.

But this particular arrow *had* no head; a token that it had not been shot in any unfriendly spirit. He looked back at his pursuers again; one of them was waving his hand, and, as his canoe came almost within touching distance, shouted:

“We have some fish; will you give us bread in exchange for some? We have no bread, and very little tobacco.” The words sounded very much like an excerpt from Somebody or Other's “French Exercises,” not the less so in that they were uttered in French-Canadian—a language which Munson understood perfectly well. He could almost have cried with relief.

The Cherokees were Ontario fishermen; Christians, and the sons of Christians, and no more likely to interfere with the soldier than if they had been his fellow-countrymen. On finding that he spoke not only French but their own Iroquoian as well, they became exceedingly friendly; but Munson (perhaps he did them grave injustice) had become far too cautious to tell them the circumstances under which he had learned their language. He confined himself to the statement that he wished to reach Buffalo, and would reward them amply if they would put him ashore there; he had been robbed of his money, he said—which was perfectly true—but could easily get some in the town; he was too tired to use his paddles; would they take him there?

The next thing he knew was that the Indians were waking him at the quay outside Buffalo; he had fallen asleep even while trying to strike a bargain with them, and now they refused to take any other payment than the tobacco and provisions with which he had stored his boat; and, bidding him good-bye, they landed him and paddled away again.

He went to the nearest military dépôt and reported himself, and of course had no difficulty in obtaining the means to reach his home.

CHAPTER II

THE INVASION OF CORRIENTES

The South American Indian, as a soldier, is a being about whom we English know very little. Of course we know that, centuries ago, he was a force to be reckoned with locally; we know that when his civilisation was stamped out of him he became a mere savage, ignorant, dirty, brutal and crafty; but it is something of a surprise to us to learn that, during the first quarter of the nineteenth century, he occasionally shook off much of his savagery, and showed himself the equal of the white soldier in discipline, generalship, staying-power and chivalry. A case in point is that of Andresito Artegas, one of the most striking figures in modern South American history.

Andresito, who belonged to the Guaycuru branch of the great Guaranian tribe, was the adopted son of the celebrated insurgent leader, Artegas, who seems to have given him some education and to have developed in him the great natural foresight and controlling power which he was to exhibit later in the war between the Guaranians and the Portuguese of Argentina.

This petty war, which lasted roughly from 1818 to 1820, was largely a “coming to a head” of the constant bickerings, forays, and persecutions which, for years, had been interchanged between the white man and the red; and though, in the end, the Indians were badly beaten and the tribe almost annihilated, in the early and middle stages of the contest there seemed every likelihood of the Portuguese being driven out of La Plata. In 1819, emboldened by a train of minor successes, Andresito, with a force of seven hundred Guaycurus, determined to seize the city of Corrientes.

Next to Buenos Ayres, this was the wealthiest and most important of the Argentine towns, and much of the commerce was in the hands of British merchants, such as the well-known brothers Robertson, and their friend and sometime patron Thomas Postlethwaite. To men like this the news of Andresito’s advance was alarming enough, for it would probably mean financial ruin, if nothing worse; but to the more excitable Portuguese residents it was absolute paralysis. People went stark mad with panic; the seven hundred Indians became seven, and even seventy, thousand. Tales went from mouth to mouth of massacres unspeakable in every village and town on Andresito’s line of march, and it was said that the Paraguay boundary and the Parana River—the only means of safety hitherto open to fugitives—were already in Indian hands.

Mr. Postlethwaite, disappointed in the hopes of being able to send his two daughters down the river to Buenos Ayres, resolved to take matters into his own hands as far as possible, and saw that all the Europeans were armed and ready to band together in self-defence. But before anything in the way of concerted effort could be agreed upon, rumour became fact; Andresito and his Indian cavalry were within half a mile of the city. Two Portuguese men dropped dead in the street with fright; Francisco Bedoya, commandant of the colonial troops, lost his head altogether; collected all the money and plate he could lay his hands on and buried it in the garden, then began to run about the streets like a rat in a trap.

As a last resource, Mr. Postlethwaite sent one of his servants to Andresito with a letter, warning him that our Government might mete out a terrible punishment if British life and property were not respected; and,

to his great relief, the man soon came riding back with a courteous message from the young chief, to the effect that no violence was intended to anyone, least of all to British subjects.

The Englishman was imparting this message to his friends when the steady trot of a large body of horse was heard, and everyone either rushed to hiding-places or swarmed into the streets. Postlethwaite and his daughters reached the *Plaza* in time to see the Indian soldiers take possession of it. Nothing could less resemble a horde of uncivilised invaders than these seven hundred men. Headed by the handsome young Andresito and his Spanish-Peruvian secretary, Mexias, the Guaycurus halted and dismounted at the sound of the bugle, and it could be seen that they were a set of well-trained fellows, armed like a European cavalry troop, dressed like civilised people, and apparently no more ready for outrage than if they had been loyalist soldiers come to rescue the town.

The rear of the procession was certainly remarkable, being composed of four hundred boys of from six to fourteen years, half of them the children of white people, round whom thronged a mixed group of farmers and their wives, screaming, threatening, and entreating. The Indian boys were liberated slaves, and it appeared that wherever Andresito had found a native child in captivity, he had freed him and taken a white boy prisoner. It is interesting to know that, not many days later, the Indian chief gathered together the distressed parents who had been able to keep up with or to follow his march, and handed the white children over to them.

"I have given you a lesson, he said. In future, try to remember that Indian parents have hearts as well as you."

Andresito's first act on arriving at the *Plaza* was certainly not that of a bloodthirsty tyrant; for, marshalling his men on foot, he led them straight into the cathedral to hear Mass, and as soon as the service was ended, began to converse amicably with the principal inhabitants of the town. The cowardly commandant, Bedoya, had found a place of concealment; perhaps his conscience pricked him, for only a few weeks before he had instigated the massacre of an entire Indian village. At any rate, he would not face the Guaycurus, and in imitation of their valiant leader, the whole garrison deserted their barracks, leaving them at the new-comers' disposal.

In Mr. Postlethwaite, Andresito speedily recognised a far-seeing, wise, and courageous old man, whose advice would be worth listening to; and after a few days, the Englishman's influence over him became so great that, during the young leader's occasional outbursts of ungovernable temper or drunkenness, his followers would invariably send for the tactful merchant and beg him to manage their chief for them.

No doubt this peaceful state of things might have lasted indefinitely but for two unpleasant factors; the first of which was the spite and jealousy of Mexias, the Indian chief's secretary—a vulgar toady and adventurer who could not be loyal to white man or red, and who, alarmed at the willingness with which Andresito listened to Postlethwaite's counsels, lost no opportunity of poisoning his mind against the honest merchant.

The second probable cause of trouble was the ill-bred conduct of the Spanish and Portuguese residents towards the Indian chiefs. We all know, either from history or experience, that it is dangerous and unwise to ignore the natural barrier that exists between the white and the coloured races; but that is no reason why a man should be gratuitously insulted because he is an Indian; and when Andresito found himself regarded socially with contempt and ridicule by people who, a fortnight earlier, would have knelt and grovelled to him for their lives, he was not unnaturally out of temper.

From these two causes, relations became more and more strained, and one morning a file of soldiers appeared at Postlethwaite's house, arrested him on a variety of stupid and trumped-up charges, and

lodged him in the common prison among criminals of the lowest type. His elder daughter at once went to Andresito's hotel, but could not obtain an interview with him till the next day. Then the chief happened to be in a good humour, and after some little argument, admitted that the arrest was due to Mexias' having told him that her father meditated escaping to Buenos Ayres to warn the Portuguese; and on the girl's indignantly denying this, the prisoner was set at liberty.

As a peace-offering for this affront to the Europeans, Andresito gave a great dinner-party to the chief residents, which was to be followed by a display of picturesque Indian dances. Very few of the Spaniards or Portuguese accepted the invitation, and those who did were particularly offensive in their comments on the dancing. Andresito left the hall in a towering rage.

The following morning the Postlethwaite household was again disturbed by a visit from Indian soldiers.

"What now?" asked the merchant, losing patience.

"All those who received invitations to the General's entertainment last night are to come and report themselves; the gentlemen at the *Plaza* and the ladies at the barracks," said a soldier civilly.

The two English girls followed their conductors to the barracks, and there found all the best-known white women of Corrientes guarded by a troop of soldiers. Andresito soon made his appearance.

"Ladies, he said, I understand that you disapprove of Indian dances; therefore I have invited you here to teach us better. When each lady has condescended to dance with an Indian soldier she will be set at liberty."

Miss Postlethwaite and her sister had the good sense to regard the affair as one of humour rather than of humiliation, and not stopping to point out that they were being punished for the misdeeds of others, they readily yielded to the chief's whim, and were the first to be dismissed. They hurried at once to the *Plaza*, and here a very unlooked-for sight awaited them.

Guarded by a hundred soldiers under Mexias, all the well-to-do men of the town were at work on their hands and knees, weeding the square, rooting out, with fingers or penknives, the tufts of shabby grass that grew plentifully between the cobble-stones! The heat was so suffocating that their father and other elderly men were well-nigh fainting; but there all were obliged to remain till the task was finished, shortly before sundown.

This indignity so enraged Postlethwaite that he was tempted to persuade the white men to combine against their persecutors and rid the town of them, but was deterred by the irresolution and petty jealousies of the Corrientes men, and by the thought of the terrible amount of bloodshed for which he would be making himself responsible. Abandoning that idea, he fell back on plans for escape. This would be difficult, if not impossible, for Indians were said to be in possession of the country all round, and flight by water was out of the question, because all the boats had been destroyed or sent adrift, and the larger craft from Buenos Ayres seldom came farther north than Goya.

By way of lulling any suspicions on Andresito's part as to his schemes, he invited him and his staff to dinner one evening. The Indians conducted themselves with great dignity and politeness, and were very loud in their praise of British fare—particularly of the "plom puddin Ingles" with which the host regaled them. Andresito's bearing towards his young hostesses was gallantry itself; he even styled them his *paysanitas* or countrywomen, as well as *Indias rubias* (fair Indians.)

"But what makes you think we are your compatriots, Señor?" asked the younger girl.

"Ah, Señorita," said Andresito, "I fear you have not studied the history of England as I have done. Did you not know that *all* the people in your country were Indians till the Spanish king, Julius Cæsar,

conquered it?"

The dinner passed off very brightly and merrily, and at last the English merchant proposed the health of the Indian chief. This was drunk heartily; but Mexias, who had much of the mischief-maker and still more of the cad in him, having emptied his glass, broke it and threw the pieces over his shoulder, calling on the Indians to do the same. Now this was not at all an uncommon Spanish custom; but Miss Postlethwaite had strong objections to seeing every glass in the house broken, at a time when communication with the capital was cut off, and even the simplest household necessities difficult to procure. She whispered a hint to Andresito, at which the hot-headed fellow sprang up, drew his sword, and vowed that he would kill the next man who broke a glass.

In revenge for this snub, the Peruvian asked the Postlethwaite ladies and others to a dinner; and when all had partaken of and commended the soup and entrées, he took occasion to inform his guests with great insolence that the substance of all the savouries was horse-beef. This elegant practical joke was his last. The following evening he was met by the brother of one of the Spanish ladies, who promptly avenged the insult in a manner not unusual among people of Latin blood—by plunging a knife into his back.

This incident was the beginning of general anarchy. Indians and Argentines alike took the law into their own hands, the latter emboldened by rumours that white armies were marching on the city, the former restless and demoralised through their leader's inability to press on to further conquests till he was reinforced by the troops of Indians, half-castes, or insurgent whites for which he was waiting. To Mr. Postlethwaite there now seemed no more risk in flight than in remaining in the city; so, secreting his portable wealth, and sending his daughters forward with horses and two armed menservants as occasion offered, he managed to join them at nightfall near the river and well beyond the town.

They made excellent pace, and soon after daybreak had reached the strip of desolate, hilly country that runs along the west bank of the Parana. Then Postlethwaite called a halt, and had decided that they would rest themselves and their horses for a few hours, when Juan, his Spanish cook, pointed back to some moving objects at the foot of the long hill whose summit they had just reached—Indians, from the way they sat their horses, though the distance was too great for the watchers to distinguish whether they were the half-naked savages of the country or the better-dressed, better-armed cavalry of Andresito.



A NARROW ESCAPE

When Corrientes was seized by Andresito and his Indians Mr. Postlethwaite and his daughters succeeded in escaping to the banks of the Parana. A pursuing body of Indians almost captured them, but the boat's crew of a ship which happened to be lying in the river kept them at bay with oars and boat-stretchers.

"In either case we must not risk falling into their hands," said Postlethwaite. "Up with you all again."

"But the horses are so beaten," urged his elder daughter.

"Not more so than theirs, probably," he said. "And they have a good mile or more of hill to climb."

The jaded beasts were hastily mounted again, and, always keeping the river in sight, the party made what speed they could towards the nearest white station or landing-stage. The hill which their pursuers had yet to climb would double the value of the start they had of them, to be sure; but there would be no means of hiding from them when they again reached the high level, and unless the Indians' horses were extraordinarily fatigued, it was to be feared that they would soon make up for lost time.

For the next half-hour there was no sign of redskins. Then one head, then another, straggled into view, but still so far distant that the fugitives could not see whether they were moving or stationary. Their own horses were on their last legs, so much so that it was becoming sheer brutality to urge them on. The two girls dismounted and turned their poor beasts loose and the servants followed their example—as did also Postlethwaite himself when, on looking back once more, he could see at least ten figures—moving now, beyond all doubt—not much more than a mile behind.

"We shall have to run for it," he said.

"A ship, Señor; a ship!" cried one of the men hysterically, pointing ahead; and sure enough there were the two naked topmasts of a brig, a mile or more farther down the river.

No one else remarked on the sight; no one had breath to spare for anything but running.

Five minutes went by, and they seemed no nearer. The Englishman glanced behind him; the Indians had not appreciably lessened the distance between them. Another five minutes, and then voices were becoming distinctly audible, though whether those of seamen or pursuers it was difficult to say. Postlethwaite began to stumble.

“I’m—done for,” he panted. “You must go on—and send help back.”

“No, no, give me your hand,” cried his elder daughter. “Look; look behind you!”

He obeyed. The two foremost Indians had abandoned their horses and come within gunshot; and one was coolly taking aim at them with his musket.

“Only another minute or two,” said the girl soothingly.

“Where are you going? Where are you going?” cried a voice in Spanish.

They were running exactly parallel to the river, but about thirty yards from the water-edge. Looking to their left they saw for the first time that one of the brig’s boats had drawn up as close as possible to the bank and that her coxswain was beckoning to them.

They needed no further warning, but made a dash for the boat. As they did so a bullet whistled past their ears, and the younger girl sank down on the dry grass.

“She is wounded; she is killed,” shouted Postlethwaite.

“No, Señor; only faint and frightened,” panted the stalwart cook, and, hastily picking his young mistress up in his arms, he caught up the others, who were dragged on board as a second bullet flew over their heads. Juan handed in his burden and was about to vault over the gunwale, when his foot slipped on the mud and he fell sideways into the water.

With drawn swords the two Indians—emissaries of Andresito—made a dash at him, but were kept aloof by oars and boat-stretchers; and as one of them drew a pistol, Juan’s fellow-servant did likewise and sent a bullet through his arm, just as the plucky cook was dragged into safety and the boat pushed into the stream.

Not long afterwards a strong Portuguese force drove the Guaycurus out of Corrientes and took Andresito prisoner. He was conveyed to the coast and eventually liberated; but he died not long after, and with him the hopes of independence which the Guaranian Indians had been cherishing.

CHAPTER III

A CAPTIVE AMONG ARGENTINE INDIANS

Till the beginning of the nineteenth century, the Guaranian Indians (with the Abipons and other sub-tribes) were in possession of a great part of Southern Brazil, Paraguay, and Eastern Argentina. They were one of the strongest of the Indian peoples, unusually tall and athletic, and, so long as they had reliable leaders, well able to hold their own against the Portuguese. But owing to internal dissensions, intermarriages with Europeans, and more especially to the crushing defeat by the colonists, in 1820, of their great chief Andresito Artegas, they had become, by the middle of the century, a negligible quantity.

Much of their trouble with the Portuguese was of their own seeking; for, not content with beating off their attacks, they were perpetually making unprovoked raids upon peaceful farmsteads, carrying off not only cattle, but European boys and girls, of whom they not infrequently made slaves. A typical instance of this sort of thing came under the notice of Mr. Peter Campbell, better known as Don Pedro, *Commandante de Marinos*, or Admiral of the Fleet, who from 1819 onwards was in the employ of the Argentine Government.

Two Portuguese girls, with their little brother, were returning on horseback to their father's farm near Cordoba, when a series of frantic yells behind them warned them that savages were in pursuit. A single glance back was sufficient to show how futile all attempts at flight would probably be; the redskins were well mounted and used to riding at breakneck pace, while the girls' horses, not too spirited at the best of times, were jaded with a long, hot journey.

The cries—rendered more savage and blood-curdling by the Indian practice of simultaneously clapping the lips with the palm of the hand—grew louder and more bewildering. The boy lost control of his horse—the youngest and fastest of the three—and was soon well ahead of his sisters, the younger of whom, Ascencion by name, had the presence of mind to scream to him to ride straight on to Cordoba, if possible, and warn the military authorities there. The words were hardly out of her mouth when a shriek came from her sister, who was a dozen yards behind.

“I am taken. Do not desert me.”

Ascencion turned her head, only to see the chief himself, a splendid-looking elderly man, riding straight for her own bridle.

In another minute both girls were prisoners. Each was dragged from her saddle and lifted to that of her captor; their two horses were handed to some young Indians who rode in the rear, and then they found themselves being whirled away in the direction of the Parana River, which lay some hundred and seventy miles distant. The cavalcade made no halt till long after dark, when it arrived at a *tolderia* or native encampment. Here the girls were handed over to the womenfolk, who, after robbing them of all their finery, took them to separate tents and told them what would be their future duties.

Worn out with grief and excitement, Ascencion threw herself on the ground in her wigwam (*toldos*) and, refusing food, sobbed herself to sleep. When she awoke, it was day; she was alone in the tent, and now

had leisure to examine it and its contents. This was soon done. The miserable abode was a pyramidal hut, each side about nine feet long and consisting merely of a few tall slender sticks, across which a rough matting of straw, like a collection of old bottle cases, was laid. Through the matting sufficient daylight struggled to show that the only furniture of the *toldos* consisted of half a dozen bows of great length, and a few gourds, fashioned into drinking-cups.

She was creeping to the entry in the hope of finding out her sister's whereabouts, when agitated shouts resounded through the camp.

"Flee, flee! The Cordoban soldiers are coming."

Those shouts were the sweetest music she had ever heard. Heedless of the danger she might incur, she rushed into the open, calling loudly for her sister.

What followed was very like a nightmare. Redskinned, half-naked figures flitted backwards and forwards, screaming incoherently, in her tongue and their own. Then all of a sudden the tents round about seemed to rise up of themselves and collapse. A lengthy, rumbling chorus of shouts came from a hundred yards away, followed by a carbine volley whose bullets knocked up the dust all round her, and one of which laid a young Indian dead, almost within a yard of her. Then she caught sight of her sister being lifted into a saddle, and while she endeavoured to attract her attention, a hand was pressed over her own mouth and strong arms swung her on to a horse which seemed to come from nowhere. She knew nothing more till she found herself being borne at a tearing speed across the plain, lashed inextricably to the cacique's body.

She stole a glance over her shoulder. Less than half a mile away she could see, through a cloud of dust, a string of straggling mounted figures, half a dozen riding ahead, and seven or eight more trying in vain to keep up with them; and from the flash of the sun-rays on their scabbards and metal horse-furniture, she knew them to be white men. But would they overtake her captors? The distance increased, then lessened considerably, then began slowly to increase again. She heard a few shots fired by the pursuers, but these took no effect. The space between them grew greater than ever, for even while the Cordobans' horses slackened their speed and flagged, those of the Indians seemed only to gain fresh strength; and at last she looked away, again losing all heart. For the soldiers had come to a dead stop, and in a few minutes she would be carried out of all sight of them. A howl of triumph and derision rose from the Abipons; nevertheless, they did not draw bridle till they came in sight of another *tolderia*, whose occupants would form such a reinforcement as would enable them to defy any but a very strong company of white men.

Ascencion had eaten nothing for twenty-four hours and had held no communication with her sister since their separation. She was now handed over to the care of a motherly old body who was a relative of the cacique, and presumably a person of some importance in the tribe. Not only did she at once supply the girl with food and drink, but she promised to make interest for her sister to be placed with her.

This promise was fulfilled, and for the next week or two the girls shared the old woman's hut together at night, being kept by day in attendance on the cacique's wife, who, if she made them work hard at cooking, corn-grinding, and rough weaving, was at least not unkind to them. But this is not to say that these Indians were not cruel by nature and habit. One day after a foraging party had returned, the cacique approached the two prisoners, and addressing them in Portuguese, said roughly:

"Come with me. Come and see what is in store for any of your friends who attempt to rescue you."

They followed him tremblingly to the centre of the camp, and there found a young Spaniard, bound hand and foot to pegs that were driven into the ground. He had been caught wandering in the forest, and, being unarmed, was an easy capture.

At a word from the chief, a dozen men stepped back from the prostrate lad, and drawing their bows, each sent an arrow straight at him. Every arrow but one transfixed the body; that one was ceremoniously burnt and its ashes buried; it was in disgrace for having missed its mark.

This murder was the only exhibition of cruelty which Ascencion witnessed at that camp, though almost every day the cacique threatened her and her sister with death if they made any attempt to escape. As far as they could gather, they were to be kept till the next general meeting of the tribe, and then sold or bartered as wives to the two highest bidders.

When they had been in captivity a little over a fortnight some young men of the tribe rode hastily into the camp one evening and called excitedly for the cacique. They had, said they, been pursued by a strong party of Macabi Indians (one of the Peruvian sub-tribes) who had never altogether lost sight of them, and were even now making a descent on the camp.

Instantly the whole tribe turned out, with bows, spears, hatchets, and some few even with muskets. The alarm was no false one. The Macabis, about eighty in number, badly mounted, but far better armed than were the Abipons, were in sight, and would soon endeavour to surround the *tolderia*, the inhabitants of which, so far from showing any sign of unreadiness to do battle, or anxiety as to the issue thereof, were quickly and joyously disposing themselves to the best advantage. Indeed, they were the first to open fire; but the harmless volley from the half-dozen ramshackle old muskets was answered by a deadly shower of well-aimed bullets from at least forty guns.

The two slave girls, crouching with some other women in one of the huts, could catch glimpses of the fight through the chinks in the matting. To an outsider it might seem that Ascencion would care little as to the result of the conflict, but the Peruvians were a fierce tribe, far more uncivilised than their enemies—who were, for the most part, Christians—and to fall into their hands would probably involve far worse treatment than she had undergone at the hands of her original captors.

Presently, as the darkness began to fall, she saw a score of the young men separate themselves from the rest of the defenders, and begin to untether some of the horses. Then one of them hastened into her tent and bade her and those with her hurry out to the horses. The Macabis were steadily gaining the upper hand, and all the women were to be escorted by as many of the tribe as could be spared, towards a small and semi-permanent camp on the river, between Chamorra and Goya. No time was lost in obeying, and Ascencion had already been lifted up behind the cacique's wife, when her sister, who was waiting to be mounted on the next horse, threw up her arms and fell without a cry. One of the enemy's bullets had pierced her breast and the poor girl lay dead.

From that time Ascencion knew little or nothing of what happened; she had an indistinct recollection of an all-night ride, then of resting, once in green woods, and once on a burning, sandy plain; then of a second long march in the dark; but that was all. For she was in a fever which did not leave her till some days after their arrival at the river *tolderia*; and, when next she left her hut, the first thing she saw was the remainder of the tribe returning from the long battle. They had been beaten, but nevertheless had inflicted such a blow on the victors as crippled all attempts at pursuit of them.

Then began again the same wearisome life as before, only more intolerable now that Ascencion had lost her sister. But one afternoon, when most of the men were away hunting, the cacique came up to her as she was preparing for her daily task of fetching water from the river, and showing his knife threateningly, observed:

“There is a boat's crew of white men making for the shore. Stay here till they are gone. If you speak to one of them you shall die.”

The caution seemed needless enough, for by this time the poor girl had become so cowed and destitute of hope, that she had little heart to attempt escape. Moreover, it was quite possible that men of her own race might be no more desirable neighbours than the Indians. And so she sat down where she was, under a tree, feeling but little interest in the coming of the sailors. Looking listlessly towards the row of trees that hid the river from her view, she presently caught sight of the cacique ushering two white men towards his *toldos*, and evidently bearing himself with great obsequiousness towards them. The taller of the two entered, but the other began idly to walk about the camp, exchanging cheery words with the women at work there. Very soon he was standing by Ascencion's side. She was hesitating whether to answer a civil greeting of his, when he said quickly:

“But you are not an Indian girl, surely?”

Then she forgot all caution and all indifference to her condition. She had heard her own language spoken by one of her own people!

“No; I am Portuguese. I am a prisoner,” she whispered eagerly.

“Why not escape then?”

“Alas; they would kill me. No one will help me.”

“I'll find someone who will,” said the young man, who wore a naval commander's uniform; and he ran to the cacique's tent, Ascencion following him more slowly. In another minute both strangers reappeared, talking earnestly in a language which the girl could only suppose to be English, as the second sailor was very tall and of fair complexion. When they had almost reached her, the Portuguese officer suddenly touched his cap and set off running full speed back towards the river. The other beckoning to her, and addressing her gently in tolerable Portuguese, said:

“Is it true that you are a prisoner, my poor lass?”

The girl hesitated, for the cacique, who had guessed something of the import of the white men's conversation, was laying his hand on the haft of his knife. But the Englishman noticed the action, and immediately began to finger his sword-hilt.

“Speak up,” he said; “there is nothing to be afraid of.”

Then, interrupted every now and then by indignant remonstrance or denial from the chief, Ascencion told her story.

“Very well,” said the sailor at length. “Come on board my ship; I shall take you up the river to Corrientes, and leave you with some English ladies till your friends can be communicated with.”

“Not so fast, Señor,” said the cacique, assuming a more bullying tone. “Of course you can take her—if you like to pay the price I——”

The officer whipped out his sword. “This is the only price I pay,” he said curtly.



A PLUCKY RESCUE

The Indians surrounded the officer and the shrinking Portuguese girl. The Cacique threatened him with his hatchet, but a touch of the Englishman's sword-point at his throat made him reconsider his designs. Another Indian made at him with a knife, only to receive such a blow across the ear with the flat of the sword as knocked him to the ground.

The cacique laughed contemptuously, and with a single shout summoned the couple of dozen men who happened to be within hearing, and who surrounded the Englishman and the shrinking girl in an instant, swinging their war-hatchets, and yelling one against the other.

"Oh, stop that din, do," said the officer with good-humoured impatience. "Listen to me, my lads. I am Commandante Don Pedro—or plain Peter Campbell, if you like that better. I've got a cutter and twenty men a few yards away, to say nothing of a ten-gun brig with sixty hands aboard of her, in the stream. Now, are you going to stand clear?"

Brigs and cutters were meaningless to the Indians; but what they did understand was the sudden appearance from among the trees of Don Edwardo, the Portuguese captain, followed by a dozen sturdy seamen—English, Yankee, and Portuguese, armed with muskets and cutlasses.

The cacique re-echoed his war-cry and threatened Campbell with his hatchet; but a touch of the Englishman's sword-point at his throat made him reconsider his designs. Another Indian made at the "admiral" with a knife—only to receive such a blow across the ear with the flat of the sword as knocked him to the ground. The tramp of the seamen stopped, and, at the command, muskets were slung and cutlasses drawn.

The cacique bade his men drop their arms—almost a needless recommendation.

“Take her,” he said sullenly.

Campbell pointed to the man whom he had knocked down. “Take away his knife,” he said, addressing his boatswain, a burly Yankee. “Now—you have attempted to kill an Englishman, and you shall die.” Don Pedro felt the edge of the knife and gave it a final “strop” on his palm. “I’m going to cut his head off, as a warning to the rest of you,” he said, so sternly that the Indians and even the cacique uttered little cries of terror.

Ascencion began to think that Englishmen were no more merciful than other people; for, as the Indian crouched whimpering at Don Pedro’s feet, he stooped and brandished the knife with all the coolness of a butcher. But, to her amazement, when he stood up again, the head was still in its normal position, while, in his left hand, Campbell held the braided pigtail of hair, full five feet long, which had proudly adorned the head of the would-be assassin; and he, still doubting his good fortune in having got off so cheaply, sprang up and made headlong for the woods.

This is but one of the scores of anecdotes told of the celebrated soldier of fortune, Peter Campbell, who, whatever may have been his faults, was never known to show fear, to be disloyal to his employers or unjust to the Indians; indeed, by his unfailing good nature and sense of fairness and fun, he succeeded in adjusting many a tribal or political grievance which in the hands of most men, however well-meaning, would probably have ended in bloodshed.

The Portuguese girl was taken up the river, and when she returned to her parents she was accompanied by a husband, for she married an Irish settler in Corrientes.

CHAPTER IV

THE IROQUOIS OF THE CANADIAN BOUNDARY

The Iroquoian branch of the red race is considered by the best authorities to be far superior, mentally and physically, to any other. Before British rule was definitely established in Canada, they were a power (known as "The Six Nations") duly recognised by English and French alike; and to-day, though less numerous than the Algonquins, they show fewer signs of dying out than the other families. Ontario is, and has ever been, a favourite district of theirs, and it was while living in this province that Dr. John Bigsby, who died in 1881, jotted down the notes concerning them which one often sees quoted in works dealing with the study of races.

Surgeon-Major Bigsby had the good fortune, as a young man, to be appointed geologist and medical officer to the Canadian Boundary Commission, a post decidedly congenial to a zealous student of ethnology, since it brought him in constant touch with the Cherokees, who, with the Hurons, Mohawks, etc., constitute the Iroquoian family. The inspection of military and native hospitals, together with his geological researches, necessitated frequent journeys north, south, and west from Montreal; and it was on one such journey, in the year 1822, that he met with a string of adventures both comical and exciting.

From Montreal he set out in a light waggon for Kingston, where he fell in with an acquaintance, Jules Rocheblanc, a fur-trader who, like himself, had various calls to make on the shores of Lake Ontario. Rocheblanc had already arranged to travel with Father Tabeau, the diocesan inspector of missions, and the doctor very willingly joined their party. The mission boat, unlike the birch canoes, was a well-built, roomy craft paddled by eight or ten Indians—Cherokees and Hurons—all of whom spoke Canadian-French fluently. The weather, though cool, was far from severe, and as all three travellers had frequent engagements ashore, these made welcome breaks in the journey.

After Toronto was passed, the white stations became scarcer, and villages inhabited by Indians more frequent; and, at the first of these, the young army surgeon began to fear that the treachery so often justly imputed to the redskins was going to betray itself.

Three of the Indians had asked leave to go ashore for a day's hunting, and, as the meat supply had run short, Père Tabeau was glad to let them go, on the understanding that they were to await him that evening at a spot below the next Indian village, at which he was to halt for a few hours. Owing to some minor accident, it was well on in the afternoon before the boat came in sight of the village, which stood at the foot of a hill, immediately on the lake shore.

Two or three dozen Indians could be seen on a grassy space, engaged in their national ball-play—a mixture of tennis, lacrosse, and Rugby football, which will be more closely described in the next chapter. By the goal nearest the water, the absent canoemen were standing, a goodly heap of game piled at their feet. The moment they caught sight of their boat they drew the attention of the players to it; these immediately abandoned the game and, running to the farther goal, picked up muskets and hastened with them towards the quay.

“This is something new,” said Bigsby, “and I don’t like the look of it. For whom do they take us?” He took a pistol from his bag, and Rocheblanc did the same; then, looking towards the bank again, they saw that every redskin had pointed his gun-muzzle on the boat.

“I think it is only a salute,” said the priest, “though I must confess I have never been so honoured before. They are harmless, hard-working men, and all know me perfectly well.”

He had scarcely finished speaking when the guns began to go off in twos and threes and sixes, anyhow, in fact. Then the surgeon put away his pistol and laughed, for there was not a splash on the water anywhere.

“The Father was right; it’s only a salute. Do they often do this?” he asked of the nearest of the canoemen. “I’ve not seen it before.”

The Indian looked very knowing and mysterious, and, after a pause, answered:

“It is a royal salute. They only fire like this for a great Iroquois chief, or for a messenger from the white king.”

Very soon another succession of reports came, the guns all the while trained so accurately on the boat that even Bigsby, fresh from three years’ constant active service at the Cape, began earnestly to hope that no one had, in the excitement of the moment, dropped a bullet into a gun-muzzle by mistake. Before the muskets could be loaded a third time the travellers were safely at the landing-stage.

At other Indian villages the doctor had noticed that the priest was always subjected to lengthy greetings, speechifyings, and very elaborate homage. The homage and the greetings were not absent to-day, but they were of the hurried and perfunctory sort, for everyone, after a word and an obeisance to his reverend fellow-traveller, turned to Bigsby himself; and the old chief, coming forward with tremulous respect, began to address a long oration to him, calling him the lord of lakes and forests, the father of the red man, the slayer of beasts, and a score of other titles; in short, “describing him ever so much better than he knew himself,” as John Ridd says. While he was stammering out a suitable acknowledgment in French, the parish priest came hurrying to greet his superior, and then the mystery was explained, for Père Tabeau introduced the lord of lakes, etc., to him as plain “Surgeon Bigsby.”

The old *curé* laughed heartily.

“I understand. Your uniform is responsible for all this, monsieur. Your boatmen had told us that an ambassador from the king was coming with the Père Supérieur.” He pointed at the doctor’s regimental coat.

“Then that is why all the canoemen have been so distant and servile with me to-day,” said the young surgeon. “I’ve not been able to get a word out of them.”

Usually he wore a perfectly plain, blue relief-jacket, but on this particular morning he had donned a very old scarlet tunic, of the dragoon regiment to which he belonged, merely because the day happened to be too chilly for the thin serge jacket, and not cold enough for him to trouble about unpacking a winter coat; and if this had raised him in the canoemen’s estimation, he had been quite unconscious of it. As a matter of fact, when the Indians left the boat that morning, they had already made of him a British potentate who was at last throwing off his disguise, and this they honestly believed him to be; but, before the morning was out, their imagination had run away with them so far as to promote him to the rank of envoy extraordinary; in other words, they had exaggerated, as more civilised people sometimes will, for the sake of a little reflected greatness.

“Mr. Rocheblanc,” said the doctor, “if you will lend me a spare coat till I unpack to-night, I think I can sweeten that chief’s declining years.”

A coat was soon produced, and, to the wonderment of the Indians, Bigsby removed the old tunic which, with a grave bow, he begged the old chief to accept as a memento. So great, indeed, was the surprise of the redskins that the donor was in no danger of the contempt which they might otherwise have shown for a broken idol—a daw despoiled of its peacock's plumage. Such liberality was stupefying.

But the chief was not to be outdone in self-sacrifice. After a tremendous struggle with himself he stifled his vanity and desire for possession, and turning to the old parish priest, begged him to wear the garment, as being more worthy of the honour; nor was it till he was made to understand that, neither in nor out of church, would it be seemly for the staid old clergyman to go flaunting in a cavalry officer's scarlet and gold, that the chief would consent to wear it. And then his appearance and his self-satisfaction were such that none of the white men dared look at him for long, lest they should hurt the dear old fellow's feelings by a burst of laughter.

The gift led to an invitation to dinner from the chief, so persistent and impassioned that it was impossible for the visitors to refuse it, though the *curé* had a meal awaiting them at his presbytery. And now the doctor was to achieve even greater popularity, for the *curé*, who usually acted as village surgeon and herbalist, took the opportunity of asking his advice in the case of a baby of one of the parishioners that suffered from what seemed to be incurable fits. Bigsby at once went to examine the child and recommended the application of a little blistering lotion to the back of the neck; he sent to the boat for his medicine-case, gave the *curé* a small supply of the lotion, and instructed him how to make more. This was, of course, the signal for everyone in the village to require doctoring. Ailments were discovered or invented with astonishing rapidity, and the whole time, till dinner was ready, was occupied in feeling pulses, drawing teeth, lancing abscesses, and salving sores. But if the surgeon had been a vain man, the reverence paid to his skill would have been ample reward.

At last the white men were conducted in state to the chief's hut. The dinner was laid on the floor, and mats and cushions arranged round it in a circle; the two priests sat on the chief's right, the doctor and Rocheblanc on his left, and his son opposite him, while the wife and the daughter-in-law brought in, helped, and handed round the various courses. The first of these was *sowete*, a really villainous concoction of bruised sunflower seeds, *camash* (a very insipid kind of truffle), and the gristly parts of some fish-heads, all boiled together to the consistency of porridge. Of this the guests ate sparingly, and of the next course not at all, though it looked and smelt so inviting that Bigsby and the fur-trader would have done full justice to it, had it not been for a warning look from Père Tabeau, and the ejaculation of the single word "Puppy!" which was lost upon the Indians, as they spoke only the Canadian *patois* and their own Iroquoian. The dish might have been a roasted hare; but Bigsby suddenly recalled, with a shudder, having seen a fresh dog-skin spread to dry on the outside wall of the hut. But the remaining courses were unexceptionable: various fish, a kind of grouse, venison, and a right good beefsteak to finish with.

The chief implored his guests to stay for at least one night, but the mission superior had an appointment early the following day; and, when he had inspected the parish books, all returned to the boat, conducted by the red-habited chief. At the landing-stage the canoemen were busy stowing away presents which half the parish had brought down for the mighty medicine man: fruits of all kinds, small cheeses, carvings on horn, bone, and wood, and—to Bigsby's great delight—several lumps of nickel and copper ore and some bits of gold quartz. These he knew were to be found in the vicinity, though he had not yet succeeded in discovering them; and here were valuable specimens which he might have spent weeks in trying to find.

As a good deal of time had been lost, no halt was made that night, each man sleeping in the boat, where and when and how he could; and, long before noon of the following day, the next stopping-place was reached. This was a small fur-trading centre where Rocheblanc also had affairs to transact; and he and Père Tabeau went about their respective business, agreeing to meet the doctor at the boat at three o'clock.

Bigsby, having nothing special to do, explored the tiny settlement and, strolling a mile inland, collected one or two geological specimens. This occupation attracted a knot of Indian idlers, who stood gaping at the childishness of a white man who could find nothing better to do than picking stones off the road, throwing them down again or putting them in his pocket, and varying these puerilities by producing a hammer and knocking chips off unoffending wayside boulders. Geologists and painters are too much accustomed to being stared at, as marvels or lunatics, to heed such curiosity; and it was not till he heard a strident voice in French, ordering the Indians to go away, that he even troubled to turn his head.

“Sales chiens,” “salauds,” and *“sacrés cochons”* were the mildest terms that were being hurled at the simple redskins by an over-dressed and much-bejewelled being whose European toilette could not conceal the fact that he was a negro-Indian (or a Zambo, as he would have been termed farther south), with possibly a streak of white blood in him.

“Out of the way, reptiles, redskinned animals,” he shouted. “White gentlemen don’t want to be pestered by you,” and pushing his way roughly through the little crowd, he came and stood by the scientist, bestowing on him a most princely bow and a gracious smile.

Now as Bigsby had not sought this very loud young man’s acquaintance, and wouldn’t have had it at any price he could have offered him, he took no notice of him beyond a civil nod, and returned to his task of examining a chip of quartz with a pocket-lens. But the Zambo, having established the fact that he was “somebody” in these parts by driving away the shrinking natives, endeavoured to press on the doctor a card that bore a string of names beginning with César Auguste and ending with the historic surname of de Valois. Convinced that the man was not sober, and unwilling to be the centre of a disturbance, Bigsby turned away with a curt “good morning” and followed the retreating Indians.

At three o’clock he returned to the boat. The others were already in their places, and sitting next to Rocheblanc was a coloured person, resplendent in white hat, fur-collared surtout, and an infinite number of waistcoats, pins, brooches, chains, and rings; Dr. Bigsby’s acquaintance of a few hours before.

“I took the liberty of inviting Mr. de Valois to join us as far as the next station, where he has business,” said Rocheblanc, who, like the Indians, seemed more or less in awe of the stranger. Bigsby concealed his annoyance and comforted himself with the reflection that the next station would be reached in less than three hours’ time. It turned out that the fellow was a millionaire fur-buyer, with whom Rocheblanc had often done business and wished to do more, and who, from his great size, his wealth, his powers of bullying, and his pretensions to white blood, was a terror to all the more civilised Indians. To the doctor, as a “king’s officer,” he condescended to be more friendly than was desired; but his manner towards the two Canadians was insufferably patronising, while a curse or a kick was the sole form of notice he could spare for the canoemen, and that only when they happened to splash him. Father Tabeau and the doctor pocketed their disgust as well as they could, and Rocheblanc endeavoured to hold his guest tightly down to business conversation. The worst of it was that the canoemen, though strong, able fellows, seemed fascinated by their fear of him, and had it not been still broad daylight, a serious accident might have happened to the boat. Even as it was, the men paddled nervously and irregularly, more than once getting her into a crosscurrent, and growing only more frightened and helpless as the half-breed became noisier and more abusive.



A BULLY WELL SERVED

The over-dressed Zambo, after bullying the canoemen to the verge of mutiny, was ordered by Bigsby to leave the canoe. The bully clenched his fist, but Bigsby planted a powerful blow on his throat, and sent him right over the gunwale.

“There’ll be trouble if we’re not careful, Father,” said Bigsby in English, now at the end of his patience. “If you’ll allow me I’ll try and get rid of him.”

He made a sign to the Indians to pull sharply in, which Mr. de Valois did not perceive. But, when the confused redskins suddenly ran the boat among a number of projecting stakes, where an old landing-stage had been broken up, the Zambo, splashed and shaken, began to behave like a maniac. He jumped up, cane in hand, and lashed the three nearest Indians savagely over the head and face, swearing, gesticulating, and threatening till the doctor was minded to pitch him into the water straight away.

“Steady her; hold by those stakes,” he cried to the men in the bow, who, being farthest from the stick, were the coolest. Then, throwing himself between the half-breed and the canoemen, he said, “There’s one redskin too many here, my man, and I think *you’d* better clear out,” and at the same time he wrenched the stick from his hand and flung it on shore.

The bully clenched his fist, but again Bigsby was too quick for him, and planted a powerful blow neatly under his throat; he staggered, tried to steady himself, and, in so doing, toppled clean over the gunwale.

“All right; push off,” said Bigsby coolly. “He’s got plenty to catch hold of there.”

The water was still fairly deep, but the stakes were so numerous that even a non-swimmer could be in no danger. The boat was soon in clear water again, and Cæsar Augustus could now be seen—a truly pitiable figure—helping himself ashore from stump to stump, a sadder if not a wiser man.

Bigsby never had the felicity of seeing him again, but he heard, some months later, that his power over the redskins was very much diminished, and that he had grown considerably less ready to domineer over the race which certainly had more claim to him than any other.

CHAPTER V

CREEK INDIANS AT PLAY

A great deal of abuse has been poured, from time to time, on the United States Government for its treatment of the North American Indians. In point of fact, much of this abuse was quite undeserved, for, as the well-known traveller, Captain Basil Hall, R.N., has shown, constant endeavours were made by Congress to render the savages self-supporting; large grants of money and land were given to those who were dispossessed of their forest or prairie homes, and the remainder were allowed and encouraged to preserve as many of their own customs and laws as were not connected with blood-feud or revolt.

The redskins with whom Captain Hall came most in touch were the Creeks, who—with the Choctaws, Chicasas, etc.—belong to the great Muskhogean family, at one time the possessors of Kentucky, Tennessee, Georgia, Alabama, and Florida. When the Captain first set foot in the State of Georgia, in 1828, he knew little or nothing of the Indians, save from books; and on entering upon the prairies near the Savannah River, he was prepared for adventures thrilling and abundant. He and his attendants were all well armed, for they had before them a lonely ride that would occupy two days, to a small Government settlement on the edge of a hilly forest, where they were to meet a United States agent to whom the Captain had letters of introduction.

They rode all that day, however, without meeting a soul; and the greater part of the next also. Then, as they crossed a stream which formed a natural frontier between prairie and forest, smoke became visible among the trees, and, shortly after, the travellers began to catch glimpses, not of the wigwams which they had looked to see, but of tarred log huts that were certainly not the work of unreclaimed savages. But every man examined the loading of his firearms and prepared to defend himself: a very needless precaution, as it turned out. For, amid a confused barking of dogs and screaming of women, a dozen or more redskins crept gloomily out from one or other of the huts, and Captain Hall's heart sank in chill disappointment. Were *these* the noble savages whom, all his life, he had burned to see? The "Black Eagles" and "Sparrowhawks" and "Pathfinders" of the romance-writers?

The skinny, stooping, half-starved-looking group drew near. Not one carried arms, not one appeared to have nerve enough to slay a spring chicken; and the moment the white men reined up, all began a chorus of whining appeals for tobacco, drink, or money, such as you may hear from the gypsies along the Epsom Road. Hall hastily distributed some small change and a handful of cigars and rode on again, having scarcely the heart to look round on the dismal little village with its scolding women, its disreputable fowls and dogs, and its little company of loafing, unkempt men, the most energetic of whom could find no more vigorous employment than the making of toy bows and arrows for sale, or the listless sowing of seeds in ground that had never been properly dug. And *these* were the famous Creek Indians!

But compensation for the disappointment awaited him when, some hours later, the forest path which he was following widened into a large clearing where wigwams, as well as permanent huts, well-fed horses, and camp fires announced at least a more virile and natural form of life. A robust and well-dressed young white man came running out of the first and largest of the huts and, greeting the Captain warmly,

introduced himself as the Government agent.

“Oh, pooh! They’re not all so bad as that,” he said when, seated over a comfortable meal in the hut, Captain Hall dwelt on what he had seen at the edge of the forest. “They’re only the dregs and leavings. I’ll show you something different to that by and by. Poor beggars; I’m afraid they’ve no one but themselves to thank for their condition.”

“How do you make that out?” asked the Englishman.

“Well, when Congress claimed that bit of prairie land, these fellows were given the patch where you saw them—and considerable money grants as well. They went off to the towns and spent the money like children, and when they hadn’t got a red cent left, calculated to try farming. I reckon you saw the sort of farming *they* go in for, Captain. They’re too lazy to fell the trees, let alone grub out the roots or break up the soil. We’ve given ’em corn for seed, but they only chaw it up and then come back and ask for more. They had the option of coming out here, but they ain’t partial to forest hunting; they won’t help themselves, and they won’t let us help them.”

“But what’s the good of their coming out here if you fellows are going to turn them off when you think good?” asked the Captain.

The agent shrugged his shoulders. “Look here, sir, these chaps won’t be disturbed for another twenty years. The chiefs have had fair warning, and if they don’t turn to and help themselves before then, it’ll be their own look-out. Finer men you needn’t wish to see—at present.”

Hall felt that the last remark was fully justified when, later in the evening, his new friend conducted him to the middle of the clearing, where the whole tribe had foregathered.

“Couldn’t have come at a better time, Captain,” said the Yankee. “To-morrow’s their Derby Day, University match, or whatever you like to call it—the greatest day of the year. A team of up-forest Creeks is now on the way to play against them at ball.”

“Ball?”

“Ay, you’ll see to-morrow. Come and be presented to the chiefs now—and mind the dogs.”

The caution was needful enough, for at the entry of every hut or wigwam was a brace of half-wild Indian hounds, each fastened by a thong to a stump, and ready to spring on the unwary.

“What’s all the din about?” asked Hall, as they came to the village square or *place*.

“Local band,” said the American briefly, and just then they came upon the gifted instrumentalists, two in number, though making noise enough for two dozen. One “uneasy imp of darkness” was beating with his fist a drum made of deer-skin stretched over a short length of hollow tree-trunk; the other had a gourd, so dry that it resembled wood, which contained a double handful of pebbles and which he shook as a child shakes a rattle, only with more disastrous results to Christian ears.

The “square” was formed by four long huts or pavilions, in one of which sat an assembly of chiefs, cross-legged and smoking; and to these the Captain was introduced with a good deal of ceremony. In the middle of the quadrangle was an enormous fire of pitch-pine, and, between it and the hut where Hall was now seated, were over twenty young women, who sat—in accordance with local etiquette—with their backs turned to the chiefs and visitors. These were the dancers, and at a given signal they all rose, and went through some manœuvres far more tedious than interesting.

Perhaps the Englishman’s face showed that he was bored, for the oldest of the braves ordered the dancing to cease after a while, and remarking to the agent that he had something in store that *would* amuse the

stranger, banged a copper vessel which did duty for a gong. Immediately thirty fine young men sprang up from various quarters of the court, and made a dash for a heap of sticks or clubs which lay close to where the white men were sitting. Certainly these Indians were a contrast to the poor wretches encountered at the edge of the wood; every one of them looked as hard as iron and as agile as a puma. Uttering fearful shrieks, and swinging their clubs round their heads, they performed the wild sort of war-dance that Captain Hall had heard of and had despaired of seeing, and followed it up with a series of very ingenious and difficult somersaults, round and round the fire.

“That’s only the first part of the preparation for to-morrow,” said the agent. “Come along, we must go to the town hall for the second.”

They followed the chiefs to a very large circular hut beyond the far side of the square, which was lighted and heated by another pitch-pine fire; and they had no sooner sat down than the thirty athletes crowded into the building and at once stripped off ornaments and clothes. Supporting the roof were six stanchions, and to each of these one of the Indians betook himself and stood embracing it. Then six of the chiefs rose solemnly, and at once every voice was hushed. Each of these had provided himself with a short stick, at the end of which was a tiny rake—in some cases consisting of a row of garfish teeth, in others of a dozen or more iron needle-points, with their blunt ends stuck in a corn-cob. Every chief approached his man, and having drenched him from head to foot with water, commenced an operation calculated to set any civilised man’s teeth and nerves on edge.

Scroop-scroop, sounded the rakes, like razors being drawn over very bristly chins; and Captain Hall realised that these young men had given themselves up to be scraped and scarified with the rows of teeth. All stood quite passive while both thighs, both calves, and both upper-arms were scored with cuts seven or eight inches in length, the pleasantness of which proceeding may be gauged by the fact that, in a few minutes, the victims were bathed in blood from heel to shoulder.

“But what’s it *for*?” whispered the Captain, fretted by the long silence and the whole uncanny exhibition, as batch after batch of athletes submitted themselves to the ordeal.

“They reckon it makes them more limber for to-morrow’s performance,” explained the agent. “They’re the ‘ball’ team, you know.”

Captain Hall had seen enough for one day, but early the next morning he rode further into the forest with his guide, towards the playing ground, some six miles away. This turned out to be another clearing—a space two hundred yards by twenty, at either end of which were two large green boughs stuck six feet apart in the earth, evidently meant to act as some sort of goals.

Here was the ground, right enough, and batches of spectators were continually adding themselves to those already in attendance. But where were the players, and what were they going to play?

“They go to meet the other team,” said the agent; “and they usually take their time over getting here, for there’ll be a score or two of private fights, that have been carried over from last year, to settle by the way.”

When the white men had waited for more than two hours, they lost patience and rode further into the forest in search of the rival companies, guiding themselves more or less by the warlike howls that proceeded from the distance. And presently they came upon the bulk of the missing men, some walking in twos and threes, others stopping to adjust private grievances with the strangers or their own people (they did not seem particular), and a third contingent lying in the rank grass, singing war-songs, sleeping, smoking, or bedizening themselves. These latter, who had left the putting on of their bravery till the eleventh hour, were painting their eyelids (one black and the other yellow) and adorning their persons artistically with

feathers and the tails of monkeys or wild cats. Clearly it would be idle to suggest their hurrying themselves; and the Captain and his conductor rode back to the field very much at their leisure.

Shortly after midday, however, both teams arrived, and having inspected the ground for a bare minute, made a sudden stampede, each side for its own goal.

“There’s one thing, they don’t waste any time about beginning, when they *do* get here,” said Hall relievedly, at which remark the agent only grinned.

In another moment an appalling chorus of yells arose from the neighbourhood of either goal, and both teams began to dance like madmen, waving over their heads the sticks with which they were going to play.

And now—imagine the Oxford and Cambridge crews, as a preliminary to the race, gathering one on either bank and bawling derisively at each other, cursing like bargemen and screaming themselves hoarse in a struggle as to which side could make the more noise and utter the grosser invective or the more offensive personalities. This is what these unsophisticated savages were doing, and continued to do for a good twenty minutes, the one lot recalling to the other’s memory former defeats or instances of foul play, the other replying with both wholesale and individual charges of lying, theft, etc. Then, when the abuse began to grow monotonous, it dropped suddenly; and, at a sign from one of the chiefs, both parties advanced to the centre and laid down their sticks. These were bits of well-seasoned wood, two feet long and split at one end, the fork thus made being laced across with sinew or skin, so forming a small and very rough sort of tennis-racquet.

A deputation of braves advanced, examined the sticks severally, and carefully counted the men (thirty on each side), and, this being done to universal satisfaction, a chief harangued the teams for a quarter of an hour, bidding them “play the game.” Having finished his speech, he told them to pick up their sticks—each player had two—and go to their places; whereupon they distributed themselves much as we should do at football or hockey, each goal, however, being guarded by *two* men. When all were ready the committee of elders passed the ball from hand to hand, each inspecting it gravely to see that it satisfied the regulations. It was a soft, rough edition of an ordinary cricket-ball, being made of raw hide, neatly stitched, and stuffed with horse-hair.

By this time Hall had begun to understand why his companion had smiled so subtly at his anticipation of a speedy commencement. They had tethered their horses some distance away, and had secured for themselves a point of vantage near the scorers. At last the old chief threw the ball in the air and beat a hasty retreat. As it fell it was caught deftly by one of the home team between his two bats, and, regardless of tripping, kicking, punching, and snatching on the part of the other side, he began bravely to force a way towards the opposite goal, backed up sturdily by his fellows, who were waiting for him to throw the ball to them as soon as he saw himself brought to a final stop by his adversaries. And thus the match proceeded, being—as may be seen—not at all unlike our Rugby game; and whenever a goal was scored by either team, the delirious shouting of the spectators might have added to the impression of a modern onlooker that he was witnessing a Crystal Palace cup tie.

But there were two respects in which their rules would have profited by a little overhauling. We consider an hour and a half ample time for a match to last; but, though Captain Hall watched the Indians’ game for five hours, it was not quite finished when he left. Twenty “was the game,” and any footballer knows that that number of goals is not to be scored all in a hurry, when both teams are equally active, powerful, and skilled men. The scoring, by the way—or the counting of the goals—was done by the two mathematicians of the tribe, each of whom was supplied with ten sticks, and stuck one of them in the ground every time a goal was gained by his side. The dear old gentlemen could not count above ten, so, when the eleventh goal had to be marked, the sticks were pulled up and the reckoning was begun a second time.



A GAME AT BALL

This game is a mixture of tennis, lacrosse, and Rugby football. The rules are few and simple, the object being to gain possession of the ball by any means and hurl it between the goalposts of the opponents. The safety or comfort of the onlookers is of no consequence whatever.

The other direction in which the Indian laws cried loudly for amendment concerned the spectators even more closely than the players. There was no “touch” line, nor was the ball, no matter where it went, ever regarded as *in* “touch.” With a pitch only twenty yards wide, it will easily be seen that the ball was, from time to time, knocked or thrown among the onlookers; but that was their own affair, argued the players, who rushed pell-mell among them, screaming and struggling, hitting or kicking, or trampling right and left.

Indeed, it was one of these wild rushes that was the means of bringing Captain Hall’s interest in the contest to an abrupt end. The ball had come within a yard or two of him, plump between the two scorers, each of whom wisely made an instantaneous dash into the open and so avoided the onrush of the players. If Hall had had two more seconds at his disposal he would have seized the ball and flung it into play again; but the sportsmen were too near.

“Tree, tree,” shouted the agent behind him; and waiting for no second reminder, the active sailor sprang at the bough above him and hoisted himself into safety just as the crowd swarmed over and half killed a boy who was trying to follow him into the tree.

When the ball was safely on the other side of the ground he climbed down.

“I’m going,” he said resolutely.

They reached their horses and were riding slowly back towards the village when shouts resounded behind them, eclipsing the loudest and noisiest of any they had heard that day.

“The end of the game,” said Hall. “Our side were nineteen when we came away.”

“Ay, the end of the game,” assented the young American; “and the beginning of the fighting. The losers are getting ready to whop the winners. Are you keen on going back again?”

CHAPTER VI

WITH THE DELAWARES AND CREES

Sir George Head, elder brother of the great South American explorer and Colonial Governor, was a sort of Raleigh on a small scale, inasmuch as he figured in the various rôles of sailor, soldier, traveller, and courtier. The greater part of his time from 1814 to 1830 was spent in and about Nova Scotia, Quebec, and Ungava, his military duties at Halifax, as chief of the commissariat, giving him plenty of opportunity for combining pleasure with business in long journeys northward.

Late in the autumn of 1828 he set out on a tour north-westwards from Halifax, intending to devote his six months' furlough to hunting among the Cree Indians of New Brunswick and Eastern Quebec. It was not a journey that would commend itself to people who love the sun and the fireside, for though the district for which he was making is in the same latitude as Cornwall, the average winter temperature may be put down as 19° F. A coach took him and his servant across country as far as the Annapolis Basin, whence it was only a sixty-mile run by steam packet to St. John; and here there was no difficulty in obtaining a large canoe with three Delaware Indians to paddle it and act as guides.

Of the St. John River, up which quite big steamers travel over two hundred miles nowadays, comparatively little was then known, except its lower reaches, and its source, which lies north-westwards in the State of Maine; and even the Indian guides would not undertake to go many miles beyond Fredericton.

"What do you mean by 'many miles beyond'?" asked Major Head, when, on passing that town some days later, the Indians reminded him of their contract.

"Ten miles, or perhaps fifteen. We are strangers beyond that, and, though the Cree Indians are akin to us, they do not love us." This was perfectly true, for the Crees, Blackfeet, and other of the less civilised Algonquin redskins despised the Delaware Indians as mere cockneys.

In the end, the guides promised that they would go as far as the next town, which was twenty miles farther, admitting that they might possibly have business there. The nature of that business soon leaked out, for suddenly the Indian in the bow dropped his paddle, snatched up a spear from a small bundle of those implements that lay to hand, leant over the side, and brought up a salmon nearly three feet long. The other canoemen at once abandoned their paddling and stood expectant, spear in hand. The Major had never caught salmon in any other way than with rod and line, and he, too, took up a spear, determined to distinguish himself; but, though they waited patiently for another hour, not a second fish was seen, and at length the Indians picked up their paddles again and moved on.

"We may get some to-night," said one of them; "though it is almost too late in the year. Nearly all of them have reached the sea by this time, but it was worth our while to come so far on speculation. Between Fredericton and the sea there is little chance of catching anything, for the timber rafters frighten all the fish, so that they seldom rise."

At evening they landed to make their camp for the night; but, soon after supper, instead of lying down as

usual, the Delawares announced that they were going fishing. By way of a preliminary, each lighted a substantial brand of pitch-pine, and, taking up their spears, got into the boat again, Head following them. And this time there appeared to be considerably more chance for the fishermen; the silence and darkness and loneliness of the spot were, of course, in their favour, but of even more importance were the torches, which would appeal to the curiosity of any salmon that might be about. Even in daylight the Indian fishermen more often than not regard a flame of some sort as a necessary adjunct to their work.

Sport opened briskly and brilliantly. Long before the Englishman's eyes had accustomed themselves to looking down into the water by this constantly moving artificial light, the Indians had caught over a dozen fish; and still the silly creatures came peeping to the surface or hovering a few feet below it.

With the "beginner's luck" that is proverbial, the first salmon that came within his reach fell an easy prey to the Major's spear, so easy, in fact, that the redskins smiled broadly at his triumphant satisfaction, for they knew that it was the one happy chance in a million. He began to think so, too, when, time after time, he darted the spear into the water without making a second catch. His eye and hand were well trained to every kind of sport; and, of course, he knew that hitting an object in water and out of water are two very different things. Over and over again he would have taken an oath that his spear had struck its mark, and yet it came up empty. He grew more and more impatient and venturesome, and, in the end, naturally met with the reward that he might have expected: lost his balance and went heels over head into the water.

He was a bold and strong man who had faced danger and death in many forms, but the icy chill of that water almost prompted him to scream out; and, as it gurgled and bubbled over his ears, he decided that his chance of ever getting out of it alive was but small, for he was wearing top-boots, thick leather breeches, a seal-skin jacket, and a heavy overcoat. Nevertheless, he struck out desperately and reached the surface again. If he could only keep himself up for a few seconds he was safe. At once catching sight of him, one of the Indians uttered a shout, leant forward with his paddle, and held it towards the drowning man. A couple of laboured strokes brought him near enough to clutch the blade of it, and he was speedily drawn to the stern of the boat.

"Hold there," cried the Indian. "No, don't do that," for Head was trying might and main to draw himself up. As every swimmer knows, it is not the easiest thing in the world to get into a light boat from the water, even when one has no clothes on and is not numbed to the very marrow with cold.

"What on earth are you trying to do?" he spluttered, as the other two Delawares also took up their paddles. What they were about to do was soon clear enough; they meant to tow him ashore, for suddenly the paddles flashed through the water and, despite the weight behind it, the canoe moved rapidly towards the bank.

"Wait a minute, you precious fools," gasped the Major wrathfully; but they never so much as turned their heads. True, he had never seen a canoe move so swiftly in all his life, yet those forty or fifty yards to the bank were like miles, and when, springing ashore, two of the Indians bent over to help him out of the water, he could scarcely use his feet to scramble up the low bank.

"Why ever didn't you pull me out straight away, or keep still till I got into the boat?" he asked, as he stood and shivered before the fire while his man gave him a rub down with a blanket. The Delawares looked grave and wise.

"You are a tall and a heavy man. You might have upset the boat—and then we should have lost all our fish."

Sir George does not record the answer that he made to these curmudgeonly rascals who preferred endangering a man's life to the risk of losing a few salmon. But perhaps they were only having their

revenge on him for having spoilt their night's work by driving away all the fish.

The next afternoon, fishing and paddling by turns, they came to a town or village of some pretensions—the last on the river. Head again tried to persuade the Indians to agree to go farther, but fruitlessly; and their utmost concession was that, as one of their number was going into the town to buy some goods while the others sold their fish at the wharf, he would make inquiries about procuring new guides. The Major sent his man across with the luggage to the only decent inn of the place, and himself idled about the jetty, talking to the remaining Indians and their customers.

“He has found a guide for you,” said one of the Delawares at last, pointing to a strange figure that came stalking along the quay behind the third Indian.

The new arrival was a middle-aged man of such ferocious aspect that Head fancied he could foresee trouble before they had gone far together. He was one of the Crees, and his personal beauty—probably never at any time great—was not improved by the scars and tattoo marks that covered his face, arms, and chest. Cold though the weather was becoming, he was naked, but for his moccasins and a sort of kilt or petticoat made of feathers and deer-skin. His hair, also decorated with feathers, extended to his waist, and he wore a string of odds and ends round his neck: glass beads, teeth, bits of metal, coins, and buttons. He carried a broad-bladed spear nearly eight feet high in one hand, and an enormous club in the other, while from his neck or shoulders hung bow, quiver, tomahawk, and two knives.

Head, who spoke the Algonquin dialect perfectly well, bade him give some account of himself, and he replied, in a voice whose mildness scarcely fitted his fierce and repulsive appearance, that he had ridden down from his camp near Presque Isle (in Maine) to guide a Yankee fur-trader across the New Brunswick boundary, and had now been waiting two days on the chance of a similar job for his return journey.

“Who did you suppose would be likely to be going up there from *here*?” asked the soldier suspiciously.

“There are many French people who come from here to buy our furs. Is it not true?” The new guide turned fiercely on the Delawares for confirmation, and they nodded, making little effort to disguise their fear of him. Hitherto they had generally shown themselves cool-headed enough, but in the presence of this forest savage they seemed afraid to say that their souls were their own.

Head reflected that he was becoming very tired of the river, and further, that it might now be frozen hard any day. Moreover, it was but a roundabout way of travelling compared to the forest, which, being only of pine and spruce, offered none of the obstructions of the creeper-clad woods farther south. Could he hire or buy horses? he asked of a negro working close at hand. Ay, any number of them; mustangs were being brought over the boundary every day by enterprising Americans, and could be bought for a couple of pounds a head.

“Very well, then.” The Major turned to the Cree again. “Call for me at the inn to-morrow morning at nine, and I shall be ready to start.”

Arrangements were soon made as to horses, and Head, who had not slept without his clothes for a week, and might not see a Christian bed for weeks to come, went off to his room, resolved upon at least one night’s good rest. Coming down to his breakfast in the morning, he found that his man had put out, cleaned, and loaded a pair of pistols for him.

“Beg pardon, Major; most disreputable-looking party that guide, sir.”

“Well—yes; we don’t want to know too many of his sort. We’ll keep an eye on him in case he has some idea of leading us into an ambush; but don’t let him imagine that we suspect him.”

Head had finished his breakfast and was strolling into the yard at the back of the house to see if the horses were ready, when a violent uproar arose in the bar, which was at the other end of the passage: women

screaming and running hither and thither, loafers shouting and laughing. Yielding to natural curiosity, he turned back along this passage and was just in time to see a stranger sight than he had ever witnessed in all his six-and-thirty years. There, gesticulating, stammering, and struggling, was the terrible Indian of the day before, and, behind him, one hand firmly grasping his long hair, the other buffeting him liberally over head and ears, was the landlady—a sturdy Irishwoman—who was “helping him into the street,” at the same time expressing her opinion of him with great volubility. In her wake followed two chamber-maids, each armed with a mop, and from one of them the traveller learned that the Indian had already been forbidden to enter the house on account of his drunken and riotous behaviour there two days earlier.

“We only keep one manservant, and he’s frightened of him, so Missis had to take him in hand,” explained the girl cheerfully.

The valiant brave made no second attempt to enter the inn, and stood meekly by his horse till the travellers were ready, and Head—with difficulty keeping a straight face—bade him lead on. They were soon riding at a good level pace along the forest track, which, by its narrowness and few signs of recent use, did not promise a meeting with many travelling companions. At first the Indian only answered curtly to the remarks addressed to him, but, little by little, he forgot the insult to his dignity and had become quite chatty by the time they stopped to rest the horses and eat the dinner which they had brought with them. He said they would pass no more inns—no more white habitations of any sort, in fact—till they came to the United States boundary, and but very few then; and no Indian camps that side of Presque Isle, which was still forty-five miles distant. From there the travellers could, if they chose, journey as far as the St. Lawrence with a party of Crees who would soon be starting away for the winter hunting, and who would show them where they could get a boat across the estuary.

They rode another twenty miles before sunset, and then halted for the night. While the Indian was making the fire he several times glanced round him to windward and sniffed the air suspiciously.

“There will be snow before morning,” he said; and indeed, during the past hour there had been well-nigh an Arctic chill in the air, though it still wanted a week or two of the beginning of winter. That snow was coming was bad hearing; not that two men, who had often slept practically under water during the war in Spain, were likely to shirk one night in the snow; but because they had not troubled to bring many provisions, being unwilling to hamper themselves and relying on finding abundance of game in the forest.

If a heavy snow should come, the chances of killing anything fit to eat would be diminished tenfold, for hares, rabbits, and squirrels would stay at home; and further, the journey towards a district where they were safe to meet with plenty of animals (elk, caribou, etc., that had just migrated to the forest from farther north) would occupy thrice the time they had allowed for it.

“You and I must take watch and watch to-night,” said Head to his servant, not unmindful, in face of new dangers, of the likelihood of their guide’s playing them false. “We don’t want any of this good man’s ‘surprises’; if you turn in when you’ve had your supper, I’ll call you soon after midnight and we’ll change guard.”

Immediately after supper the Indian rolled himself in his blanket and Head was left to amuse himself. When his man roused him at six the next morning, he found the ground more than a foot deep in snow, and the Indian, who was just returning from filling the breakfast kettle from the stream hard by, greeted him with the news that the ice was several inches thick. But, he added, there would be no fear of famine; they would have sport enough before the day was out.

“What sport?”

“Wolves!” The Cree smacked his lips as if he were speaking of a Mansion House banquet.

“Ah! Then that is what I heard just as I was falling asleep.”

“Most likely; their track lies all round our camp; not close, for they feared our fire.”

“Is there more snow to come, do you think?” None was falling now.

“Not unless the wind gets up again. But we ought soon to be moving; it will be bad going for the horses.”

The hardy little mustangs seemed not a whit the worse for their snowy bed, and stepped out bravely as soon as they were mounted. But Head pulled a long face as he remembered how little corn he had brought with him; truly the cobbler’s wife was going the worst shod; he who had control of the entire military commissariat for that district had left the food for his men and horses to chance, on a journey of sixty miles, twenty-five of which had still to be covered! Of course, the pace they made was wretched, for the snow was fetlock-deep at the best; and, at the worst, it had risen to drifts of ten feet, which had to be dodged or skirted. Three miles an hour was the utmost that could be expected, making allowances for everything; and by the time the horses had gone twelve miles, it was clear that they must have a rest.

“So our next meal is to be wolf, eh?” said Head as he surveyed a lump of salt beef of which none would be left when three men with frost-sharpened appetites had eaten their fill. The Indian nodded.

“And they are not far away; I have heard them for the last hour. The horses can smell them now; you will find that they will not touch their oats.” This was true; two of the tethered animals crouched shiveringly, disdaining their food, while the third strained at his halter as though he meditated flight.

“What does it matter?” said the Cree. “We have but thirteen miles to go; we shall be at our camp soon after dark, and my people will be as brothers to you. As for the wolves—” he laughed boastfully—“I will kill them by the dozen if need be.”

“Yes; we’ve seen something of your bravery before,” said the Major in English. He divided the one remaining loaf and the meat into three equal parts. “You two can do as you like; I shall only eat half my share now.”

The servant followed his example, but the Indian was resolved that the future should take care of itself. He had scarcely swallowed his last mouthful when he started up.

“Mount! Quick! They are coming!”

“Then what’s the good of mounting, you infernal coward?” said the Major, snatching up his gun. “We can’t race wolves.”

The guide made no answer; but, slipping his horse’s halter, vaulted to his back, and might have ridden away but that Head turned his gun-barrel on him.

“You stay where you are.... Now, Sanders, we must keep them off the horses if we can. Fire the moment they show their noses, and trust to their eating up their brothers while we——*Look out!*”

A pack of over forty wolves came yelping through the trees, with a strange, bouncing motion which showed that even they were seriously impeded by the snow.

“Fire; and keep one eye on the redskin,” muttered Head.

A wolf went down before the servant’s first barrel and, from the break in their ranks, several of the others appeared to be falling on the carcase. A second and third and fourth fell to the guns; but the wolves had smelt horse-flesh, and neither noise nor gunpowder nor dead comrades could keep them from following up the scent. The two white men reloaded, fired, and loaded again with the coolness habitual with soldiers; but it was plain enough that the pack would not be kept off much longer.

“I’m afraid we shall have to give up the horses after all,” said Head, as the foremost wolves bounded contemptuously past or over the last of their number that had been shot.

“Why do you not mount?” bawled the Indian in his ear. Head had forgotten his existence for the moment. “That is the only way to save your horse. You have had your play; let me show you what the red man can do.” As he finished speaking he methodically pulled his quiver forward and began to pour arrows into the howling pack more swiftly than the eye could follow them, every one of them carrying death to a wolf.

“Up, Sanders, and use your pistols! By Jingo, that fellow was right!” shouted Head as he leapt into his saddle.

“You see? It is quite easy,” remarked the Indian with as much *sang-froid* as though he were at target-practice. “When I have emptied my quiver they will all be dead; if not, I have my lance. Don’t waste any more of your powder.” And all the while he went on shooting.

The soldiers could do little but stare at the man’s amazing coolness; he who had writhed and screamed when attacked by an irate Irishwoman, was now killing wolves at the rate of about twelve per minute, and the only time he broke off from his task was to draw his knife and stab that one of the wolves that was bold enough to venture a spring at his horse. It was plain enough that he had known what he was talking about when he counselled mounting the horses. Wolves that would tear an unriden horse to shreds would not dare touch one that was mounted, unless they were maddened by hunger; and so early in winter this could hardly be the case.

“Yah! Now run away, cowards, and tell your brethren to come,” shrieked the Cree, when, without waiting for his last few shots, the remaining dozen wolves turned tail and skulked away. Then Head stretched out his hand and patted the blanketed shoulder.

“Well done; I did wrong to call you coward. You shall have double payment when we reach your camp, and I will make you a present of these two horses.”

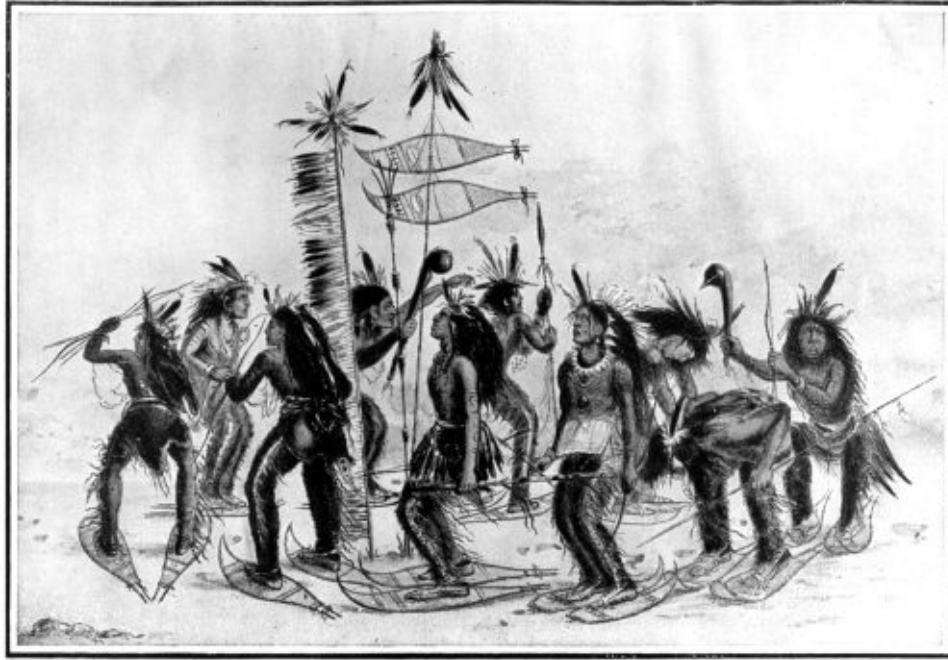
“We must have my arrows back, in case of further accident,” said the redskin, making neither much nor little of his achievement. In a few minutes he had cut all the barbs from the carcasses, and proceeded to skin the three primest wolves, cut away the fore and hind quarters, hung the three “saddles” on his horse’s withers, and remounted. The Cree Indians and the Eskimos will none of them refuse roast wolf, and the ribs are considered a special delicacy.

With a little coaxing from the guide the horses now ate their corn; and, not long after dark, that much misjudged individual led his employer proudly into the Indian camp. The chief, very much astonished at finding a white man able to speak his tongue with fluency, promised, in return for a ridiculously small sum of money, to allow the travellers to join his great hunting party which was to start northwards for elks, caribous, etc., in a few days’ time.

During those few days Major Head had an opportunity of noting various ceremonies peculiar to the northern Indians, which were quite new to him. One of these was a dance which signified a loving farewell between the hunters and the warriors who remained behind to guard the camp, and was precisely the same as that which Samuel Hearne saw farther north-west.^[1] In this, the two parties formed into two single files, and, bow in the left hand and an arrow in the right, approached each other, walking backwards. When the lines were almost touching one another, both turned suddenly, each party starting back with feigned surprise at seeing the other; then, with astonishing quickness, transferred the bow to the right hand and the arrow to the left, in token that their intentions were strictly friendly.

The other ceremony was also a dance, the celebrated snow-shoe dance, which took place when all was

ready for the departure northwards; and in this Head was especially interested, because he was himself an expert on “shoes.” Two or three spears, elaborately decorated with feathers or other trophies of the chase, were stuck upright in the snow, and to one of them a pair of snow-shoes was hung; and, after prayers and incantations by the old chief, ten mighty men of the tribe, each carrying his weapons, formed themselves in a ring round the spears. Waddling, sliding, dancing, or jumping, these passed round and round the consecrated shoes till all were satisfied that the Great Spirit’s aid had been enlisted, and that the ghosts of the animals or birds that they might kill would never return to vex the slayers.



THE SNOW-SHOE DANCE OF THE RED INDIANS

A religious ceremony at the opening of the winter hunting season.

CHAPTER VII

AMONG THE FUEGIAN INDIANS

Tierra Del Fuego—"The Land of Fire," as Maghelhaens christened it, from the number of beacons exhibited along its coast—is the home of a family of Indians properly known as Pesherahs. Whence they came no one can tell us, though some think them to be of Chilean origin; but they are—and have been, during the last four centuries—among the most degraded savages that the earth holds. This is, no doubt, partly owing to the barrenness of the archipelago and the almost animal simplicity of their lives which is a consequence of it; for though their brain development is certainly not extraordinary, it is probably as high as that of many savages who have yielded with comparative readiness to European influence.

All sorts of efforts at civilising the Fuegians have been made by philanthropists, scientists, and missionaries, but it is to be feared that they have met with little success. Not the least practical of these was an experiment made by the late Admiral Fitzroy, inventor of the nautical barometer that bears his name, and better known to readers in general as Darwin's friend and at one time commanding officer.

From 1826 to 1830 this clever young sailor was in command of H.M.S. *Beagle*, which, with H.M.S. *Adventure*, was sent on a surveying expedition to the southern seas. During the early part of this cruise, while an exploring party was ashore in what is now called Beagle Channel, a number of Fuegians took advantage of the absence of the sailors to spring into their boat and row off with it.

Not wishing to lose the boat, and deeming it advisable to give the natives a lesson, Commander Fitzroy took another pinnace ashore and, with half a dozen bluejackets, made a descent on the nearest encampment, captured the first family he could lay hands on, and took them back to the brig to be held in pawn for the stolen boat. This move, of course, answered its purpose; the boat was restored and the hostages liberated. But of these there were three to whom the commander had taken a special fancy: a stalwart young fellow of nineteen whom (from the adjacent mountain which Cook had so named) he had dubbed "York Minster," and a boy and girl of about fourteen. York and the girl, Fuegia, on being asked if they would like to come to England, joyfully accepted the offer; and the other boy was readily exchanged by his father for a pearl shirt-button.

The enthusiastic young commander brought these three home with him, endeavoured to teach them English, and dressed them respectably; and after he had been ashore for about two years, decided to take them back to their country as a pattern to their friends and relations. He engaged a missionary—a Mr. Matthews—and was on the point of chartering a small vessel and taking the natives back at his own expense, when, to his joy, he heard that his old brig was to be sent a second time to the Horn and that he, now gazetted post-captain, was to have command of her. It was on this voyage that he took with him, as naturalist, Charles Darwin, a young fellow not long down from Cambridge.

In December, 1832, the brig anchored in the Bay of Good Success, and her arrival was hailed by a tatterdemalion group of Fuegians who piled their fires high and frantically waved their scanty garments as though to scare off the intruders. These people of the eastern side of the island were a far more robust set than the typical Fuegians of farther west; many of them were over six feet high, and all boasted some sort

of clothing—usually a mantle of guanaco (llama) skin. Fitzroy and other officers went ashore, bearing presents, at sight of which the savages abandoned their distrustful and defensive bearing and showed every willingness to be friendly. Their chief had his hair confined by a rough head-dress of feathers, and his coppery face was painted with transverse bars, after the fashion of the Indians of the North.

The Englishmen distributed pieces of red cloth, which each recipient immediately tied round his neck. Thanks for these bounties were offered in a series of “clucks,” which a horse would assuredly have translated as “gee-up”; and further, by sundry pats on the breasts of the donors. After Captain Fitzroy had been thus patted three times by the chief, it occurred to him to return the compliment, a proceeding which highly delighted the whole tribe. But the most exciting scene was when one of the sailors left in charge of the boat began to sing absently to himself. In an instant the Indians deserted the group of officers, rushed madly down the beach again, and almost grovelled before the singer, considerably to his amazement.

“All right; sing up, my man; let’em hear you,” cried Captain Fitzroy encouragingly; for the bashful performer had stopped somewhat abruptly on finding himself thus distinguished. “Bear a hand, you lads; he’s shy.”

Thus urged, the grinning bluejackets struck up a rousing sea-chorus, the effect whereof was to make even the important-looking chief stand open-mouthed and wave his hands in wonder and delight.

As the first meeting with the savages had been so successful, on his second landing the Captain was accompanied by York Minster and the other two natives, Jemmy Button, now a strapping fellow of eighteen, and Fuegia Basket, already a grown woman, and betrothed to York. The Indians’ attitude towards them was one of curiosity as intelligent as such people are capable of. They felt their English-made clothes and compared them half contemptuously with the bright-buttoned uniforms of the officers, and the chief, pointing to a few straggling hairs on York Minster’s chin, inquired why he did not shave them off after the Indian fashion. The colour of their visitors was the greatest mystery to them. Jemmy and York were dressed like white men, and had short hair, and yet were not white. York knew their language and Jemmy did not. This was very puzzling. Then—was Jemmy the same colour “all over”? The chief made him strip his sleeve, but while this was being done something else happened to distract the savages’ attention. Mr. Bynoe, the ship’s surgeon, had been examining one or two bad sores on the face of a native, and now stepped back to a rock-pool to wash his hands.

That a man should dream of washing at all was a mystery to the Fuegians (in fact, during the whole of the brig’s cruise in these islands the practice never failed to attract admiration, though it does not seem to have gained converts), but the doctor had thrown off his pilot-jacket and rolled up his shirt-sleeves for the performance. This more than staggered the beholders, so that Jemmy saw himself rudely neglected; for the Englishman’s arms were a different colour from that of his hands!

It was the white men’s turn to be inspected again. Everyone, from the Captain to the boat’s crew, was implored to show his arms, and this only led to further mystification, for while the hands of the officers were tanned and their arms white, the brown on the seamen extended to the elbows. A full parliament was at once held, but the debate had to be abandoned; the matter was too abstruse for the Fuegian brain.

Mr. Darwin created a diversion by attracting the Captain’s attention to a very tall fellow among the group; and to settle an argument between them as to his abnormal height, Fitzroy called to him the tallest of the boat’s crew, and told him to stand back to back with the rival giant. With the natural vanity of the savage, the Fuegian seemed to guess in a moment what was being said about him, and no sooner was he placed back to back with the seaman than he endeavoured, first to edge himself on to higher ground, and, failing that, to stand a-tiptoe. When York Minster explained to him that he was the taller by two finger-joints, he began to swagger about as if he had bought the island.

The old chief was very anxious that the three natives should at once take up their abode with that portion of the tribe; but neither Jemmy nor Miss Fuegia could yet make themselves understood; the parents of all three lived on the other side of the island, and further, the Captain was not at all satisfied that the chief's hospitality arose from any higher motive than that of plunder, if not murder.

With a favouring wind they ran through the Strait the next day, and once more went ashore. Here Fitzroy found that his former visit had presumably been forgotten; for when he led an exploring party of thirty men into the nearest camp, the natives armed themselves with slings, stones, and fish-spears, and assumed altogether a very threatening front. These folk were the most debased of the islanders; not one man had a stitch of clothing on him, and whereas the other natives had shown such terror of the bluejackets' muskets that they would not even lay a finger on them, these were not even inquisitive as to the weapons of the white men, and certainly mistook the amiable demeanour of the strangers for timidity. They dropped their arms, however, on some offerings of red ribbon being made.

But possession only whetted greed; and taking up their arms again, they began one and all to bawl "Yammerskooner," which, York Minster said, meant "give me," but which sounded a great deal more like "your money or your life!" The more the sailors gave, the more did the Indians pester, till, with the hope of scaring them away, Fitzroy drew his sword and flourished it round the head of the chief; but he and those with him laughed jeeringly, as though this were only child's fooling. Then the Captain, who was an excellent shot, pointed a pistol at—or rather half an inch above—the head of the noisiest of the party, and fired.

Every man stared at his neighbour; every man clapped his hands to his ears and uttered an ejaculation; but nobody thought of moving. Poor wretches; they were as ignorant of danger as the wild beasts.

"No good, Captain Sir," said York Minster. "But you kill one—then all run."

"Tell them they're likely to get hurt if they go too far," said the Captain. The interpreter obeyed, but they showed no more feeling at his remark than fear of the pistol.

It was growing late; the Englishmen were hungry and had yet to find a comfortable ground for the night's bivouac. Fitzroy quietly told his men to draw off; but at the first movement of retreat, the savages grew bolder and more menacing. Nothing could be much more galling to Englishmen than retreat under such circumstances as these. Here were thirty white men, all well armed, and the majority of them experienced fighting-men, turning their backs on less than a hundred miserable specimens of humanity with scarcely brains enough to know the use of their own weapons. The faster the sailors moved, the faster the Indians followed. To kill one or two of their number would have been to put the rest to flight; but unless actual violence should be offered, neither Fitzroy nor any of his companions were the men to disgrace their flag by the sort of "fighting" which has made the Spaniards and Dutch hated in East and West.

Arrived at a good spot, the Captain called a halt, and ignoring his persecutors, ordered a large fire to be made, and posted sentries at various points round the camp; then told York to try his eloquence with the natives once more. Meanwhile the stores were unpacked, and at sight of the strangers eating, a new begging chorus arose which was fortunately satisfied by a small distribution of ship's biscuit.

At dark the natives were ordered out of the camp and warned by York that they must not attempt to pass the sentries. That lesson was impressed on the more obstinate by the sailors' throwing them "neck and crop" beyond the boundary line. This sort of argument they could understand; and though some of them loitered round the camp all night, or lit their own watch-fires close to it, there were no attempts at trespass.

Young Jemmy Button, on being rallied by the officers on his disreputable connections, stoutly disowned

them; he belonged to another tribe, he said. But soon after sunrise several dozen strange men and women appeared, summoned by the remainder, and among them were Jemmy's mother and brethren. Darwin, who witnessed the reunion, says, "the meeting was less interesting than between a horse turned out into a field and an old companion." But those women who recognised Fuegia showed themselves very interested in her toilette.

It was now that the value of Fitzroy's experiment was to be tested. Matthews, the missionary, asked to be left behind with three natives while the sailors continued their coasting trip; and it was plain enough that York and his bride and Jemmy asked nothing better than to be allowed to settle among their own people, from whom they had now been absent four years. Already Jemmy was recalling his language—which was a great mercy for him, for, as Fitzroy had said earlier, "he had forgotten Fuegian and never more than half learned English, so that he was as ignorant as a rational being could well be."

The Captain's surveying expedition lasted for some days, and when it was finished he ordered the boats to call at the spot where the missionary had been left, before they returned to the *Beagle*.

Mr. Matthews was awaiting them in a terrible plight: scarcely a rag of clothes on him, hungry, bruised, and wounded, and with a wretched tale to unfold. Jemmy had been robbed of everything he possessed; even York, strong man though he was, had had much ado to protect himself and his wife, while the missionary, left to fend for himself, had not dared to sleep during the whole time. He had been robbed, stoned, threatened with all manner of violence, and only saved from death by doling out buttons, studs, or coins which he had contrived to secrete.

Fitzroy, who knew that these people were not only ruffians but occasionally cannibals as well, sent the missionary on board again, and was half tempted to take Jemmy with him also, particularly as the young man was loud in abuse of his family; but on the whole he was likely to be safe enough under York's patronage now that he had nothing left to steal.

The brig made sail farther south, and a month or so later returned to her old anchorage. Before long a canoe put off from the shore, and a thin, haggard savage came paddling out to the vessel—Jemmy! Jemmy, without a rag to cover him!

"I think, sir, you'll have to take him aboard again," pleaded young Darwin.

"It does look like it," said Fitzroy. "I'm afraid we've made a fish out of water of him," and the two went forward to greet their old friend.

But Jemmy electrified everyone by the statement that he was perfectly happy, and had only come out to bring a couple of otter-skins to Lieutenant Sullivan and Dr. Bynoe—his favourites among the officers—and some neatly-carved arrows for the Captain; and further, to invite the ship's company ashore to visit the tribe.

Mr. Button was fed, and loaded with presents; and later in the day Fitzroy, Sullivan, and Darwin went ashore. The first thing that was apparent was that Jemmy had taught the tribe some English words; the second was that that youth had reasons for not wishing to rejoin the *Beagle*. For, pointing to a modest-looking girl who stood in the background, the old chief tapped the Captain on the shoulder and observed, "Jemmy's wife; Jemmy's wife," and the whole tribe, parrot-like, took up the cry.

Fitzroy never met his protégés again; but, in 1842, Captain Sullivan, who was cruising off the island, fell in with a British whaling skipper, and he told him that his men had seen a native woman who spoke excellent English. This could have been no other than Fuegia.

CHAPTER VIII

THE END OF THE “BLACK HAWK” WAR

Some allowance ought surely to be made for a man who is condemned to go through life with such a name as Muckkertamesheckkerkerk; and, to do the United States Government justice, the gentleman so styled seems to have been treated with a good deal of patience and lenity.

“Black Hawk” (to give him at once the name by which he is better known in American history) was an Indian chief who contrived to be as much a thorn in the flesh of the white rulers of his country as—let us say—some of the Welsh princes were in that of our Plantagenet kings. He was born in 1767, and by the time he was fifteen had so distinguished himself in war and in hunting that he became a recognised brave of his tribe—the Sac and Fox. Up till the year 1804 the new republic could afford to ignore the deeds and misdeeds of this renowned patriot, for he confined most of his energies to warfare with the Cherokees and Osages—sub-tribes of the Iroquois; but, as white civilisation continued to push westward, it became necessary either to conciliate or to subdue those who stood in the way of its progress.

At first conciliation did not appear difficult. General Harrison invited Black Hawk—now a man of four-and-thirty, and the recognised champion of all the Algonquin Indian tribes—to appear at St. Louis, in order to discuss the question of boundaries, and to enter into a treaty which would be of mutual benefit. Black Hawk came, and with him a host of tributary chiefs—Shawnees, Blackfeet, Sacs and Foxes, etc.

The American General’s proposals were fair and to the point. The redskins were to renounce all claim to about seven hundred miles of land east of the Mississippi, in return for an annual payment of a thousand dollars. A couple of hundred pounds as rental for a strip of land some eight hundred miles long sounds ridiculous enough to us, unless we bear in mind that the Indians were merely asked to keep to the other side of the river; they were not giving up towns or houses or cultivated lands; they were receiving what—to them—meant a very substantial income, in return for their migrating to far better hunting-grounds in Iowa and Minnesota. Black Hawk solemnly agreed to the contract, with—we must believe—every intention of keeping his word.

Unluckily, General Harrison and his officers had rather lavish notions of hospitality; and when Black Hawk’s decision was made known to the other chiefs, most of them were a great deal too drunk to know what they were agreeing to. The money was paid regularly enough, and, for some few years, whatever breaches of the treaty there were, were so trifling that the Government could easily wink at them. Black Hawk went about his hunting and his civil warfare and conducted himself as a respectable savage should.

Then he got into bad hands. As the troubles of our own armies in India and the Soudan have shown, it is no uncommon thing to find peaceable men stirred to fighting frenzy by some maniac who makes it his business to cause as much strife as possible in the name of religion. A great prophet had arisen among the Indians—a Shawnee, in whose hands poor Black Hawk was wax; and who gave the redskins no rest till they crossed the river in a body, and swept eastwards as far as Michigan, driving the handful of white settlers back and back to the towns from which they had come. This was in 1811. In the following year, now thoroughly persuaded that he and all the chiefs and all the white subscribers to the treaty were drunk

when it was signed, and that it was no longer binding, Black Hawk pressed on into Michigan as far as Detroit. This was more than human patience could stand; the white citizens turned out, and drove away the Indians with such slaughter that their leader was only too glad to draw off. For four years he confined his attacks to petty farm raids, and, in 1816, signed another treaty, which was followed by fourteen years of comparative peace, though Black Hawk and a few of his supporters refused to retire across the river again.

By 1830 the States Government, realising its folly in having allowed any deviation from the strict terms of the agreement, obliged Black Hawk to sign another, by which every acre of land east of the river became white property. It was now that the real trouble began. The Indian chief was growing old, losing his former promptness of action, and becoming more and more a slave to the Shawnee prophet's counsels. During the fourteen years that he had been practically defying the Government, he and his immediate adherents had begun to farm a little; and just now their crops were ripening, and harvest-time was almost due. When the order came for him to leave the neighbourhood he lost his head or his temper, refused to stir, and threatened with death anyone who dared to interfere with him. A week later he returned from his hunting to find some white labourers calmly ploughing up his crops and parcelling out his land. There was a brief scuffle, and the whites were obliged to flee, and thus opened the last period of the war.

Knowing that vengeance would be taken, Black Hawk sent across the river for more warriors, and prepared to make a decided stand. But instead of the half-dozen shopkeepers and labourers he had been prepared to meet, he found himself attacked by a body of men several hundred strong, well armed, and many of them mounted. These were the Illinois militia under General Gaines—hardy trappers, farmers, and timber-rafters, whose fathers had fought with and defeated British regiments. The Indians' nerve failed them, and, after a single deadly volley from the militia, they fled. But, instead of crossing the river, they went north, into Wisconsin, where they looked to find remnants of their tribe who would ally themselves with them.

During the whole of the next year, and until the summer of 1832, a very clever guerrilla warfare was carried on by the savages; hundreds of white men were killed, and scarcely one Indian; nor was there much in the shape of a pitched battle. It was then that General Atkinson, an old and experienced fighter of Indians, was sent to put an end to the whole matter. Dispatching a small force of light cavalry, under General Scott, to search the woods, he marched the bulk of his little army towards the Wisconsin River, in the hope of eventually surrounding the Indians and capturing Black Hawk.

His march proved more tedious than he had bargained for. Nowadays tired New Yorkers and Chicagoites, with a taste for sport, devote their summer holidays to shooting over the beautiful Wisconsin highlands; but in 1832 there were no railways or palace-like hotels there. Even a farm was a rarity, and every hill or ravine might conceal a score of Indian sharpshooters. The whole aspect of the country was savage, dreary, and forbidding. It had been the duty of the advance guard to see that there were no redskins lying in ambush; but General Atkinson soon began to think that that duty had been very much neglected, for at almost every mile an arrow or a bullet came from nowhere, wounding some man or horse, and in one case killing a Sioux guide. This kind of thing continued for a couple of days or more; and Atkinson had begun to say somewhat hard things of his colleague when one of the scouts rode up to report a mound of earth which, he said, looked very much like a grave. Before the day was out, six more such mounds had been seen by the wayside, and as most of them were marked by a cross, hastily made with a couple of sticks, it was all too probable that these were the graves of white men.

The old soldier's mind was soon made up.

"We must get double work out of our horses, boys," he said; "there'll be no camping to-night; I'm going to

overtake General Scott.”

All sorts of possibilities suggested themselves, the most prominent of which was that they were coming to a district more thickly populated by Indians, who had been picking off Scott’s men with increasing rapidity; for the last four graves were ominously close together. Scouts were doubled and, so far from making any pretence of a stealthy march, lanterns and torches were lit, and every hiding-place hurriedly examined. The night passed without any sign of Indians; but, soon after daybreak, three or four columns of smoke were seen rising from behind a hill that lay in the line of march. Half a dozen scouts galloped forward and soon disappeared. Atkinson’s men closed up, baggage-waggons were dragged to the centre, and in a moment everyone was prepared either to charge or to repel a charge.

In less than five minutes a single horseman appeared on the top of the hill and clattered down the slope. Atkinson spurred his horse and hurried to meet the messenger—one of the six scouts.

“Well?” he shouted when he was within earshot.

“General Scott—cholera—had to give up!” was the cheering intelligence.

“Forward!” shouted Atkinson, and the company hastened over the hill, at the foot of which a pitiable state of things awaited them. Soon after the start of Scott’s troops, cholera, in its most malignant form, had broken out among the party. In less than two days seven men were dead, and now the remainder had been obliged to abandon their march, for there was scarcely a trooper of them who was not more or less afflicted by the horrible malady. As some little consolation for these tidings, General Scott reported that he had dislodged a party of Sac and Fox Indians from a ravine, and that these had fled collectively towards Bad Axe River.

Leaving behind the few men that he could spare to guard and nurse the sick, Atkinson hastily drew his force to a safe distance from the cholera camp, and, after a few hours’ rest, marched for the nearest reach of the river, and along the bank, northwards.

Indian chasing does not permit of lengthy rest; the cavalry did not stop again till long after nightfall, and were off again before dawn. That afternoon, as they came to a wider strip of river, the General realised—and not for the first time—that it is the unexpected that usually happens. Barely a mile ahead, a schooner, towed by three cutters, was moving slowly northward. Atkinson galloped ahead, but before he had overtaken the vessel the men in the boats had long ceased rowing, and she was heading more towards the opposite bank.

“Who are *you*?” was suddenly shouted from her after-deck.

“General Atkinson. Who are you, and what are you about here? Seen any Injuns?”

“The *Warrior*—Captain Throckmorton.—All right, sir; I’m sending a boat ashore for you.”

This was the first that Atkinson had heard of a river expedition having been sent. He knew Captain Throckmorton as a very distinguished young officer, and a clever linguist, master of several native dialects. While he was speculating as to what had brought the schooner here, and, further, as to the meaning of a white, flag-like object which—as he looked past the vessel’s stern—he could see waving on the opposite bank, one of the cutters had pulled ashore and was waiting for him. A lieutenant met him at the gangway.

“Cap’n’s talking to the redskins. Come aft, sir, please.”

Then the waving white thing was explained; there were Indians on the far bank, seeking, under cover of the white flag, to parley with the Captain. Atkinson joined him and, as well as he was able, followed the dialogue.

“If you want to speak to me, you must send at least ten of your men aboard.”

“I have not so many with me.”

“Liar. I saw over a hundred of you a few minutes ago. Where’s your hopeful leader? Where’s Black Hawk?”

“They were but women and children whom you saw.”

“Where’s Black Hawk?”

“Are those General Atkinson’s warriors on the other bank?”

“Yes,” interrupted the old soldier explosively; “and I reckon you’ll find that out purty soon.”

“Where is Black Hawk?” once more demanded the Captain.

“He is—he is—oh, across the river.”

“Will you come aboard if I send you a boat?”

“No.”

“Then I give you fifteen minutes in which to send away your women. You know what that—*Heads oh!*”

A flight of arrows had greeted the Captain’s last remark. Happily no one was struck, and the schooner immediately put into mid-stream again.

Through the thick foliage on the bank, a redskin or a white feather could be seen every now and then; the muffled sound of voices could also be heard. Then another volley of arrows came; and another, and exclamations from the direction of the boats showed that two men were wounded. The captain motioned to the crews to shelter behind the vessel, but still he gave no order. He had promised a quarter of an hour’s grace, and only five minutes of that time had gone by.

“Hear that?” said Atkinson suddenly; and Throckmorton nodded. Every man on deck had heard the click-click of a score or more of gun-hammers being pulled back.

The crew looked questioningly, but not impatiently, at their captain; they knew that he would not go back from his word. There were still seven minutes to wait.

“Lie low, all hands,” said Throckmorton very quietly; and as he spoke twenty or more sparks and flashes showed through the leaves and a shower of lead flew over their heads. The man at the wheel was shot in the shoulder; but the Captain sprang back and had taken the spokes almost before the sailor fell.

“Let them go on,” he said, looking at his watch again. “Your turn will come, my lads.”

Perhaps no other men on the face of the earth, save those of British extraction, would have stood by uncomplainingly during those next five minutes without returning a shot. Every man had a loaded musket in his hand, except the two or three who were in attendance on the howitzer, ready at a second's notice to fire. Another flight of arrows came; then one more, and the schooner's spars and bulwarks were bristling with them.

"Two more minutes!" said Throckmorton. "Look out; they're firing again."

The volley came. One man fell dead, and another had his hat carried away; but still no one spoke. Captain Throckmorton beckoned a sailor to him and bade him take the wheel; and again expectant eyes were turned on him. Suddenly he returned his watch to his pocket, and everyone gave a little gasp of relief. The Captain nodded to the men at the howitzer, and instantly a shell flew among the trees; and, before the echo of the report had died away, the sailors' muskets began an incessant fire. Indians appeared from everywhere—from tree-branches, grass, sedge, in many cases only to fall before the steady rain of bullets. Some ran north, others south, and these latter suddenly found their retreat cut off by a heavy fire from the other bank; for Colonel Dodge, whom Atkinson had left in charge, had only waited for the men on the schooner to begin firing to get his own carabineers to work.

"Where can my waggons ford it?" asked Atkinson significantly.

Captain Throckmorton soon produced a soundings-chart and showed that, at about a mile higher up, the waggons could easily cross, now that the tide was running down.

"Put me ashore, then."

In a very few minutes the old fighting-man was in the saddle again; and, while the baggage was moved on to the ford, he and a hundred light-armed cowboys were swimming their horses across the river. The shelter from which the Indians had fired proved to be a narrow, copse-like strip which separated the river from an undulating prairie.

"There they go, General!" cried a young fellow, Captain Dixon, who rode behind the leader.

"Ay; making for the hills. *I* know; the same old plant. We must pretend to be taken in.—Go on, Dixon; after 'em with twenty men."

The General knew well enough, from bygone experience, that the spot from which the score or so of redskins were fleeing was probably that at which the bulk of their army lay *perdu*, and that they were merely trying their old trick of getting a pursuing force between the two halves of their own. He rode steadily on, and, before he reached the hills, saw that he had not been mistaken. The fleeing Indians had suddenly wheeled and were bearing down furiously on Captain Dixon's few men.

"Forward!" shouted Atkinson. "He can take good care of himself. We want Black Hawk.... And here he is, by the living Jingo!"

As he spoke, sixty or seventy Indians appeared at the top of the hill, four of them beautifully mounted; the rest on wrecks of animals that could scarcely be matched in a Belfast job-yard.

"Fire! A hundred dollars to the man who gets Black Hawk—alive or dead," shouted Atkinson as he drew his horse to one side.

Without drawing bridle, the troop fired and reloaded, as only men born, reared, and nourished in the saddle as these were could have done. Three of the well-mounted Indians, ignoring the volley, rode straight at the white men, and were followed more hesitatingly by the rest, with the exception of those killed, and of the fourth man, evidently—from his fantastic garb—the aged Shawnee prophet.

“Black Hawk! Black Hawk! Over with him!” roared the excited Yankees, as a splendid-looking old man, six feet four inches in height, rode fearlessly at them. Pistol-bullets whizzed round his head, but he appeared to ignore them and, swinging his war-hatchet, began to cut a way through the cowboys. His two well-horsed companions—his sons—followed closely, and in a couple of minutes six of Atkinson’s men were dead. But one glance behind him showed the chief that he was playing a losing game. General Atkinson seemed to have surrounded all the rest of the Indians with his troop, who were hewing them down right and left. Captain Dixon’s men, too, had put to flight or killed those who had turned on them, and were now coming to reinforce their comrades.

With a passionate yell of disappointment and hatred, the chief turned his horse’s head in the direction whither the prophet was already fleeing; and, with his sons, rode for some distant bluffs. It was all very well for Atkinson to spur in pursuit, shouting, “After him!” The white men’s horses had been almost dead-beat before the flight began, and now could scarcely move at all; and the General was obliged to await his baggage-vans for the pitching of his camp, for at least a few hours.

But, before those few hours were ended, another party of Indians came riding into view, and, as the men sprang to their arms, one of Atkinson’s Sioux guides cried jubilantly: “They are our brothers! They are the white chief’s brothers also.”

The strangers galloped up and showed a goodly supply of fresh scalps. They had pursued and slaughtered those of Black Hawk’s warriors who could not escape with him.

“Why didn’t you catch Black Hawk?” asked Atkinson disgustedly.

“We know where he has gone to hide. What will the white chief give us for Black Hawk and his sons?”

The old man named a price, and the troop rode off again. Soon after sunrise they returned, and in their midst were Black Hawk and his sons. The old chief was sullenly silent—a broken man, in fact—and one is glad to know that these rough cowboys had it in them to treat the poor old fellow with the courtesy becoming his standing among the natives.

With his two sons and seven other braves he was taken to Fort Monroe and there imprisoned for a short time; but when the country was once more quieted, the Government appointed a fresh chief in his place and he was set at liberty. He died among his own people six years later.

CHAPTER IX

PERUVIAN INDIANS

The history of South America teems with accounts of arduous marches made by European explorers through its forests or deserts, across its mountains or along the banks of its rivers. Some of these are more widely celebrated than others because the results were greater; but many minor expeditions—some unsuccessful, others serving no practical end—are as worthy of remembrance because those who undertook them went coolly, and with their eyes open, into all manner of privations or dangers, for the sole purpose of advancing their country's interests.

Among such secondary enterprises is the journey made by Lieutenant Smyth and Midshipman Lowe from Callao to the Amazon, in 1834, an enterprise which recalls some of the splendidly reckless achievements of the Spaniards in the first half of the sixteenth century, or of our own even bolder adventurers in the second half.

While Captain Fitzroy was still surveying the southerly parts of the American continent, H.M.S. *Samarang*, under Captain Paget, was making a similar though more rapid cruise right round the peninsula from La Guayra to the Bay of Panama. As the ship lay at anchor for observations off the Peruvian coast, the question was raised as to the possibility of the Amazon being converted into a water-way between the Atlantic and the Pacific; and Captain Paget, more in jest than seriously, asked who would volunteer to go ashore, cross the Andes, and find the nearest approach to the main stream of the river. To his amazement, John Smyth, a junior lieutenant, at once offered, and so earnestly did he beg to be allowed to go that the Captain was forced to give way at last. Young Smyth had a good knowledge of Spanish, and was known to be courageous and level-headed; but the difficulty was that not a boat's crew, not a single seaman, in fact, could be spared to accompany him; but Smyth insisted that he required no protection, and only asked leave to take, as companion, his young cousin, a midshipman named Lowe.

Their knapsacks were soon packed, a cutter took them ashore, and the crew gave them a parting cheer as they turned back to the ship. In Callao Smyth hired five mules, and two Jevero Indians to attend him as muleteers and guides. As becomes direct descendants of the Incas, these were fearless, fine-looking men, industrious and kind-hearted, though by no means the sort of folk one would like to offend. They belonged by birth to Ecuador, which is the chief home of their tribe; but they seemed to know every yard of the country from Colombia to Chile, and from the coast to the Brazilian frontier, and, contrary to the usual custom of their tribe, both spoke Spanish quite well. One part of their costume which very much interested the two sailors was a short length of dried reed which each wore in place of an earring, and fixed to the end of which was the tooth of a slain enemy. But this was the only essentially barbarous decoration they possessed. They were bare-foot and bare-headed, but wore shirts and trousers like ordinary mortals; both, too, were Christians.

At first they assuredly did not flatter whatever vanity the English lads may have possessed, for they would scarcely believe that such youthful-looking persons (Smyth was twenty, and Lowe sixteen) could command the obedience of tried warriors. The question arose through Luis, the younger guide, contrasting

the weapons of the two. The midddy, after the fashion of the time, wore a dirk, while his cousin, of course, carried a sword. Was it then the custom, asked Luis, for the length of an English warrior's weapon to depend on his years and fighting experience? With what sort of blade, in that case, did the *commandante* of a ship fight?

Their opinion improved very much, however, as time went on and as they found these two lads enduring, without a murmur, heat and cold and thirst and fatigue which few white men that they had ever seen could have borne. Perhaps it should be added that their experience of white men was limited to the incorrigible lurchers and beach-combers—most of them of Spanish origin—to be seen anywhere along the South American coast. By the end of the second day they had come to feel quite a fatherly affection for them, so much so that they divulged a secret which, just at that time, might be worth more than its weight in gold to the explorers.

The lieutenant had noticed that, though neither guide showed any disposition to eat or drink “between meals,” they never seemed wearied, nor did they, when supper-time came round, eat with great appetite; this was the more surprising since they walked the greater part of the way, while Smyth and Lowe rode mule-back. On his making a remark about this, Filipe, the elder Indian, opened the satchel in which he carried his various belongings, and displayed a good stock of leaves and a small tin of quick-lime, saying:

“You have just eaten your supper, Señor Lieutenante, and cannot judge; to-morrow I will give you some of these to try for yourself.”

During the next morning, after a wearisome climb, Filipe fulfilled his promise; he rolled a few particles of lime in two or three of the leaves, and, pressing the whole into globular form, handed it to Smyth.

“Chew that,” he said. “It is *coca*, and will sustain you for nearly an hour.”

Smyth had previously noticed both men stuffing something into their mouths periodically, but, being so used to seeing the sailors chew tobacco, he had never given it a second thought. He chewed lustily at the little ball for five minutes, but succeeded in extracting neither taste nor nourishment from it.

“I think I should prefer salt pork,” he said. “What little taste your coca has is beastly; and I am as hungry as I was before.”

“Patience; you have not chewed it long enough.”

He tried again, and presently the Indian said with a smile:

“Well, Señor?”

“I don't know how it is, but I'm losing my hunger. *You* try it, Frank.—Give my friend one.”

The Jevero shook his head doubtfully.

“It must be a little one, then. It is not good for him. You smoke cigars, and you give some to us; but you do not give him one. With *coca* it is the same.”

Smyth continued to chew, and was no longer conscious either of hunger or fatigue—for half an hour or more, when both these mortal ills began to return; and of course with double acuteness. He remarked on this to the Indians.

“Ah!” said Luis; “now you know how we can tell the time without a watch, how we know the number of miles we have walked without counting our steps. When you feel to want new coca-leaves, thirty-five minutes have gone by; add the ten minutes during which you found no effect from them, and you observe

that three-quarters of an hour has expired. In that time we walk, at the present rate, five miles." He might have added that, if abused, the coca habit is as pernicious and as degrading as opium-taking.

"It will be five miles no longer now," said Filipe, interrupting. "Quick; blind the mules, Luis!"

They immediately began to bustle about like seamen in a gale of wind, and, in a few minutes, each of the five mules had a cloth tied over his eyes. There was soon no need to ask why. The slope they had been ascending had become a level strip—literally a strip. To the left of them the sailors saw a sheer wall of rock, rising perhaps a hundred feet, while to the right, not more than eight feet from it, was the edge of a precipice. Used as they both were to overcoming inclinations to giddiness or fear, they shuddered involuntarily as they cast their eyes over the brink and found that they could see no bottom to the abyss. Yet the Jeveros put themselves on the mules' outer side, one leading a string of three, the other two, and walking heedlessly within a couple of feet of the precipice.

To add to the gruesomeness of the neighbourhood, a weird, wailing cry began to rise from the high ledge above their heads, at the sound of which the Jeveros crossed themselves and mumbled a prayer.

"What is it?" asked the midshipman, not without a little touch of awe.

"*Alma perdida!*" said Luis, reverently lowering his voice. The words meant "a lost soul," but the boy was unaware of that, and Smyth did not think a mountain-ledge, such as this, quite the right place to choose for enlightening him. Used to Spanish and now to Indian superstition, he guessed—and rightly—that the cry was that of some bird, probably peculiar to the Andes; and he questioned Filipe, who was walking at his mule's head.

"Yes; it is a bird. It passes its time in bewailing the dead, and the sins which they have committed."

"It will have a chance of bewailing its own death," said the lieutenant peevishly, "as soon as I can get a shot at it," at which the guides betrayed as much horror as Smyth himself would have shown had they proposed using an albatross as a target.

"What are we going to do if we meet another string of mules along here?" he asked.

"One party must lie down and let the other pass over it," said Filipe indifferently.

By night-time the severe nerve strain of such a passage was ended, for this ledge at last became a rock-walled mountain-path sloping at quite an easy incline. They were no sooner well along this road the following morning than the guides looked to the loading of the guns, for they said that in the neighbourhood they might expect to meet with black Indians, who were notorious cannibals, and whom it would be their duty to kill. But it happened that none thought it worth while to put in an appearance; the "cannibals" were probably imaginary, though, of course, there are blacks—negroes, not Indians—settled in various parts of the Andes, the descendants of the African slaves introduced by the Spaniards in the sixteenth century to carry packages of gold or silver which the Indians could not or would not carry.

At last the most wonderful mountain-range in the world was crossed. The mules were left at a village, and the two Jeveros had an opportunity of showing that they were as expert on the water as on the mountains. For now they were in Amazonian Peru, and the Huallaga River had to be descended and examined before the sailors' task was accomplished. In this more easterly forest district of Peru there are, at this day, nearly four hundred thousand Indians, and at that time there were half a million; many of them very degraded, many more warlike and intelligent heathens, and others who led quite peaceable lives as farmers, planters, fishers, or exporters of turtle-oil.

Only once were the sailors in serious danger at the hands of any of these tribes, and that was due not to themselves or to the natives, but to the Jevero guides, both of whom had an ineradicable contempt for all

Indian families but their own.

This happened soon after the return journey up the Huallaga had begun. Smyth had expected such an occurrence for some time, for he had more than once been forced to remonstrate with his men for their quarrelsome or jeering attitude towards Indians whom they met and talked with, and who would have been perfectly willing to be friendly and obliging. They came up with a large canoe containing eight Indians who were lying in wait for a manatee. Smyth bade the Jeveros draw up, and entered into conversation with the hunters, who answered civilly, though not without some distrust. Luis and Filipe joined in unasked, and, when it was too late, the lieutenant perceived that they were “chaffing” the strangers. These became more and more angry, and at last refused to answer Smyth, who thereupon, for peace’ sake, told his canoemen to paddle on. They obeyed, but not without a parting jeer which the Englishmen did not understand, but which so incensed the Indian in the bows of the other canoe that he hurled the harpoon which he was holding straight at Luis.

Luis gave a peculiar twist with his paddle, the canoe shot sideways, and the weapon passed harmlessly by him. Filipe picked up the short-barrelled gun that lay at his feet, but, quick to meet all emergencies, Smyth drew a pistol and pointed it at him.

“If you don’t drop it before I count three, I shall fire.”



A FIERCE RETORT

The Indian in the bows of the other canoe became so incensed at the “chaffing” of the strangers that he hurled the harpoon he was holding straight at Luis.

In English, he added quickly to the midshipman, “Cover Luis, if he tries any games.”

Filipe dropped the gun with a shame-faced little laugh, and Luis showed no disposition either to take revenge for the harpoon, or to back up his friend against their employer.

“Give way, as hard as you can; both of you,” said the lieutenant, watching, with no little concern, the harpoons which were being held in readiness to throw at his canoe. Perhaps one bullet from his gun might have put the whole boat’s crew to flight, but he had the love of fair play and reluctance to kill which has distinguished the majority of British explorers, whether renowned or obscure. He put his pride in his pocket and frankly ran away.

Strangely enough, neither of the Jeveros ever showed any animosity towards him for thus siding with the enemy. When, at length, the parting time came, both pressed keepsakes on the young officers, and then surprised them by holding them by the hands and crying over them like a pair of women.

CHAPTER X

THE CARIBS OF GUATEMALA

In 1839, curious as to the rumours of general anarchy prevailing throughout most of the Central American countries, the United States Government sent a young Foreign Office official—Mr. John Lloyd Stephens—to find out the truth of the matter. At first glance there seems nothing specially alarming or hazardous about such a mission, nor would there be nowadays; but, at the date of which we are speaking, there were no means of rapid communication between the towns, and many of the roads, rivers, and forest or mountain tracks were in the hands of strong parties of Carib and Mosquito Indians, Zambos, and Mestizos (white and Indian half-bloods), who would have no more respect for an agent of the American Government than for the colonists of their own country, against whom many of them were uniting their forces.

Under the circumstances, Mr. Stephens thought it wisest to land at Belize, and learn from the English officials there the best plan to pursue. British Honduras at that time was not strictly a Crown Colony, but was governed by the executive in Jamaica. The commanding officer of the garrison, Colonel McDonald, received him with great geniality, and entertained him for a couple of days. But he could promise him no material help, he said, when once he was off British soil; he had no authority even to lend him a boat or launch, and dared not take upon himself to send an armed escort beyond the frontier.

“There is a Guatemala steamer starting up the Belize river to-morrow night,” he said. “I will send down and book you a passage. After you land you must not rely on us”—the Colonel laughed—“in our official capacity, that is to say. Of course, some of the staff are often up country after game, and if we should happen to find you in a tight corner on somebody else’s ground, we couldn’t, as private individuals, leave you in the lurch. You’ve got a nasty job; Guatemala and Honduras are both more or less in rebellion; so’s Mexico for that matter; and the Indians are plundering Government and revolutionaries alike. We’ve had a little trouble of our own with the Caribs; you’ll probably meet some of our firing-parties, any of whom will guarantee you protection as long as you’re our side of the boundary.”

The next evening, Mr. Stephens, accompanied by his secretary, Mr. Catherwood, went on board the little steamer—a boat which an American or English owner would send round the world with a ship’s company of six, but which, here, was manned by no less than twenty Mestizos, an English engineer, and a Spanish skipper. The only other passenger was a young Irish Franciscan, who proved very jovial company, and who professed to regard the Indian risings as a mere idle scare. He, too, was going into the first native territory through which the travellers must pass, and offered himself as their guide thus far.

They could not have had a better, for his “cloth” was of more use to them than a small escort might have been. Soon after leaving the steamer they came to the first of the Carib camps. The Irishman baptised all the babies in the place, good-humouredly “chaffed” the warriors over their unwisdom in taking part in white men’s squabbles, procured a supply of provisions for himself and his companions, and all three set off across the boundary into the more dangerous territory.

They should by right have reached a Spanish village that night, where they would have been able to obtain horses; but a storm came on, and there was nothing for it but to wait on the plain till it was over. A

question arose as to shelter and fuel, and this was solved by their seeing a sheep-fold in the distance. They came up to it and found it untenanted; there was a hut big enough for three persons to sit in, but too small for even one to lie in. For a fire, they broke down some of the rails of the fold, from which they cut kindling wood, and soon had a cosy blaze which defied the rain; they ate their supper and slept on the floor of the hut, huddled together.

In the morning they were awakened by a loud chattering of men, and Stephens, who was nearest the door, found himself being dragged forcibly into the open, while he was rubbing his eyes and trying to remember where he was. Catherwood sprang out after him, pistol in hand, only to be overpowered and relieved of it by a crowd of Caribs.

But, at sight of the friar, the Indians hesitated and became less noisy. He spoke to them in their own language, and demanded to know the cause of this violence.

“These men have broken up and burnt our sheep-fold,” exclaimed one of the Caribs.

“Well, well; leave go and I’ll explain. Give that gentleman his pistol back; he doesn’t want to hurt you.”

“Tell them we’ll pay for our night’s lodging,” added Stephens.

An explanation was offered and accepted, as were five dollars (about the value of the whole enclosure in a country where wood was plentiful) from the Americans; and the mollified Caribs led the way to their camp, gave the strangers a good breakfast, and put them on their road for the Spanish village. There they found everything quiet and orderly, though reports were rife as to terrible doings farther west; the Irishman obtained two good horses for his friends and bade them good-bye, as their ways divided here.

“We’re on our own resources now, and no mistake,” said Stephens when, coming to the end of the plain, they found themselves in the hilly district which grows higher and higher till it becomes the Central Guatemala Range, 13,000 feet high. “Let’s have a look at the chart.”

Colonel McDonald had warned them of the mountains, and had given them a plan showing one or two deep river valleys, here and in Salvador, by following which they could reach the Pacific coast without any climbing that a horse could not manage. Upon this an Indian village was marked at a distance of about six miles from where they now were; and they might expect to reach it easily by nightfall, after allowing themselves ample time for making notes of the country by the way. They were tolerably sure of a civil reception and a night’s lodging, for their thoughtful Irish friend had given them a letter of introduction to the resident Spanish padre of the place.

They made very few notes, for they had no fancy for a second night over a fire of palings; another storm was threatening, and they spurred for the village without further delay, arriving at the same time as the rain. It was just at the end of the *invierno*, or wet season, which consists, in Central America, of lengthy thunderstorms at very irregular intervals. The priest happened to be absent, but letters of recommendation were superfluous here; the travellers had landed on a tribe of Caribs as different from the others as yeoman-farmers are from gypsies. The others had been one part shepherds and nine parts brigands; these were the agricultural Guatemalans, descendants of the most highly civilised of the ancient Indians, whom—by reason of their very civilisation—Cortez could easily subdue in war, while the other tribes rendered his march through the country anything but safe or triumphant. Their inoffensive disposition made the Spaniards treat them rather as protégés than as victims.

The only difficulty that presented itself was that few of the inhabitants spoke any language but their own, for the tribe had, for four centuries, resisted all attempts to force a new language or new laws upon them; even their Christianity was but a hundred years old. They entertained the visitors well, but could give

them no information as to the state of the country; they were not interested in the doings of the outer world; they cultivated their cochineal insects, grew their coffee, tended their cattle, and minded their own business. They gave the Americans an unoccupied hut, brought them a generous supply of meat, wine, and cakes, and left them to amuse themselves for the night, with instructions to ring if they wanted anything; the ringing, by the way, to be performed by beating a drum which they hung outside the hut door.

Just before it was light, Stephens waked to hear a low cry from his friend. He sat up and struck a light. Catherwood was lying with his knees drawn up, hands clenched, and eyes staring, and, in reply to the other's questionings, answered only in an incoherent babble. Stephens crossed over to him and saw that his teeth were chattering and his face almost scarlet; there was no doubt as to his condition; he was in a burning fever. Nothing could have been more unlucky. He had brought the young fellow with him purely on his own account, and unauthorised by his department. He was not in Government service, but merely a personal friend whom Stephens' private means enabled him to keep in constant employment as amanuensis; therefore, to lose several days, or weeks, nursing him, at such a time, would be to bring himself into serious disgrace with the ministry. Yet how could he leave him in an Indian camp, to the tender mercies of some mad witch-doctor, who would charm and physic him to death with the most generous intentions?

He paced up and down for a while, and, at daylight, went out into the open, forced by his own ignorance of medicine, and his anxiety for his friend's safety, to stoop to ask advice of a people whom his American upbringing had taught him to despise. And it was just possible that the Spanish padre might have returned by now, and he would be sure to possess some knowledge of drugs and minor surgery. In the village street he met the chief, one of the few natives who spoke Spanish.

"I will call the physician of the tribe," he said, when Stephens, learning to his dismay that the priest was not expected till night-time, had communicated his difficulty.

The native doctor was a little old man who had no small opinion of his own importance, and was as contemptuously ignorant of Spanish as the Yankee was of Huastecan and Cariban. He passed his hand over the patient's brow, breathed on him, muttered incantations, and then walked round the hut about a dozen times, solemnly talking to himself, till Stephens could scarcely resist the temptation to give him a lift into the street with his foot. After a time the *piache*, doctor, conjurer, or whatever he called himself, took out two powders from his girdle, poured water on them, sipped the drink, breathed and mumbled over it, opened the sufferer's mouth, and poured it down his throat before the spectator could make up his mind whether to interfere or no. Then the old image strutted out of the hut, as proud as Punch.

This was all very well, but Stephens' mind was ill at ease. He followed the man of medicine into the street, and found the chief waiting modestly but expectantly outside.

"Ask him what he has given my friend," he said, curtly. The chief bowed, but shook his head.

"These are mysteries into which I may not inquire. The physician's secrets are sacred. You may rest assured that the young white man will soon be well."

Of course, Stephens did anything but rest assured of this. He turned into the hut again, and lo! Catherwood was sleeping as peacefully as a child, with no sign of indisposition except the flush on his face. The chief peeped in apologetically.

"He says that the sick señor will be well enough to travel by midday," he whispered. It was now four o'clock; Stephens ate some breakfast fretfully, looked at the patient, walked about the village, and sought to kill time as best he could. Every time he re-entered the hut, Catherwood's temperature was less high; and, about the middle of the day, he awoke of his own accord, ravenous for some breakfast. The old

medicine-man had known his business; had administered two, out of the thousand and two, healing drugs which the American forests and valleys produce—probably quinine and some preparation of poppy—and had nipped in the bud what was doubtless an attack of malarial fever.

Catherwood paid his doctor's bill by the gift of a four-bladed pen-knife, his friend forced a similar present on the chief, and early in the afternoon they rode away about their business. The next few weeks were passed in hurried journeys from town to town, in false alarms, in being potted at by revolutionaries, and humbugged by officials; and by the time they had crossed once more to the Bay of Honduras and the Guatemala coast, they had found out all that there was to learn.

About a mile from the British boundary they encountered their most exciting adventure. Outside a Carib village were a dozen Indians and Mestizos, all armed with guns, and in heated argument with five young men, who were obviously British officers in mufti; these also had guns, and two of them carried well-filled game-bags.

"You intend to keep us here? It will be the worse for you if you try it," the eldest of the white men was saying in Spanish.

"Unless you give us what we ask," replied a Mestizo insolently. "You have no right to be over the border."

The Americans pulled up their horses, and Stephens drew a pistol.

"All right," he said. "We're going to be in this."

"Then pray begin by putting that pistol out of the way, there's a good fellow," said Major Walrond, the young man who had spoken to the half-caste. "We shall be very glad if you'll back us up. We want to get out of it without firing on them if we can."

"What's the row?"

"These Mestizos belong to the rebels, and are recruiting among the Indians; promising them all sorts of plunder, no doubt, and they rather think of practising on us for a start; want us to empty our pockets and game-bags, and give up our guns and ammunition. Look out, you fellows."

Seeing a reinforcement for the white men, yet not one that need be feared so far as they could see, the ruffians were becoming impatient, and one or two had cocked their guns.

"Ride 'em down; use your whips, but for goodness' sake don't fire a shot while we're on this side of the boundary," said the senior officer hurriedly. "Bravo, Spencer; over with him"; for a subaltern had seized the rifle of one of the half-breeds and was wrenching it out of his hands. "Thank you, Mr. Stephens."

The last remark was occasioned by the American's felling with his pistol-stock an Indian who was taking aim at the Major. Then the white men began to hit out, shoulder to shoulder. The Indians were quickly overpowered, for they were more than half afraid of the guns they held, and, on these being wrested from them, fled to the nearest ravine. But the Mestizos were more of a handful. There had been five of them to begin with; the subaltern had disarmed one, and he had fled; Major Walrond had just knocked another down with his fist, and he lay unconscious; but the other three, artful enough to reflect that even if their opponents decided to fire on them, their guns were only charged with bird-shot, harmless at any appreciable distance, were running away with the evident intention of using their own ball-cartridges from some point of vantage.

Stephens' matter-of-fact Yankee way of looking at things now became a valuable asset.

"We're no British subjects," he said hurriedly, "and you'll not be to blame if we fire on these chaps"; and,

pistol in hand, he spurred after one fugitive while Catherwood pursued a second. The third fired at Catherwood, the bullet carrying away his hat, but one of the subalterns was on him before he could load again, wrenched the rifle out of his hands, and gave him a complimentary tap on the head with the butt thereof. The other two, seeing that the horsemen at least would have no scruple about using firearms, stopped when called upon to do so, and sullenly gave up their guns.

But that mile back to British territory seemed a most amazingly long one. The Carib fugitives had alarmed the neighbourhood, and knots of Indians were gathering, armed with bows and arrows, which they seemed desirous of using on the white men, for the two or three venomous lies circulated all in a moment by the Mestizos had soon swelled to two or three dozen; and to the Caribs, the opportune arrival of the two men on horseback was part of a deep-laid plot against their liberties.

“Shall we ride in and disperse them?” suggested Catherwood.

“Better not; it’ll only make matters worse,” said one of the Englishmen gloomily. “They’ll let go with their bows if you do. I think we look fools enough as it is, sneaking along like this; better not make it any worse.”

“No; we can’t afford to have Guatemala declaring war against Great Britain,” laughed Walrond. “If they attempt to shoot we must let them have it; but it mustn’t be said that we fired first.”

It was a queer procession; every man felt that he was cutting a hang-dog figure; he was not afraid of an arrow, but he was mortally afraid of looking ridiculous. All knew, too, that if serious trouble arose, the commanding officer would forbid their crossing the frontier any more, and there was no shooting to be had on their own side of it that could compare with that here.

“All right, my chickens,” muttered Walrond at last; “if you follow us just fifty yards farther, we may be able to deal with you.”

The fifty yards were covered; the white men were on their own ground again, but still the Indians—proudly indifferent to frontiers other than those recognised by their own tribe—followed at a distance of about forty paces, debating their tactics in low tones, and by no means unwilling to make a rush for the Englishmen and rob them of their guns.

“Now let’s tickle them a little,” said Major Walrond; and he turned sharply and sent a charge of small shot among the Indians. “Down, quick; ’ware arrows.”

The two horsemen jumped out of their stirrups and fell on the grass, and the little shower of arrows passed harmlessly over the heads of all. The other four officers fired in quick succession. This was too much for the Caribs, many of whom were peppered right painfully; and, with no further pretence at shooting, they turned and fled towards their village, leaving the white men masters of the field.

CHAPTER XI

A PRINCE'S ADVENTURES IN BRAZIL

Prince Adalbert of Prussia, a nephew of Friedrich Wilhelm III, is less remembered as a traveller than as a frequent visitor to this country, and one who sought to build up a German navy that should, in time, be an exact copy of our own. Yet, in his younger days, before he took seriously to sailing, he led a restless, wandering life, and, in the course of about eighteen years, contrived to see almost every country in the world.

In 1842, when he was a little over thirty, he landed at Parahiba, in Northern Brazil, with a small suite of Prussian officers, determined to make a cross-country journey to the Andes and back. Needless to say, such a march promised no small amount of excitement and danger; for European settlements were few and far between, and the greater part of the inhabited regions were in the hands of Caribs and Guaranis, who, even where they were not savage and bloodthirsty, were usually so jealous of the intrusion of white men that they would offer every hindrance to their progress through the country.

The initial difficulty was the not uncommon one of obtaining guides. Guides by the score—Indian, half-blood, Spanish and Italian—were ready enough to show the way to Caxias, two hundred and fifty miles distant; but the Prince happened to have an excellent chart of the country as far as even three hundred miles beyond that (to the other side of the Para River). But beyond the river no one had been or had any intention of going, for fear of the Indians, who were popularly supposed to number cannibalism among their other little eccentricities. Passably good horses, however, were not hard to come by, and the little cavalcade crossed the first five or six hundred miles of plain and forest without mishap, and without seeing any other Indians than those who were mildly and agriculturally disposed.

But now they came to what looked like an untouched and absolutely impenetrable forest, where neither man nor horses could move unless a path was first cut; and to render this gloomy neighbourhood a little more uninviting, there appeared to be no dearth of jaguars, wild cats, and boa-constrictors. Several of the officers separated and, for a whole day, rode in every direction, exploring every possible curve and opening that might be the beginning of a road; losing themselves and each other a score of times. But at sundown, when all met at a prearranged spot, Count Oriolla—the last to arrive—triumphantly announced that he had found a winding path that showed signs of rare but comparatively recent use. He had traced this for a good ten miles, and it still promised to remain open and to lead “somewhere.”

To a band of men who were young, strong, well armed, and romantically inclined, the prospect offered by this mysterious path was a delightful one, and by daybreak everyone was waiting and anxious to continue the journey. Count Oriolla led the way through various palm clumps and then alongside a wall of forest where every tree seemed to be linked inextricably to its neighbour by creepers and lianas; and, after some five miles of this, to a little wedge-like opening which continued in a sharp backward turn, and which no one but himself had noticed on the preceding day. For just a few yards this was so narrow that the horses could only move in single file, but it very quickly widened to the breadth of an ordinary country lane. Close examination by the scientist of the party showed that it was a path chiefly of Nature's making;

probably a dried-up watercourse which had been used by men and cattle at sufficiently frequent intervals to prevent the saplings, suckers, and undergrowth from becoming a serious obstruction.

Travelling very much at their ease, the Prince and his companions followed this road for about fifteen miles before stopping for the midday meal and siesta. In consequence of the great heat they usually all rested from twelve till four; but to-day Count Oriolla and Captain Bromberg preferred to walk on for a mile or two as soon as they had lunched, in order to see what possibilities the neighbourhood offered in the way of game, fruit, and water. A few hundred yards from the camp they came to a veritable cherry orchard on a small scale; a grove of tall trees laden with small black fruit and having leaves and bark precisely the same as those of the European cherry. The fruit was the “jabuticabas,” or Brazilian cherry; the two young men tasted some “windfalls,” and these were so promising that the Count urged his more active companion to climb one of the trunks and shake down a good supply.

For a sailor this was no difficulty; and Captain Bromberg was soon in the fork of a tree, rocking the branches vigorously, while the Count stowed the falling fruit in a small game-bag. Presently the Captain happened to peer down from his perch, and then, to his bewilderment, he saw that a third person had appeared on the scene. The Count was still on his knees, diligently filling the bag; while, unperceived by him, a tall Indian, armed with a spear, bow, and quiver, stood near him as motionless as a statue.

Bromberg at once swung himself down and dropped beside his friend, so suddenly that the Count sprang up in alarm, though the Indian betrayed no shadow of surprise. The Count, turning his head and finding himself face to face with a Carib, started back with a cry of astonishment and fumbled in his pocket for the pistol which he usually carried there; but the stranger’s demeanour was so mild and amiable, that he at once felt ashamed of himself.

“Why don’t you speak to him in Spanish?” said Bromberg; “no doubt he would understand.”

The Count, himself half Spanish, spoke civilly to the Carib, who at once answered in that tongue, at the same time turning his spear-point to the ground in token of peace. He pointed to the end of the grove of fruit trees.

“That is where I live, gentlemen”; and for the first time they noticed a thin column of smoke rising from a hut or tent a couple of hundred yards away.

“Is there an Indian village here then?” asked the Count.

“Nearly a mile farther on; I and my parents keep an inn outside it.”

The outlook seemed promising, and the Count at once asked as to the likelihood of their finding suitable guides.

“You want to go by way of Santaren? Yes; any of us will guide you as far as there, or even to the Madeira River. But we should not choose to go any farther, for we are ill friends with the Guaranis just now; nor would you do well to venture far up the Amazon; between Indians, reptiles, and *tigres*, your lives would never be safe.”

The two officers laughed; and the Count, giving their new acquaintance a drop of brandy from his flask in token of good will, easily persuaded him to return with them to the spot where they had left their companions.

The Prince at once asked to be conducted to the village. This consisted of a very picturesque street of palm-thatched huts, whose owners looked cleaner, more robust, and more thriving than any Indians Prince Adalbert had seen. A deputation, consisting of two chiefs and a native Catholic priest, came to bid the new-comers welcome, and begged them to accept the hospitality of the village for as long as it might suit

them. They confirmed what the other Indian had said: the way was safe enough and agreeable enough as far as the confluence of the Amazon and Madeira, but no farther.

On learning that the white men would pass that night in the village, everyone was resolved to make the stay an entertaining one. The visitors were shown the parish church, school, stores, etc., and eventually led to the older chief's house for an elaborate meal of fish, turtle-eggs, mushrooms, venison, partridges, and stewed monkey, with fruit jellies, cakes, and native beer. The hut was neatly furnished with cane-seated benches or lounges; and—not always to the guests' greater comfort—a puma, various snakes, a couple of monkeys, and three parrots, all very tame, wandered about the place at will.

Soon after supper, while Prince Adalbert smoked with the chiefs and the padre, he unconsciously committed a very serious breach of local etiquette. Attracted by the great size and artistic workmanship of two bows that stood against the wall close by him, he leant forward and took up one to examine it more closely. Immediately a heart-rending scream rose from the only woman present—the cacique's widowed mother—who, springing forward, snatched the weapon from the stranger's hand and replaced it with great care and reverence.

The courtier-instinct of the Prussian officers was naturally scandalised, the cacique remained perfectly still, though he looked very uncomfortable, and said something in dialect to his mother that appeared to be a gentle reproach; while the Indian padre, whose education had brought him more in touch with white men and their notions of hospitality, hastened politely to explain and apologise. The bows, he said, were the last weapons used by the woman's late husband, and it was the custom of the tribe to regard such things as extremely sacred; no one but the deceased's widow or eldest son might so much as touch them or stand within a pace of them. The Prince was, of course, too much a man of the world to feel any annoyance, and quickly put his entertainers at their ease again by expressing keen interest in the customs peculiar to the Caribs; and this led to the cacique's inviting him to witness a dance which was being arranged in his honour. He led the way to the public square or *plaza*, which was now illuminated by a symmetrical arrangement of torches and a huge bonfire. As soon as all were seated under a canopy, the cacique struck a gong, and, from every corner of the square, the young men of the tribe appeared, each armed with a blunted spear and a round wooden shield; and, at a second beat of the gong, all these began an awkward, waddling march round and round the fire. This had gone on for some minutes when, with a roar that was a splendid imitation of a bull's bellowing, a man sprang up from the ground and, with head down, pretended to run at full charge through the procession. The march stopped instantly, every man turned his spear on the disturber, and then followed a really admirable pantomime of a bull-fight, which ended in the vanquishing and pretended death of the "bull."

In the morning the Prussians sought to press various gifts on the hospitable Indians; but they were only received under protest and on condition of the visitors accepting others in return; moreover, the cacique appointed five mounted men to act as guides as far as the river; and these, he said, were on no account to accept any payment beyond their daily rations.

A march of something like four hundred miles now lay before the travellers, and this was accomplished, by easy stages, within about a fortnight. When once the river was in sight the Indians did not, as the Prince had expected, promptly desert; nevertheless, they reground their knives and the points of their spears and arrows as though they anticipated an attack at any moment. But no other Indians were sighted for a while; the ford of the Madeira marked on the chart was found, and the explorers crossed the river in comfort and bade good-bye to the honest fellows who had guided them so far and so faithfully.

Now came a temporary break in the forest land; and for several miles the road was a mere sand-strip, like a towpath, running between the Amazon and some low, marshy ground. No one was sorry to escape from

this district to the higher and more wooded lands again, for not only do such marshes breed all kinds of fever, but they are the chosen lurking-places of crocodiles, water-serpents, and other abominations.

On the third afternoon of the new march, Count Oriolla noticed, as they entered upon more forest land, that dark-skinned figures continually flitted among the trees, as though someone were spying on or keeping up with the horsemen. He reported this, and the Prince gave orders for all to draw more together and to have their weapons ready to hand. At every step, too, the track betrayed more and more signs of recent use by horses and cattle; and, from the top of the next hill, a haze like the smoke from dozens of houses was visible.

“What are those?” asked the Prince as he pointed to some dark objects moving on the surface of the water a long way ahead.

“Canoes, *Hoheit*; and Indians in them,” promptly answered the naval captain, more accustomed than the rest to long-distance gazing.

“Well, well; let us ride on. They probably intend us no harm.”

Just then a valet, who was riding a little to the rear, hurried forward.

“Your Highness may perceive that we are being followed,” he said; and pointed behind him to a group of thirty Indians of some other tribe than the Caribs, who were moving along on foot at a steady double; and among the trees closer at hand several more could be seen.

“Better to ignore them for the present,” said the Prince. “Evidently the village is not far away; time enough to stop when we come to it.”

“This looks like an ambushade,” muttered Oriolla to the man riding next him. They had come almost to the end of the little patch of forest, and, beyond the last belt of trees, the heads and forefeet of several horses drawn up in line could be seen. The words were hardly out of his mouth when, howling at the top of their voices, two dozen men shot out from the cover indicated and rode at full speed towards the new-comers.

“Pistols out; but let no one fire unless I give the word,” shouted the Prince. “Ha! Here come the others from behind.”

The second lot of Indians had increased their pace, and the Prussians saw themselves about to be hemmed between two little forces of yelling savages. Within a few yards, both parties of redskins halted and either brandished their axes or fitted arrows to their bows.

“What do you want?” shouted the Prince in Spanish.

“You are our prisoners; you must come with us to our camp,” said a young Indian, advancing his horse a foot or two. “Give up your arms.”

The Prince looked round at his followers. They only numbered thirteen, all told, five of whom had never been under fire in their lives. Then he said resolutely:

“Certainly we will come with you; but we shall not give up our arms; and if any violence is attempted, I warn you that we shall fire on you.”

None of the Indians carried guns, and for that reason the Prince had more faith in the efficacy of his threat.

“Very well,” said the leader of the mounted Indians. “Follow us.”

It was but a short distance to the village or camp or *tolderia*; and, at the entrance to it, the Guaranis (for to that tribe they belonged) dismounted, and each of the white men found his bridle seized by an Indian.

“Who is your chief? Where is your cacique?” demanded Prince Adalbert impatiently.

His captors pointed to a young man who, accompanied by another much older, had just appeared from the largest of the huts and was coming towards them. The young chief proved to be a very mild-mannered person. He said half apologetically that the tribe was poor, and that strangers were expected to make some offering on coming among them.

“We were prepared to make presents,” said the Prince good-humouredly, “but we object to being asked for them.”

The older man—evidently the Ahithophel of the tribe—whispered something, whereupon the chief said more spiritedly:

“You have been taken prisoners in our forest. You must ransom yourselves”—Ahithophel whispered again—“by giving up your arms and your baggage.”

Those of the Prussians who understood the cacique’s Spanish cocked their pistols.

“Patience; we must reason with them,” said the Prince in his own language.

He was trying to think of the most potent argument to employ, when a sudden outcry arose on all hands, and more than half the Indians, including the chief and his evil genius, turned towards the river as though in haste to meet someone. The canoes which the travellers had seen from a distance were drawing up to the wooden landing-stage.

“What’s this? What are they all doing?” asked the Prince; as well he might, for his assailants, so clamorous and threatening only a moment before, were falling on their knees one after the other, crossing themselves and shouting jubilantly:

“The padre! The holy padre!”

A pleasant-faced, athletic-looking man, wearing a large *sombrero* and a priest’s cassock, was standing on the little quay, holding up his hand to bless the kneeling crowd, and at the same time throwing a quick glance of curiosity towards the prisoners.

“At least he’s a white man,” said the Prince, much relieved, as he signed to Count Oriolla to dismount and go to speak to the new-comer. In a couple of minutes he saw both men hurrying towards him. The priest raised his hat and, in excellent German, introduced himself as a Scots Jesuit whose duty it was to make periodical visits to the camps that had no church, to administer the sacraments to the devout.

“You must look leniently on them,” he said when the position was explained. “They are just grownup children. I will see that a proper apology is made. I suspect I can put my hand on the black sheep.” He pointed at Ahithophel, and, speaking in Spanish, ordered him and the cacique to come forward. Before he had spoken for a couple of minutes, it was clear enough to the strangers that the good missionary knew the class of men with whom he had to deal. Led by the cacique, the Indians were soon sobbing and groaning in chorus; and even the grey-headed counsellor bewailed his indiscretion when, passing from the moral to the politic side of the question, the Scotsman hinted at the possibilities of a German invasion to avenge this insult to royalty; and ended by forbidding anyone in the village, as a penance, to receive any present whatever from the travellers.

The power that just one white man of quick brain and strong will had over all these savages seemed incredible. The Prussians remained in the village three days, and during that time the Indians strained every effort to please and entertain them; not an article of their property was interfered with, and when, on leaving, the Prince—forgetting the padre’s prohibition—offered trifling presents of knives, jewellery, and

silk handkerchiefs, everyone edged away as though these things were poison.

“They have been *good* children, Father,” pleaded the Prince, and so earnestly that the Jesuit was obliged to give way; whereupon the Guaranis accepted the gifts with tears of gratitude, and readily offered a supply of guides who would ensure the travellers against molestation by others of their tribe between there and the Andes.

On the last day of their stay it was reported that a tapir had been seen in the forest a mile or two back; and the Scots cleric, himself a keen sportsman, undertook to show the Prussians a native hunt at its best. In this, however, he did not quite succeed, for some of the younger members of the tribe stole a march on the rest, and the visitors only saw the “finish.” The lads had started earlier in the morning, had discovered the tapir and driven him through the forest towards the river; and, as the white men reached the most practicable path, the ungainly beast charged out of it and made straight towards the water. But the cacique was too quick for him. Spurring his horse with the sharp angles of his stirrups, he dashed from the rear of the Prussians and flung his lasso over the animal’s head.

But this was not all. The tapir cared no more for this than a whale does for a single harpoon and line, and rushed straight on for the river, apparently dragging the hunter with him. All in a moment, however, there came a clatter of hoofs, a cloud of dead leaves, chips, and dust, and four of the beaters dashed out from the forest path with their lassoes poised, and each bawling like a man possessed. Two lassoes whistled past the Prince’s head and seemed to fall at exactly the same moment on that of the tapir; these were followed by a third, which, as the beast had made a half stop, just missed him; then by a fourth, which fell unerringly.

Even then the power of this strange animal was amazing, and for a minute it seemed as though he must draw his captors into the river; but, at a shout from the cacique, the three hunters followed his example, swung their horses round, and spurred them so terrifically that they towed the quarry back, foot by foot, till he fell over on his side with all the breath strangled out of him. Then the cacique, as the first to get his lasso “home,” handed the thong to another hunter, dismounted, and gave the tapir his quietus with his spear.

CHAPTER XII

INDIAN WARFARE IN CALIFORNIA

One of America's great naval commanders—Captain Henry Augustus Wise—made use of the opportunity afforded him by the Mexican War of 1846-7 to collect material for a very engrossing account of some Indians concerning whom little was then known: the coast Comanches of Lower California and Mexico. The Captain—a cousin of Governor Wise of Virginia, and an intimate friend of Rear-Admiral Wilkes—was at that time second lieutenant of the man-of-war *Independence*, a steamship which was cruising between San Francisco and the Gulf of California.

His first acquaintance with the Western redskins was when he was sent ashore at Monterey, a hundred and twenty miles south of San Francisco, to reconnoitre the country and offer protection—or, if need be, a means of escape—to any United States subjects settled in the district. Let it be remembered that the California of that day was vastly different even from the California of two years later. Its hidden gold was only known to the Comanches and other Shoshonee tribes, and a few Mexican Spaniards; Monterey was still the capital, while “Frisco” was but a little market-town; above all, the Yankees had as yet scarce more than a foothold in the state, the greater part of it being (till the end of that war) under Mexican sway; and the coast Indians had not yet had their own virtues knocked out of them and replaced by the vices of the white diggers of '49.

Lieutenant Wise and his boat's crew, on leaving the town, began to make their way down-country between the coast and the Buonaventura River, relying for hospitality mainly on the American settlers, many of whom did a thriving and regular trade in skins. They found the district tolerably quiet, though there were reports of various fierce battles between the Comanches and their old enemies the Apaches, many of the latter being, it was said, in the pay of the Mexicans. It was at a trappers' camp that Wise heard this piece of news, a queer little circle of log-huts erected on a wide clearing in one of the river forests which they came upon by accident late one afternoon. The trappers—all of them American or American-Irish—gave a very cordial welcome to the little party, though they would not at first admit the necessity for their offer of protection.

“See here,” said one of them. “The Mexicans are shifting down south right hard, and all you're likely to see, you've seen in Monterey. Your ship, or else some other, has bombarded Santa Barbara already; and, like as not, is clearing San Diego out by now. As for the redskins, take an old stager's advice and let 'em fight it out themselves. There's one lot we'd like very well to get hold of, but the rest we don't vally a cuss.”

“Who are they?” asked Wise, sitting down to the meal of grilled deer's meat that was set before him.

“More'n we can tell ye. Some o' that coyotero lot that have learned to use a rifle; for gun-stealing and horse and rifle-lifting they've got no living ekals. Last week they killed two of our fellows at a camp up the river; scalped 'em; broke open the magazine, and got away with all the powder and lead, as well as half a dozen spare guns. 'Twas no good the rest going to look for 'em when they came home; p'raps they were half a hundred miles away by then.”

“I’ve had orders to seize all firearms found on Indians,” said the lieutenant.

“And don’t forget it,” said one of his hosts. “Take my word, them guns, and a good many hundreds beside, have gone down-country to the Mexicans; and the Injuns are allowed to keep all the horses and eat all the mules for their reward.”

“Eat the mules?”

“What else? What *won’t* Apaches eat, for that matter? How do you reckon they come to be called *coyoters*? Half of ’em ’d live on coyotes” (prairie wolves) “and never touch anything more Christian, if they had their way. Well; I s’pose we’ll get a visit from ’em next; so far we’ve lost nothing but horses.”

“Are all of you in camp now?” asked Wise. At present he had only seen fourteen men.

“No; there’s six gone across the river to trade for horses; for, barring what they’re riding, we’ve only got one left, and he’s sick. If the redskins come ever so, we can’t run after ’em.”

“I can stay till the day after to-morrow, if you think they’re likely to come within that time. I daren’t stay longer, for we’re to join the ship at San Diego on the twenty-sixth.”

“Wal; there’s eleven of you, and that’s a big help; we shan’t say no,” said the head trapper. “They might come to-night; might not come for another six months. You needn’t fear for your men’s rations; they won’t starve.”

When bed-time came, Wise posted five sentries, who were to be relieved after four hours’ duty, and went to the hut set aside for him with his mind at ease. He was in his first sleep, when he became drowsily conscious that the report of a rifle was fitting itself into his dreams. Too tired after his long march to be much affected by it, he was sleeping peacefully on, when the familiar, hoarse voice of the boatswain roused him effectually.

“Guard, turn out!—All hands on deck; come on, there.”

Sailor-like, he was on his feet and into his boots in a couple of seconds, and was running out, sword in hand, before the cry could be repeated.

“Hy-yah; hy-yah!” someone was shouting; and the boatswain was answering grimly:

“Yes; *we’ll* ‘hy-yah’ ye. Git off’n them horses will ye?”

By the firelight Wise could make out three mounted Indians, a fourth on foot, and, near him, a dead horse that had, no doubt, fallen before the sentry’s rifle. Around them stood his ten sailors, every man with his rifle covering one or other of the redskins; while the trappers, less accustomed to abrupt night-calls, appeared more slowly, rubbing their eyes and cocking their guns.

“Hy-yah! Hy-yah, Mason!” Again the high-pitched nasal voice.

The head trapper, who came stumbling out of his hut, shouted a few words in the Shoshonee dialect, and, immediately after:

“Don’t fire, there; don’t let ’em fire, Mr. Wise; they’ve copped the wrong men. These are friends; Comanches,” and a great laugh from the trappers echoed over the camp.

“I challenged ’em first,” said the sentry who had fired. “How was *I* to know who they was?”

Mason, the chief trapper, spoke for a moment or two with the redskin who had hailed him; then signed to him and his companions to take their seats by the fire.

“Stop here, Lootenant, will you? They want to have a bit of a palaver with us.”

As they dismounted, Wise could see that the Comanches were tall, well-made men, very different from the Creeks and Choctaws of the Atlantic coast. All had moccasins, and three of them wore sleeveless jackets of leather; while the fourth was habited in a magnificent “buffalo” robe. Each had either the tail of a polecat or a bunch of leather snippings in lieu of it, tied to either heel; the front half of their moccasins was painted blue, the other half red. But what struck the officer most forcibly was the remarkable thickness and length of the Indians’ hair, which descended almost to their heels. Alas for human vanity; three parts of those tresses were false; their own hair and somebody else’s, together with a liberal supply of horses’ tails, were all matted together with fat, and secured at the top by their feather head-dresses.

Mason approached the subject in curt, business-like fashion, rapidly translating to the rest all that the Indians said, and cutting very short the embroideries, formalities, and courtesy-titles contained in their address. It appeared that Comanche scouts had reported a march of the Apaches towards their own camp; they were several hundred strong, and were coming across country from the Rio del Norte direction.

“Last time we drove them away with great slaughter,” continued the Comanche chief; “but they are more now, and many of them have guns; they are more confident too, for our scouts learn that they have inflicted a great defeat on white men.”

“Ask him whereabouts,” said Wise hurriedly.

“In Sonora, it is understood.”

“Surely he doesn’t expect us to join him?” muttered Wise.

“No; no sich thing. He’s only come to say he’s moving his camp from the Buonaventura, so that we mustn’t rely on help from his tribe as heretofore, until they’ve met and whipped the Apaches. His tribe have always been the best o’ friends with us. Say, it’ll *be* a battle; not a make-believe; but bear in mind what I said; keep out’n it.”

“If these Apaches are coming from the del Norte, they’ll probably not be the same as the ones we expect.”

“Never no tellings; they’re here to-day, and goodness knows where to-morrow.”

“Then I’ll stay as long as I said,” answered the lieutenant; and he went back to finish his night’s rest.

When he turned out in the morning the Comanches had long gone and the trappers were discussing plans, some advocating going about their work as usual, since the seamen were there to guard the camp; the rest insisting that both parties ought to lie hidden within the camp and give it the appearance of being entirely deserted. As the Apaches, being mounted, would have such an enormous advantage, whether in the open field or in eluding pursuit, Wise and Mason decided upon the latter course, and positions were being assigned to the men, when, all in a moment, a dozen rifles blazed out from beyond the edge of the clearing; bullets rattled against the huts, and two of the trappers fell back wounded.

A roar of vengeance rose from all except the sailors, who, catching their officer’s eye, at once sent an answering volley among the trees.

“They’re on foot,” screamed one trapper as he snatched up his gun and ran like a madman across the clearing. “Come on, boys; there they go.”

“Fall in,” said Wise shortly; then turned to Mason. “This is a bad business for you chaps—but we must go to work in a proper fashion. You can spot their trail better than we; go on, we’ll follow you.”

With the exception of the delirious person who had already gone in pursuit, the trappers collected in an orderly manner, each man swiftly examining his stock of ammunition and snatching up whatever food lay to hand; and all were ready to start at a sign from Mason.

The noisy man was soon caught up with, bidden to hold his tongue and go back to attend to his two wounded comrades, and the chase began in good earnest. Every trapper had his special business to attend to, for the trail of each Indian had to be discovered, and, from the fact that all the twelve men were soon following a separate course, Wise gathered that the redskins had more or less dispersed in their flight. He merely occupied himself with keeping his men together, and as nearly as possible in touch with all of the trappers. For half an hour they proceeded at an easy trot, and so came to a long, narrow pool. Mason gave a single whistle and stopped, and everyone closed in on him.

“Strangers,” he murmured. His mates knew what he meant. The redskins had halted here in doubt about the depth; the stillness of the water showed that it had not been disturbed recently, and the trail proved that they had turned both left and right. “Three of you cross; if you don’t signal in two minutes we shall divide and follow both trails.”

The men knew well enough that just here the pool was but five feet deep at the very most, and three of them ran through it. Mason took out his watch, and, just after the final second had expired, a whistle was heard ahead. The main trail had been found. With their guns held high above their heads, the Yankees slid down the bank and crossed the water, and the double began again.

“Without they’ve got horses waiting for ’em, this looks like a ‘find,’” said Mason over his shoulder. “We shall come slap on to the prairie this way; and that’s as level as a billiard-table for nigh on ten miles; and we’ve gained a rare big pull in crossing the pond.”

It was as he had said; in about another half-hour the forest came to an abrupt end.

“There they go,” shouted one excitable man; and this time a cheer rose from the sailors. The Indians, twelve of them, were scarcely a mile away, walking and running by turns, and to all appearances beginning to knock up, though they made a fresh spurt at sight of their pursuers.

The lieutenant now felt himself in a difficult position. These trappers had seen two of their friends shot down—perhaps killed—only an hour or so ago; and, though the average man of Anglo-Saxon blood (save him of cheap and nasty melodrama) is far too manly a fellow to be able to nourish revenge for an indefinite period, he may be a dangerous customer while the memory of a grievance is still fresh. Wise badly wanted the fugitives’ muskets; he wanted to arrest the owners of them; if need were, to hang them, in requital of their murderous attack; but he did not want to see them riddled with bullets and hacked with bowie-knives by men wild with passion.

“I think you’d better leave this to us now,” he whispered to Mason, who was a man open to reason. The old trapper shook his head, however.

“I wish I could,” he said, “but it’s no use trying. They’ve got a good many old scores against the varmints, and this one coming atop—Wal!”

“Then it’s going to be a race,” said the lieutenant, with decision; and he bade his men quicken their double, in the faint hope of their being able to outrun the trappers. But, as things turned out, the difficulty was removed from his hands. For some few minutes he had noticed a thick mass of moving figures across the plain some distance farther to the left than the point for which the Indians were making. At first he had taken them for cattle; but, on closer inspection, he saw that they were mounted men. He pointed them out to Mason, who was now twenty yards behind.

“Yes; I see ’em,” he shouted. “It’s a battle; Comanches and Apaches, I count.”

In the sailors’ excitement they almost forgot the objects of their pursuit, though these were again showing unmistakable signs of breaking down.

“Now, lads; one good spurt and we’ll be within range,” said Wise. “Never mind about what’s going on over there.”

But it was not in human nature not to watch what could be seen of the combat; Wise himself could not resist the temptation; one side was already taking flight, shooting at their pursuers as they went; and the two forces formed, with Wise’s men, two converging lines which would very soon meet.

“The Apaches have had enough; they’re making for the mountains, and this here other lot of reptiles’ll get away on the first horses they can come near,” shouted Mason from behind.

In a few minutes the first of the Indian forces was only half a mile away from the sailors’ line of march. No doubt they had come to the hopeless stage in Indian warfare; the stage at which all arrows or bullets have been shot away and it is a question either of close fighting—for which they have neither strength nor stomach—or of flight. But, strangely enough, the Indians on foot made no attempt to join their brethren; instead, they wheeled more than ever to the right.

For the next few minutes, things were little more than a confused blur to Wise; the dust was flying; he scarcely knew one party from the other; he was bewildered by the yelling of both, and by the lightning speed at which pursued and pursuers moved; in fact, he knew nothing definitely till a shout of triumph arose from the trappers behind.

“*Got ’em!*”

The Comanches, abandoning the hope of overtaking their enemy, had wheeled suddenly, and closed round the twelve scattering Apaches who were on foot.

“Guess it’s out of our hands now, anyway,” said Wise to the boatswain. Just then two of the Comanches turned their horses and cantered up to the sailors; at the same time the trappers joined them from behind, impelled by curiosity; and Wise heard old Mason talking with one of the men who had entered the camp the night before.

“He says, does the young white chief—that’s *you*, gov’nor—want them Mexicans? If not, they calculate *they* can find a use for ’em.”

“*Mexicans?*” said Wise.

“Ay; what do ye think of ’em? Mexican spies and gun-runners, dressed and painted up as Apaches, as I’m a sinner. If we’d had a redskin with us he’d ha’ seen through ’em in a jiff.”

The pseudo-Apaches were soon bound and, despite the protest of the trappers, taken in charge by Wise, who handed them over to the first military picket he met. They were one of the many parties sent out by the Mexicans to steal guns, ammunition, horses, and information, and had visited the trappers’ camp that morning in the hope of making a haul of weapons. Finding it garrisoned they had run away again, venting their disappointment in a hasty volley at the men who wore the Government uniform, secure, as they flattered themselves, from pursuit through the trappers’ having no horses. Lieutenant Wise had many more exciting adventures before that war was ended, but these did not again bring him in touch with the warfare of redskins, whether genuine or sham.

CHAPTER XIII

WITH THE AYMARAS AND MOXOS

There is no part of the American continent, save perhaps Guatemala (and, of course, the Arctic Regions), where the Indian race has survived in such power and—relatively—such numbers as in Bolivia. At the last census, the entire population of the republic was two millions, and of that number the whites, blacks, and half-bloods together amounted to less than three hundred thousand. The coast Indians belong mainly to the Colla (more commonly called Aymara) tribe of the Quechuan family, and, unlike the average redskin, are square and squat in build; long in the arms and body and short in the legs; many of them have passed their lives entirely on the mountains and have never seen a lowland river or town.

In Bolivia there is no British Consulate, for Britishers there are almost as rare as Samoyeds; but as a rule there is some semi-official *chargé d'affaires* in residence. From 1848 to 1855 this office was filled by a young Englishman of Italian extraction—Hugh de Bonelli; and much of that time he passed exclusively among Indians; hunting, sight-seeing, mountaineering, and collecting natural history specimens.

In mixing among the Aymaras, one of the first things he discovered was that, though himself an exceptionally good walker, he was a baby at such exercise when pitted against them. While staying at a native village on Lake Titicaca, he expressed a wish to visit a spot rather less attractive than the Sahara—the Atacama Desert, to wit, which lies between the coast and the Andes. Plenty of men were willing to guide him, though they cautioned him that they could not be spared for more than a day or two, because a general meeting of the tribe was about to take place. Now as the lake lies more than twelve thousand feet above the sea-level, and when this prodigious descent had been made, there would be several miles to traverse on foot, he wisely abandoned the project. Nevertheless, being curious to test the truth of the reports he had heard as to their long walks, he accompanied a party of Aymaras who were bound for the far end of the lake with loads of silver.

They started at sunrise, and the mountain air being deliciously cool, he was not at first incommoded by the pace at which they went. But that pace was five miles an hour!

He kept up easily the first two hours, and, with considerably more difficulty, the second two; five miles in one hour, and twenty in four hours, are however, not quite the same thing; and when he had walked the twenty-second mile, he was ready to drop from fatigue and hunger. Yet they showed no signs of being about to stop; and conversation was not easy, for only one of the number understood Spanish, and that very scantily; the language of the Aymaras being almost pure Quechuan, i.e. the tongue of the ancient Incas, who founded their wonderful empire when we English were vainly endeavouring to ward off invasion by the Normans. He explained that he was both tired and hungry, and, at last growing desperate, inquired where he could get a mule. Happily that article was obtainable at a village which they were now approaching, and, his curiosity thoroughly aroused as to how far they intended going, he ambled on after them (for they had not deigned to stop while he concluded his bargain), caught them, and kept up with them, though he was now almost too stiff to sit his mule and too tired to enjoy the food which he had brought with him.

The thirty-fifth mile was reached before those energetic Indians stopped, and de Bonelli wished he had with him some of the people who make the sweeping statement that “all Indians are lazy.” He expected to see them bivouac for at least a couple of hours; instead of this, not one man sat down; all stood or lounged, as though they knew by instinct that the walker who allows his muscles to relax completely is doubling the strain of the after walk; and the standing only lasted long enough to enable them to eat their meal—twenty minutes at the outside. Then on again. *Seventy miles* did these indolent wretches walk between sunrise and sunset, only stopping for that one brief meal. It sounds incredible, but even greater distances are stated, on the best authority, to have been covered by members of this wonderful tribe.

De Bonelli found a contrast when, after some weeks’ condor and wild-cat shooting in the mountains, he descended to the lowlands and moved for a while among the Moxos of the Beni River. A member of this tribe had come up to Titicaca, as ambassador from his cacique, to treat for the barter of copper and turtle-oil for mountain silver; and the inquiring traveller was glad to engage him as a guide to the Lower Beni, which he was anxious to trace as far as its junction with the Mamore, the chief feeder of the Madeira River.

De Bonelli was bound to admit that the Moxo was to be preferred as a companion; he was chatty, light-hearted, and witty, whereas the Aymaras had a sort of Puritan austerity and were devoid of sense of humour; he spoke Spanish and they did not; and further, he considered twenty miles—with a four hours’ siesta between the two tens—an ample day’s walk. Better still, on the fourth day he produced a canoe from a cunning hiding-place among the undergrowth by the river, and thenceforward the journey became a luxurious holiday; for the woods on either bank were, to all intents and purposes, orchards, the fish was delicious and easily caught, and the Moxo guide kept the boat well supplied with venison and peccary-pork.

The Indian’s destination was a large village about fifty miles from the Brazilian frontier, and, as the canoe drew near to it, de Bonelli observed that they were continually overtaking or being overtaken by other canoes; not tiny boats, manned singly or by twos, such as he had seen higher up the river, but large family concerns; houseboats, literally; for everyone carried a family and all the cooking utensils, tools, weapons, toys, etc., that it might require.

“It is the great egg-gathering,” said the Moxo enthusiastically.

“Do you mean that the whole tribe is turning out to go bird’s-nesting?” asked the white man with good-humoured contempt.

“Our birds are water-birds, with houses on their backs,” laughed the Indian. “Turtles!”

“Even then I shouldn’t have thought several hundred people were required to take the eggs.”

“You shall judge presently, Señor. The cacique was sending out the order for the people to collect when I left. No one may touch the eggs till he grants permission.”

They found the Indian village overflowing with detachments of new arrivals. De Bonelli was introduced to the cacique, who was so overjoyed by the present of a silver-mounted pistol that he was ready to place the whole town and its resources at his visitor’s feet.

“Pray stay among us as long as you will,” he said. “Our egg-taking begins to-morrow and will last for about a week; but, after that, I and my tribe will be at your service, and I can promise you better hunting than you have seen with the gloomy Aymaras.”

The noise in and around the village aroused the traveller at an early hour in the morning, and he strolled

out from his tent to survey the neighbourhood. Since the previous night the village had swelled to four times its size; for on every side pyramidal tents had been erected by the simple process of sticking three poles in the ground, sloping so that the tops met, and covering the spaces between the poles with mats made of grass or palm-leaves. The cacique was already at breakfast, which he begged his guest to share; and, when it was finished, he said:

“You will do me the favour to ride in my canoe. Then you will be able to see all my people at once.”

They proceeded to the water-edge and found all the tribe—nearly two hundred men with their wives and children—seated in canoes and impatiently awaiting their chief’s arrival as the signal to start. The moment he and his guest were embarked, a great shout went up and paddling began with a will, the canoes moving at such a rate that the journey to the “turtle-ground,” five miles away, seemed to occupy no time. Arrived here the chief’s paddlers drew in and he and de Bonelli landed, the tribe following in due order of importance.

As an amateur naturalist the chargé d’affaires knew something of the habits of the turtle, but he was not prepared for many things which he saw that day. Turtles seldom lay their eggs immediately by the water; as often as not they choose a place half a mile or more away from it. In this case the row of “nests” took the form of a long sand-bank which lay between two fringes of trees, and this, the traveller learned, had been stealthily and jealously watched by spies from the village for some weeks past, so that there could be no mistaking the spot. Behind the cacique walked a man with a drum, and, as soon as the bank was reached, a short “call” was beaten and all the men, every one carrying a paddle, collected round him. The chief made a short speech, enjoining patience, industry, and good temper, and then began to portion off the bank among the men, each family thus being entitled to whatever they might find in their patch.

The reader is probably aware that the turtle, like many other reptiles, deposits her eggs in the ground, and carefully covers them with sand or soft earth. Through this covering the fierce sun of the tropics can easily penetrate, and in a short time—if left alone—the young are hatched. And what a family! One to two hundred eggs, and sometimes more, are laid by this prolific creature.^[2] When every man had taken up his station at his “claim,” his wife and children went and stood at the other side of the bank opposite him, and everyone waited breathlessly for the signal to begin; for etiquette forbade the stirring of a single egg till the cacique had formally opened the patch which belonged to him. He made a sign to the drummer, who handed him a paddle, with which he turned over a spadeful of earth. Immediately there followed a long roll of the drum, and every man struck his paddle into the ground and began to dig.

De Bonelli could scarcely believe his eyes; the place seemed alive with turtle-eggs; yellowish, globular objects considerably larger than a golf-ball, with a soft but very tough shell. As fast as a “nest” was turned out by the digger, his wife and children collected the eggs, throwing them into bags, baskets, or copper pots; and, by evening, the canoes were so full that it was a wonder how the families stowed themselves away.

The return journey was like the home-coming of a party of hop-pickers, for jubilation and noise, the only difference being that these benighted Moxos were perfectly sober, and that their singing consisted mainly of hymns in a mixture of Spanish, native dialect, and truly barbarous Latin, instead of music-hall songs. On reaching the village each family carried its share of eggs to its tent and piled them up outside, and a feast of some of these delicacies followed, recalling the “herring-breakfasts” in which the more old-fashioned of our fishermen indulge at the opening of the season.

The next day the digging was continued, though no opening ceremony was observed, each man beginning when he thought fit; and this went on for five days, most of which time de Bonelli spent in teaching the cacique the use of firearms—a task which he would probably better have left undone—and in shooting jaguars and alligators. The sixth day was passed in the village, for the eggs were now all gathered and all the tribe were busy converting their eggs into oil.

Large copper tanks were filled with the eggs; those Indians who had come from a distance and could not borrow tanks, borrowed small canoes for the purpose, which seemed to do equally well; and the owners set to work to break the eggs, which they did by beating them with sticks, stones, paddles, or anything that came handy. In some cases the younger men and boys jumped into the tank and danced on them, as though they were treading a wine-press; and by and by the various receptacles were half full of a dirty yellow mash. The women now came toiling up from the river-bank with pots of water, which they poured into the tanks till the mixture rose nearly to the top.

By this time the dinner and siesta-hour had come round, and the tanks were left to take care of themselves; good care, too, thought de Bonelli, as he walked round, an hour or two later, with the chief. While the workers slept, the sun had done their work for them; had warmed the tanks, freed the oleaginous particles contained in the eggs, and now the top of every tank was several inches deep in oil, which the Indians were preparing to skim off and bale into their cooking-pots; the skimming being done by means of large shells. By evening the whole village was dotted with small fires over which hung pots of oil; and the oil, thus clarified, was ultimately poured into earthenware pots, corked up, and ready to be exported to the towns for use in lamps, or carried up the river and across country to the hills, where the Aymaras were willing to pay high prices in silver for a product which could be used for fuel, light, or even food.

CHAPTER XIV

A SPORTING TRIP ACROSS THE PRAIRIES

There is nothing extraordinary to the English reader in a man's making a sixteen-hundred-mile journey across lonesome prairies and mountain-ranges, where railways are almost unknown and fierce tribes of savages abound, merely for the sake of shooting big game; for if we do not take our pleasures sadly, we at least are proud to devote to our sports as much energy and self-discipline as another nation would bestow on its politics or monetary interests.

After a good deal of rambling through the eastern States, Mr. Henry Coke, brother of the second Earl of Leicester, found himself wandering one morning, in the year 1850, about the streets of St. Louis, already sickened of town life and eager for something more wholesome and natural. Generally it is only in story-books that a happy coincidence suddenly arises to help a man out of a difficulty; but real life also has its chance meetings and its odd bits of luck, and so Mr. Coke thought when, on turning a corner, he found his arm seized by an old Cambridge chum of whom he had heard nothing for three years.

"Why, man, what are you doing here?" he demanded.

"Packing up. I'm off for the Columbia River to-morrow, salmon-fishing. You'd better come and make a sixth; I'm travelling with four Canadian chaps; everything's arranged: horses, waggons, mules, stores, and even a redskin guide."

There was no resisting such a temptation, especially as Coke had never been farther west than Kansas City, had only caught salmon in Norway and Scotland, had never seen a bison or a grisly except in a show, and had never met with any Indians who were not perfectly respectable and law-abiding. Therefore he never dreamt of hesitating, but hastened away to make a few necessary purchases, and, the next morning, presented himself at his friends' inn, where he found nine mules, eight riding-horses, and two waggons drawn up, and his friend's valet vainly endeavouring to get into conversation with a particularly morose-looking Indian who sat on the front-board of one of the waggons.

The early days of the journey were occupied by the sportsmen, as such days generally are, in getting to know one another and in settling down to a novel mode of life. The young Canadians were the sons of a wealthy stock-breeder and were taking a year's furlough in order to see the States; and no more valuable companions could have been found; for, if they were ignorant of the route, there was not much left for them to learn where prairie and forest life and the ways of Indians and wild beasts were concerned. For the first week or so the party managed each night to put up at some wayside inn or farm; but they no sooner came on to the wilds of Kansas than the mere aspect of the country was sufficient to tell them that they had probably bidden good-bye to eastern civilisation. The way that now lay before them, if seen from a balloon, would have looked like a gigantic staircase whose treads sloped slightly upwards and whose uprights were low, ragged-faced bluffs that seemed to hint at the advisability of abandoning the waggons as henceforth useless, and teaching the horses and mules to take flying ten-foot jumps. The guide, however, seemed fairly confident in his ability to find suitable inclines, and at least for some fifty miles they were able to follow a very rough track that was a guide in itself.

But the Indian—one of the Crow tribe—grew more sullen and silent and discontented as each new platform of ground was reached; so much so, that George Dumont, the eldest of the Canadians, who was perfectly familiar with the Siouan tongue, began to question him closely as to the cause of his grumbling demeanour.

“It is no use trying to go any farther,” said the Crow moodily. “The next bluff is quite impassable.”

“Then why didn’t you say so before we left St. Louis?”

The Indian shelved the question. “And even if it were not, the country here is full of Comanches and Pawnees and Shoshonees. Did I not warn you of *that*?”

“Oh, if that’s all,” said the Canadian, laughing, “don’t frighten yourself. They won’t hurt us.”

The Indian shrugged his shoulders and said no more; but presently he stood up on the footboard and, attracting Dumont’s attention, pointed triumphantly to a bluff about a furlong ahead, which had been hitherto concealed by a ridge of rising ground dotted with pine-trees. Coke, who had been riding some way in advance with his friend, now hurried back to Dumont’s side.

“What do you make of this?” he said, pointing to the bluff. “Fred’s ridden off to the right to try and find a slope, and I’m just off the opposite way.”

Dumont rode with him as far as the obstruction and examined it more carefully; it was a sheer precipice, twelve feet high.

“Right you are,” he said. “Try and find a slope, and I’ll wait here for the other fellows.”

Two hours later the men met again; the two scouts had ridden ten miles along the cliff-foot either way, only to find that there was no spot where the waggons could possibly be raised. Meanwhile, two of the Dumonts had scooped footholds for themselves and climbed to the higher level, which they pronounced to be a beautiful grass plain, studded with little conical hills; and by the aid of a telescope they had seen large herds of bison going on ahead towards the Platte River.

“Then we must go on,” said Coke, “even if we have to haul the waggons after us, or cut a roadway.”

The others were of the same mind, but the sun had just set, and whatever their plans might be, they would have to stand over till to-morrow. The fire was lit and all were sitting down to supper when someone asked:

“Where’s the redskin?”

The redskin had gone, bag and baggage (someone else’s baggage).

“Why, he’s collared your new gun, Coke,” shouted Fred, who had jumped up into the waggon in which the Indian had ridden and was making a hurried search, “And—whew! my little valise as well.”

The gun was a large-bore rifle of a new pattern, which Coke had only obtained with difficulty at the last moment; but even this theft, annoying as it was, was of minor importance compared with the disappearance of the valise, which contained all such maps and charts as its owner had been able to procure, some money, and his letters of introduction to people in Washington and across the boundary.

“Mounted or on foot?” asked Paul Dumont, the youngest of the brothers.

“Horses and mules all here, sir,” reported the manservant after a brisk look round.

“Then come on, Coke; up with you,” said young Paul. “We’ll have him,” and taking the two best of the horses, they were soon galloping along the path by which they had come. In a few minutes they were past

the ridge with its little belt of trees, beyond which all was plain sailing—or would have been if only the light could have lasted a little longer; for here was only a treeless, imperceptibly sloping plain where even an Indian could scarcely hope to conceal himself.

“Fellow must be a perfect ass to think he could get away from us here,” said Coke. “There you are; there goes the gentleman.”

A couple of miles ahead was a dark, moving dot, evidently the Indian trotting along at a good round pace.

“Ass enough to know that there’s precious little twilight now, at any rate,” said Paul ruefully, as he urged on his horse. “And there’s no moon till after midnight.”

They rode the next mile in silence, and, at the end of it, were no longer able to distinguish the fleeing figure with any degree of certainty. In another few minutes they were at the spot where they had first seen the Indian, but there was hardly enough light for even the keen-sighted Canadian to detect any trail.

“It’s no use thinking of giving up,” he said. “We must have the bag if we ride all night for it.”

Again they spurred the horses to a gallop, peering all the while on either side of them; and in this manner they covered another few miles. Farther than this the Indian could not possibly have gone in the time.

“Better divide, and prowl round,” said Coke. “Fire a pistol if you see anything, and I’ll do the same.”

He rode away at a gentle trot, pausing now and then to listen. After half an hour of this he heard the pop of a pistol a good way behind him, yet distinct enough in the silent night air. Wheeling round, he looked steadily before him in the hope of seeing the flash of a second report. This came after a few seconds, and he at once responded to it.

But even before he saw the flash he had noticed something else of far more importance: a little glow of flame on the ground a few miles away, somewhere about in the direction which Dumont had started to follow. And now, coming towards him, was the steady thud of a horse’s hoofs.

“That you, Paul?”

“Ay; come on,” sounded from a mounted figure that was beginning to stand out indistinctly against the blue-black of the sky. The two young men were soon together again, and Dumont pointed towards the flame.

“Redskins. Thought I’d better come back and meet you first.”

“How many?”

“I could make out three. They couldn’t hear my shots with the wind this way; I didn’t hear yours; only saw the flash. Now for a little bit of spying. Are you well loaded up?”

They were soon within a pistol-shot of the fire, in the light of which shone the bodies of three Indians, naked as far as the waist. The Englishman’s heart beat with excitement, for as yet he had never been so close to Indians who were real savages. A few more steps and then the Indians, not to be taken altogether by surprise, sprang erect and stood with bowstrings stretched.

“Pawnees, I think,” said Dumont, reining up. He shouted some words in the Siouan dialect, and was answered by what seemed to Coke merely a series of grunts.

Again the Canadian spoke, and on receiving a brief reply moved on again.

“Come on,” he said triumphantly. “They’ve got him; they’ve got our man.”

As the two white men, stiff and hungry, got down from their saddles, the Pawnees advanced cautiously to

meet them, their bows still bent. Paul, however, made some masonic motions with his hands which were understood as meaning peace, and each returned his arrow to his quiver.

A conversation began which, to the Englishman, was very much worse than any Greek, and so gave him leisure to look about him. Now that his eyes had become accustomed to the glare of the fire, the first thing he saw clearly was the runaway guide, bound so tightly with thongs that the poor creature could not move an inch. Near him lay the stolen rifle and his friend's valise, the latter disgorging papers through an opening which had been slashed along one side of it.

Regardless of a murmur of protest from the savages, young Dumont picked up the gun and handed it to its owner, and having satisfied himself that none of the papers were missing, strapped the bag across his own shoulder.

"You must pay us for them," said the Pawnees discontentedly.

"Yes, yes; all right. Come to our camp in the morning, and we'll give you what is reasonable. What do you propose doing with this man?"

"We shall take him to our camp."

"I'll swear you shan't," said Dumont in English; for he knew what sort of mercy a trespassing Crow might expect from the Pawnees.

"Tell them we'll fight them or we'll buy the chap of them, which they like," said Coke, when the position was explained to him.

A debate followed in which Paul showed himself a shrewd bargainer. He and Coke totted up their available assets, and eventually about a quarter of a pint of whisky, a penknife, a steel watch-chain, and four or five shillings' worth of small silver were offered as the Crow's ransom, and accepted, much to the astonishment of Coke, who, in his innocence, had been about to add a valuable ring and a pair of pocket-pistols to the purchase-money. He stooped and cut the prisoner's bonds, and that worthy, in obedience to a threatening hint from Dumont, fled into the darkness.

The Indians were amicably inclined, and not only shared their supper of broiled deer's meat with the travellers, but agreed to call for them at the camp in the morning and lead them to a point where the waggons could easily be drawn up to the higher platform; and on this good understanding the young men rode away. The new guides were as good as their word, and appeared on their little mustangs before Coke's party had finished breakfast. They appeared to be one of several small scouting parties sent out from a main camp farther on to gather intelligence as to a reported advance of the Crow Indians against them; and were now returning to their head-quarters beyond the Platte River. Instructed by them, the sportsmen moved along the bluff to a place about three miles farther than Coke had ridden on the previous afternoon; and there found a tolerably easy incline, up which the waggons were soon dragged.

By the side of the first of the hills seen the day before, the noonday halt was made. The Pawnees still continued very friendly, the more so on discovering that nothing but the desire to do battle with bisons and grisly bears had brought the pale-faces so far.

"To-morrow we will show you many bisons," they said; and they certainly kept their promise.

All that afternoon the sportsmen could trace the steady passage north-westwards of herd after herd of the animals; at that distance merely a brown, moving blur; and Coke wondered how the Indians ever proposed to come up with them.

"They will go no farther than the river," said the Pawnees, when questioned.

On the afternoon of the next day, as the little procession came near to another of the mound-like hills, the guides called a halt.

“We are too few to attack a herd,” they said. “We must watch for the stragglers which may be grazing on the slopes. Go very quietly and do not raise your voices. Follow us and leave the waggons here.” They moved on their horses again at a quick walk, and the white men did the same, till they had gone nearly half round the base of the hill, when the Pawnees pulled up with a jerk, and one of them spoke hurriedly to George Dumont, who rode immediately behind the guides.

On the hillside about twenty bisons were grazing; and it seemed the easiest thing in the world to cut them off from the rest of the herd, which, to the number of three or four hundred, were moving slowly towards the river, now plainly to be seen flashing in the far distance.

“Look here,” said George, turning to the Englishmen, and speaking with evident embarrassment. “They mean to make us prove our pretensions to being mighty hunters. Two of them are going round the farther side to keep the bulls from wandering, and this chap is going to captain us. We’ve got to guard the valley and this side of the hill; but as you fellows are new to it—if you’d rather not be in it——”

“Oh, bosh!” said Coke; “we’re going to stand by you and get our share of the fun.”

“Oh—of course; if you feel sure of yourselves. Well; keep an eye open for the game beyond. They have a nasty trick of coming to each other’s assistance.” He made a sign to the two foremost Indians, who galloped away without a word, and were soon invisible behind the loitering bisons. Then the Englishmen saw what sort of sport they were letting themselves in for. They were to stop the probable downward and sideward rush of twenty bulls, killing as many of them as they could, and be prepared at the same time for an attack by the remaining hundreds that, at the first gunshot, might turn on them in a body. Daily, for the past fortnight, both of them had zealously practised shooting with a rifle while at the gallop; but what sort of experience was that to bring to a task which the Canadians, used from boyhood to bison-hunting, admitted was a dangerous one?

Low as the voices had been, the stragglers had heard them and were beginning to look nervously from side to side. Suddenly a white streak darted through the air, and with an awful bellow one of the bisons fell, pierced through the eye by an arrow, and began to roll helplessly down the grassy slope. The remaining Pawnee had drawn first blood. But a second after, the four Canadians brought their guns to the shoulder and fired one after the other; two beasts fell dead and two more showed by their groaning that they were badly wounded.

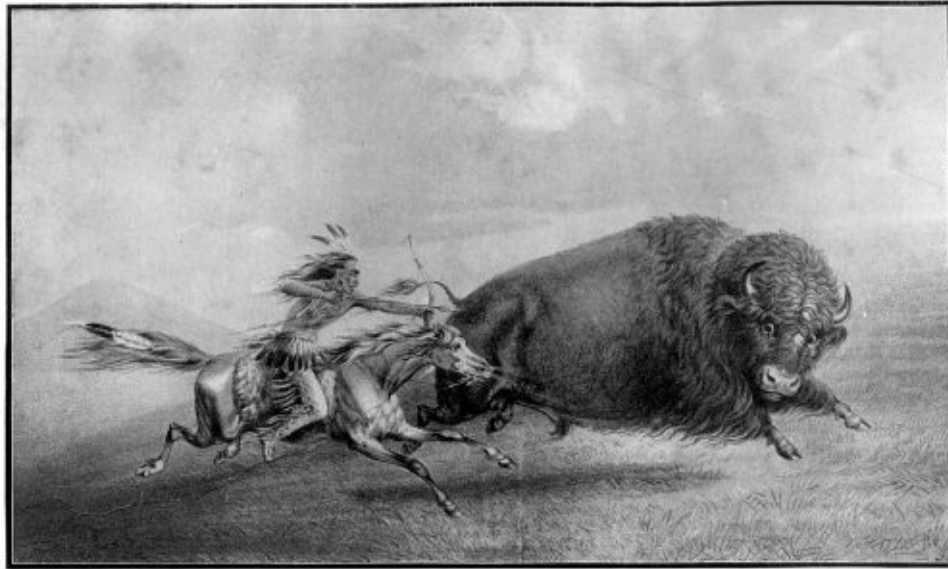
“Here goes,” said Fred; and in another moment he had shot his first bison.

“Get more to your left, or they’ll bolt yet,” shouted Dominique Dumont; and Coke, with an uncomfortable impression that the whole herd was charging upon him from the rear, nevertheless spurred his horse sideways for several yards; then fired at a bull which was endeavouring to flee down the near side of the hill; and with a thrill of pride saw him fall on his knees and then roll over.

The excitement of the hunt was on him now and he thought no more of the herd behind him. Had he looked back he might have seen that alarms on that score were groundless; for, contrary to their usual custom, at the first shot they had fled in a body. But it was their desertion that made the loiterers so determined to escape and rejoin them. Three more of their number had fallen dead or disabled before the arrows of the Pawnees on the farther side, who could now be seen pressing the game more closely; and, at a sign from the other Indian, the party in the valley now spurred up the hill, the six guns all crashing out together.

In despair the remaining bulls sought the only sure escape open to them, and charged up the hill. Fred, the

best mounted of the white men, was soon ahead of the rest, and, deaf to a laughing shout of "Whoa! Don't be in a hurry," from Paul Dumont, was soon on the heels of the biggest of the bison. He had but one barrel loaded; the bullet took the animal in the hindquarters, making him stop and turn. The next thing Fred knew was that he was lying bruised and giddy, on his back, within a very few yards of the maddened brute; for his horse, young and easily confused, had suddenly reared at sight of the monster's motion towards him and had thrown his rider.



ALMOST A TRAGEDY

Fred had fired at the bison, but only hit it in the hind-quarters. It stopped and turned, frightening the horse, which threw its rider within a few yards of the maddened brute. His friends were powerless to help him, but a Pawnee on his wiry little mustang galloped up between them and with a couple of arrows brought the monster down.

Coke had reloaded by this time, but at first his aim was balked by the prancing horse.

"Shoot the confounded horse; he'll kick him to death," yelled George Dumont in his ear, at the same time frantically pushing a cartridge into the empty breech of his own gun; but just then the horse swerved and fled down the hill towards the waggon. The bull, meanwhile, seeing his enemy at his mercy, had paused just for a moment as though to take breath; and now, with his nose to the ground, was making a wild dash towards him.

Coke pulled up, took good aim, and fired; but unluckily, the bullet which was meant for the bison's shoulder caught him on the frontlet, his most hopelessly invulnerable part. The three younger Dumonts, unaware of the accident, were now over the brow and out of sight. George had almost pulled his trigger, when the Pawnee who had been riding near him galloped between him and the bull. The little Indian horse, more used to climbing than the heavily-built hacks of the white men, shot up the slope like a chamois, and, joining his whinny to the rider's howl, flew between the prostrate man and the bull.

Fred, who had been too unnerved for the moment to do anything but try feebly to roll away out of danger, was conscious suddenly of a good deal of clattering close to him; then, looking up, he saw that the bull had turned to flee and that the shaft of an arrow was protruding from his ribs. The bull was struggling up the hill, too startled and confused to attempt to battle with his new assailant, who, in hot pursuit, was sending a second arrow after the first.

"No, no; hang it; let the redskin finish him," said Dumont as Coke made ready to fire again.

The bull did not require much more “finishing.” Already the Indian had wounded him in two places and was getting a third arrow ready for him; and the final rush up-hill, together with loss of blood, was weakening him at every step. The mustang, not to be outraced, was soon abreast of him; and one more arrow from the persevering Indian brought the luckless beast on to his knees.

Mr. Coke and his friend saw and shot a good many bisons after that, but never again one that so nearly turned their trip into a tragedy.

CHAPTER XV

HOW THE YO-SEMITE VALLEY WAS DISCOVERED

Till 1851, the peaks and valleys of the Californian Sierra Nevada were known only as a grim, mysterious region that white men, who valued their lives, would do well not to pry into. Parties of diggers travelling westwards had crossed the range in certain places, but even the strongest bands of them carried their lives in their hands in so doing, for the Snake Indians regarded the whole neighbourhood as their special property. All that was definitely known was that, between the hills, lay deep, uninviting valleys, walled and overhung with granite blocks. The deepest and most picturesque of these, the Yo-Semite, was the great stronghold of the Indian banditti; a cunningly hidden natural fortress whose approaches no stranger would suspect; and it was only by sheer accident that white men ever discovered it.

Only too often, “civilisation” has been another name for importing white men’s most degrading vices into a country whose people could originally have taught the civilisers many a lesson in dignified humility and self-restraint. And in no instance is this more true than in that of the Snake or Shoshonean branch of the Indian race; for whereas, in 1805, the worst complaints that Captains Lewis and Clarke^[3] had to make of them was that they were treacherous and given to pilfering, by 1851 they had already become drunken, lazy highway robbers and gamblers; and for this the white gold-seekers were largely to blame.

On account of the rush of the “forty-niners,” San Francisco and Sacramento had developed, all in five minutes, from mere Spanish market-villages into great, raw, ugly towns or camps, whose principal buildings were drinking and gaming dens and money-brokers’ offices. The Indians stood by and watched, and wondered; and then coveted; for a vulgar tawdriness, that soon became positively idiotic, was to them a world of magnificence—and the gold which paid for it all was derived from their own soil; a wealth which they ought to have been enjoying! They went back to their hill-camps and reported; the matter was pondered and discussed. They could not take San Francisco, but at least they could prevent the white man’s territory from spreading beyond certain limits; and this they determined to do to the best of their ability.

The strangers most likely to be affected by such an attitude were those restless spirits who, dissatisfied with the output of their “claims,” were already wandering farther into the unknown country in search of better ones; and the store and tavern keepers who supplied travellers and the more outlying diggers. Two such stores were the property of a young American named John Savage, a good-hearted, respectable fellow, who, because he was wise enough to ignore little thefts on the part of his Indian neighbours, yet man enough to hit out uncompromisingly if necessary, was very popular among the redskins; and this popularity he increased by marrying an Indian girl. He, his wife, and his mother conducted the store at Mariposa Creek, while that on the Fresno River was left in charge of a manager and two assistants.

Every evening a crowd of Snake Indians would collect outside Savage’s house, or in the store, and while he smoked a friendly pipe with them, he was sometimes able to gauge their feelings towards the fresh inhabitants of the tiny settlement, whose number was steadily increasing. The chief of the Snakes was one José Jerez, a comparatively young man, who certainly had not benefited by contact with white men. Bit by

bit this brave had succeeded in supplying most of his tribe with muskets; but ammunition was not so easy to obtain. Savage had, from the beginning, firmly refused to supply the Indians with powder; and now that San Francisco was becoming a power in the land, few of them dared enter it to make purchases, lest some of their tribe's recent depredations should be visited on them. Thus Jerez was dependent on what ammunition he could bully or steal or wheedle from passing travellers or raw new-comers.

One evening Savage noticed that the group of idlers were less chatty and civil than usual; in fact, they pointedly conversed with one another in their own dialect, of which they knew him to be ignorant, instead of in the broken English which they generally employed. This so aroused his suspicions that he ordered his wife to play the part of eavesdropper, and to report anything of a dangerous nature.

The talk turned on the Indians' grievances, real or imaginary. Their fishing and hunting had been encroached upon, they said; the pale-faces were enriching themselves out of land that belonged to them, and giving them nothing in return; not so much as a bag of gunpowder; and the miners would never be satisfied till they had driven them up to the barren mountain-tops.

When Savage had learned the gist of the conversation, his mind was soon made up. He had to drive into San Francisco on the following day for fresh stores, and it occurred to him that if he offered Jerez a seat in his waggon, and a day's sight-seeing, he would not only be restoring the chief to good humour, but would have an opportunity of showing that gentleman the numerical strength of the white men, and the folly of interfering with people who might deal out some very unwelcome chastisement.

Jerez and another brave joyfully accepted the invitation, and at daybreak the waggon drove off. On the way Savage did his best, by means of quiet hints, to show his two guests that it is always wise to put up with what one cannot alter; and that Indian notions of wholesale bloodshed would not "pay" with white men. In San Francisco he hammered this lesson home by taking them to see the volunteers at target-practice, and pointing out one or two pieces of artillery that had been imported. The chiefs were decidedly impressed, and, seeing them in such a satisfactory frame of mind, Savage conducted them to the inn where he purposed staying the night and went about his purchases.

Left to themselves, each found the dollar which Savage had given him burning a hole in his pocket. Not daring to venture into the streets by themselves, they spent the money at the bar, and so effectually that, when their entertainer returned, both were very drunk and very quarrelsome. Savage remonstrated mildly, whereupon both grew abusive and threatening. In order to avoid an unpleasant scene, he went down the yard to the outbuilding where he was to sleep; but before he had lain down, both redskins sought him out for a renewal of the argument. Savage pointed to the apartment reserved for them, and recommended them to go to it; and their answer was a further torrent of threats, which they emphasised by brandishing their knives. No one with the spirit of a man in him cares to see a knife brought into a discussion or fight; John Savage expressed his personal views on the matter by hammering both his antagonists with his fists till they were glad to retreat to their bedroom.

In the morning they were sullen and silent, but Savage took no notice of this; he finished his marketing, and then returned to the inn to put in his horses and take up the Indians. Still they would not speak, and, disliking their demeanour, the Yankee very ostentatiously loaded a pair of pistols with ball, and stuck them in his belt before joining the others on the front-board. At a house a mile or two out of the town he stopped to deliver a parcel; he was not away from the waggon five minutes, but when he returned, Jerez and his companion had vanished.

Savage was aghast, for there was but one construction to be placed upon their disappearance: they wanted to reach Mariposa Creek before him. For what purpose would scarcely bear thinking of. They were familiar with every inch of the country, while he only knew the cart-track—a road cut purposely zigzag

that the worst of the hills might be avoided; the average rate of his horses could hardly exceed six miles an hour on such a road, while the Indians could easily run eight; he had thirty miles to drive, and ought to give the horses at least one rest; they had scarcely eighteen miles before them, if they went in a straight line, and would easily accomplish in three hours a journey that usually took him six.

He lashed the horses without mercy; already he was picturing his wife and mother killed, and his home in flames; for the Indians would probably reach Mariposa in the early afternoon, a time when no diggers would be likely to be within a mile of the store. He gave no further thought to food for himself, or bait or rest for the horses. Twice he saw, or fancied that he saw, two figures hurrying over the hills to the southeast; he only drove the harder, trying might and main to sit on his fears and laugh at himself for being frightened of a couple of redskins. Unhappily, he knew all too well that it was not just "a couple of redskins" who had to be taken into account. During the past six months, seven such stores as his had been plundered and burnt by a strong posse of Snakes; and Jerez could, without difficulty, collect the best part of a hundred men at an hour's notice.

Hours and miles slipped by; the horses behaved like bricks, never once stumbling and apparently never tiring. As always happens in such a case, the last mile seemed as long as all the rest together; the road here was a steady wind, so that the driver could never see more than a hundred yards ahead of him; for on either side of the track was dense forest. At last he came in sight of his home, and then, like a boy, he stood up on the footboard and vented his feelings in a delighted "Hurrah!" For everything was in its normal condition; the cattle and horses grazing in the pound; the poultry in the roadway, and his women-folk gossiping cheerily with a couple of diggers under the verandah.

So far nothing had been heard of the Indians, and, after a rest and a meal, Savage began to feel heartily ashamed of his terrors. But, that night, either a remarkable coincidence or a very ominous event took place. For the first time in two years, the store was entirely deserted by Indians; not a single Shoshonee looked in for an evening's chat. The next night it was the same, and the next after that. On the fourth night the proprietor arrived at a conclusion.

"It's a boycott," he said; "and I'm not sorry a little bit; we shall be better off without 'em."

"Maybe they've boycotted the country as well as the store," said a loitering digger. "For none of our boys have clapped eyes on a Injun since you come back from 'Frisco."

"So much the better; 'cause to-morrow's audit day, and the old lady goes to the river for her little jaunt." On the first of every month, either Savage or his mother drove over to the store at Fresno River to examine accounts, pay wages, and bring back the "takings." On this occasion the young man felt himself in an awkward dilemma; on the one hand dreading to be absent from his store, on the other not at all satisfied that his mother might not be attacked on the way by revengeful Indians.

The old lady, however, always looked forward to such an outing as a welcome break in the monotony of her life at the Creek, and would not be baulked of her treat; though, in the morning, she consented to take Sam, a reliable negro servant, as escort. The Fresno River store was but a four hours' drive distant; and she ought to be able to return soon after dark came on, at latest.

In the middle of the day a digger rushed excitedly into the store. He had just returned from a "claim" six miles away, whither he had gone to compare some quartz.

"Where's all the boys? Not knocked off for the noon spell yet?" he cried.

"Some of 'em'll soon be round," said Savage, who was alone in the store. "What's the trouble?"

"Trouble 'nough. The redskins have come down on First Creek, killed a dozen of 'em, and cleared out

with all the powder an' nuggets they could see their way to handling."

Savage turned pale; First Creek was on the direct road to his other store.

"Where are they got to now?" he gasped.

"Lord knows. It was a nigger as told me, just afore he died; he seen it all, an' got one o' their bullets into him. All the rest of the diggers have made tracks for 'Frisco, to fetch out the volunteers. Never had a chance, so the nigger said. There was 'most three hundred o' the reptiles, an' not more'n twenty of our boys, an' all of 'em took by surprise; shot down afore they could pick up their guns."

Savage gave the frightened man a drink of spirits, then said resolutely:

"See an' muster as many o' the boys as ye can.—Here come some of 'em. Tell the others if they don't wipe off this score, our lives won't be worth a cent out here. My poor old mother's over at the other store, and I'm off to fetch her back."

Within half an hour fifty diggers had been collected, and, after a brief discussion, it was arranged that forty of them should accompany Savage on horseback while the others guarded the store, which, just now, was less likely to be attacked than the more distant one.

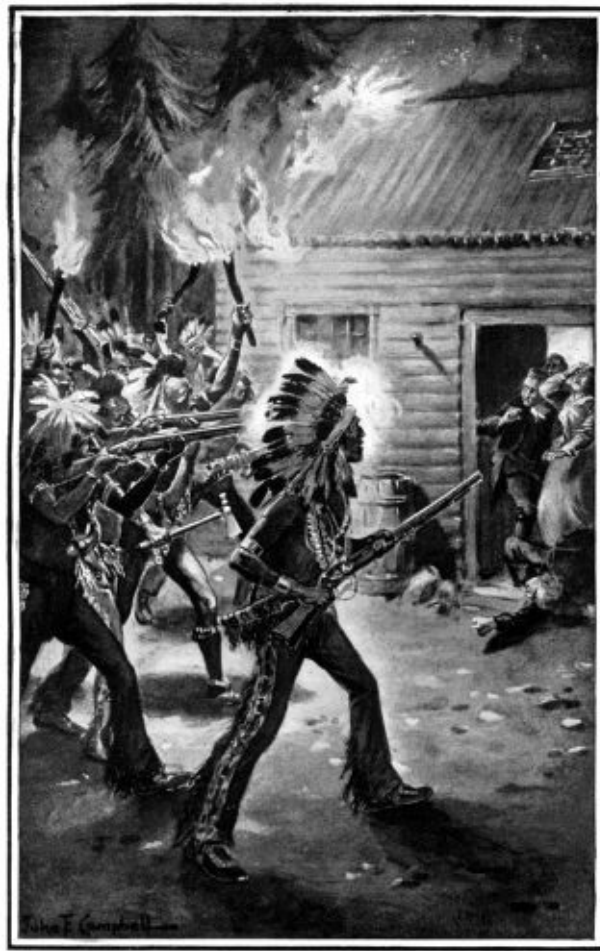
Riding at full gallop they accomplished the distance in a little over two hours; and even that was two hours too late. A roar of futile anger arose from the miners as they pulled up their horses. The store was in flames, and already half consumed; at the end, by the stables, was Savage's van, minus the horses, and across the front-board of it lay the faithful black, shot dead, but still clutching a discharged rifle; while round about the doorway were the bodies of the manager, his two assistants, and old Mrs. Savage. Heedless of everything else, her son rushed to her side; then uttered a strange little cry of relief as she opened her eyes and sat up painfully. Blood was running from her shoulder.

"Thank God you are safe," he said huskily. "The rest doesn't matter so much now." He lifted her in his arms and carried her tenderly to the waggon. Meanwhile, some of his companions were examining the other bodies for some sign of life, which, unhappily, was not forthcoming; while the rest made fruitless efforts at extinguishing the fire.

The old lady's story was soon told. She had not been in the store very long when a large party of Indians swooped down on the place with guns, tomahawks, and lighted torches. She heard a scream from the negro who had been dozing under the waggon-tilt, and she and the three shopmen rushed to the door, only to be shot down immediately by the crowd of shrieking wretches outside. She had received a ball in the shoulder, and, while the Indians were ransacking and firing the store, swooned away from fright and loss of blood.

A pair of horses were at once put into the shafts and the sorrowful party were about to return to Mariposa Creek, when a dozen horsemen galloped up; miners from the "claim" hard by, who, though they had paid no special heed to the firing, had soon been alarmed by the smoke of the burning house. Not one of them had seen anything of the Shoshonees, and all were anxious to help in a search for the culprits. But the short winter's day was already at an end, and Savage preferred getting his mother home in safety to scouring a country that might teem with Indian ambuscades; he therefore urged the volunteers to make a dash for San Francisco, to interview the Governor (McDougall) and ask for troops and ammunition.

But the day's misadventures were not yet ended. Within a mile of Mariposa Creek the returning men could hear spasmodic bursts of musketry fire.



RED INDIAN ATTACK ON A STORE

The Indians swooped down on the place with guns, tomahawks, and lighted torches. Those within rushed to the door, only to be shot down immediately by a crowd of wild redskins outside.

“They’re laying up for us, by gum!” said one man, starting off at a gallop.

Savage leapt from the waggon and on to a spare horse, and, leaving his mother to the care of two or three men who were riding inside, he started with the rest for the store. “We’ve got them this time,” he shouted triumphantly.

About seventy redskins, most of them on horseback, and the rest with their horses tethered close at hand, were firing on the house, though from a tolerably safe distance; for the undaunted miners within had a good supply of ammunition, whereas the Snakes had to use theirs sparingly. Already a good many Indians lay dead or wounded, and, at the sound made by the new arrivals, the rest either turned to bay or fled.

“Don’t say I didn’t warn you, Jerez,” shouted Savage as he charged at the chief and fired off his pistol in his face.

Seeing their leader down, the Indians hesitated, though some of the bolder of them rode straight for the store, now that it was no longer safe for the men inside to continue their fire. But the ensuing battle was only a very short one. However brave the Indians might be at shooting from cover, or making war on women, they were powerless in open field against the burly miners, who cared nothing for their howls and their hatchets, and who, in many cases, having exhausted their ammunition, tore the savages screaming from their saddles and flung them senseless on the hard-frozen road.

“Look what the oseberds be at, Savage!” roared a huge Devonshireman, spurring his horse furiously in pursuit of a small batch of Indians who were galloping for the hills.

“After ’em,” echoed the defenders of the store; and Savage and five others rode madly in the Devonshireman’s wake.

Confident of success now that their friends had returned, the miners in the store had come out to continue the fight in the open; and the young Indian wife had followed them. In an instant, and at first unseen by anyone except Billy West the Devonshireman, one of the braves had snatched up the woman, flung her across his saddle, and ridden off, his flight covered by other fugitives.

The little handful of white men rode despairingly on, though their horses were jaded, though it was pitch dark and a heavy snow was beginning. There was no thought of ambuscades now; each man’s blood was up; each man ready to deal with a score of Indians single-handed. Yet, at last, common sense said “stop.” For the first mile or so, the snow had been their friend; for, to eyes accustomed to darkness, the Indians’ track was visible enough on its surface; but with the increasing storm, footprints were obliterated as fast as they were made. The Devonshireman was the first to pull up.

“Shall us goo on, or goo back, or baide yere,—or what?” he asked.

Everyone looked towards Savage. Clearly these good fellows were all anxiety to show their sympathy with him, and their readiness to fall in with his least wish. He, too, had now pulled up, but seemed altogether too dazed to form any decision. The others held a whispered council; but, while they still hesitated, they heard a body of mounted men riding swiftly behind them.

“Halt!—Who goes there?” And as an echo to the leader’s voice, came the click of three dozen carbine-hammers.

“All right; we shan’t eat ye,” growled a miner; and the troop rode on towards them. “Who are *you*, any way?”

“Dr. Bunnell, and forty volunteers from ’Frisco. Know anything about that affair at First Creek this morning?”

The new arrivals were mounted militia from San Francisco, who had been warned by the fugitives from the massacre at the diggings. Billy West began to tell of the other outrages, but the doctor interrupted him.

“Ay; we judged there was something of the sort going on. Bring that redskin here again.”

Two men with bull’s-eye lanterns at their belts rode forward, leading a third horse on which an Indian was securely bound.

“Here’s our guide,” said Dr. Bunnell grimly. He held up his heavy stock-whip to the lantern light, and the Shoshonee winced. “We captured him this afternoon, and he’s going to be good enough to show us where his brothers live. We got ten of ’em altogether; Captain Boling’s men are looking after the rest. They’ll meet us yon side the first hill at midnight; so fall in with our lads, and we’ll get on; if your horses are anything like ours, you’ll be glad to travel slowly.”

The troop rode on silently, following the directions given by the prisoner; and soon after midnight they came upon a body of men, seventy strong, who, having dismounted, were huddling over camp-fires on the mountain-side. The soldiers were well supplied with rations, which they readily shared with Savage and his six friends; and all settled down to give the horses a breathing space. A couple of hours before dawn, a bugle blew, and the shivering, stiffened men clambered into their saddles again.

The way now lay across a snow-clad plain which, after a few miles, began to slope steadily upwards. As day broke, the riders saw a group of hills not far ahead; and at sight of them the Indians began to look hesitating and uncomfortable.

“What’s wrong?” asked Captain Boling.

“They can’t agree, gov’nor,” said a man who acted as interpreter. “Some of ’em allow we’re on the wrong track altogether.”

“In other words, they reckon we’re in for the worst of it, and they’ll get burnt for informing,” said Dr. Bunnell, riding up. He spoke impressively in the Shoshonean dialect to the prisoners for a minute, then added, “All right; drive on. I’ve made them understand that it won’t answer their purpose to be crooked with us.”

More crestfallen than ever, the guides led the way up the slope and into an unsuspected ravine, which eventually opened on to another plain; and this they crossed, coming out presently to the brink of a sharp downward slope, at the foot of which the opening of a valley was visible.

“There’s someone standing over there.” Captain Boling pointed to the mouth of the valley.

“Ay; Injun woman,” said a sharp-eyed miner.

As the men quickened their pace the woman ran to meet them. It was an old Indian squaw, who was wringing her hands in an agony of terror. Dr. Bunnell reined up and questioned her, and she at once admitted that a strange Indian girl had been brought to the valley a few hours earlier, and that over two hundred Indians were sheltering there. She also told him what he did not believe at the time, but which subsequently proved to be true: that these would be the first white men to enter the valley. He looked sharply round at the prisoners; their faces fully confirmed the old woman’s betrayal of their tribe’s hiding-place.

At the sound of the bugle the whole troop dashed into the valley, and the first sight that greeted them was a large group of wigwams. Before the savages could get into battle array their camp was surrounded, and a brisk carbine fire had opened on them. Almost at the first shot they lost heart, and on seeing them lay down their arms, the Captain stopped the firing and ordered his men to close in. John Savage, unable to control himself any longer, made a rush for the wigwams; and, while he looked desperately round him, his wife, screaming deliriously, came running to meet him.

Through this prompt action on the part of the militia, the Indian rising was entirely suppressed, over a hundred braves were carried back to San Francisco as hostages, and the beautiful Yo-Semite Valley ceased, from that day, to be the stronghold of Shoshonee mountain-brigands.

CHAPTER XVI

AMONG THE NIQUIRANS AND APACHES

A somewhat adventurous career fell to the lot of the late Julius Froebel, a nephew of the great Friedrich Froebel of "Kindergarten" fame. Having devoted his early manhood to journalism and politics of a very rabid and revolutionary character, he became the recognised leader of the Dresden democratic party in 1848. After being arrested in Austria and reprieved from a death-sentence, he fled to New York, and was for some time the editor of a German paper published there.

Two years later he joined a party of traders who were sailing for Central America, and with these he stayed for some months at Granada, on Lake Nicaragua. Finding town life becoming tame to him, he one day started off by himself to examine the more inland district, which was then inhabited largely by Indian tribes. The project had been in his mind for a long time, and what finally decided him was the accidental meeting with a fellow countryman, who told him privately that gold had just been found in large quantities at a village a little farther west; so without a guide, without more than one day's provisions, and with only a very scanty knowledge of Spanish to help him on his way, he set off on his risky trip.

He travelled all that day, and met no one after he had left the outskirts of the town; and that night, with his saddle for a pillow, he slept very comfortably under a tree. On the next day, he continued his way till an easy ride of about twelve miles, across a pathless plain, brought him suddenly on the heels of a travelling party of fifty Indians,—men, women, and children—all of them chatting freely and jubilantly, and riding as though bent upon some definite errand. They saluted him cheerily and he asked, in his broken Spanish, how far he was from the next village.

"It is over there; not far; not very far." He looked where they were pointing and saw that smoke was rising thinly from beyond a clump of trees. "Keep with us, Señor, and we will show you the way," added the man, who seemed to be the chief or leader.

But this village proved to be a great deal farther than it looked; riding among the trees and thick undergrowth was slow and weary work, and, even in this damp, shaded spot, the heat was now becoming almost unendurable. The Indians themselves were losing their energy and talkativeness; and many of them were beginning to lag behind or fall asleep in their saddles, when the chief cried out that they would halt at the little stream which was already in sight.

Froebel, more than willing, dismounted with the rest, and, tethering his horse to a tree, sought a comfortable resting-place for himself. Hunger and fatigue not infrequently go hand in hand, and the sight of the Indian women collecting sticks to feed the fires which they had speedily made reminded the traveller not only that it was some hours since he had breakfasted, but that, beyond a flask of brandy and water, all his provisions were exhausted. He watched wistfully the Indians' preparations. What were they going to eat?

Two women near him were untying their bundles, and now produced therefrom a number of small drinking-gourds, nets of eggs, bunches of plantains, with oranges or other fruit, which Froebel eyed

hungrily. Then, to his great relief, he saw that he was to be regarded as one of the family; for two young Indians, sons of the chief, at once helped him generously to the fruit, and explained that the great cooking-pots that hung over one or other of the fires would soon be filled with eggs, of which he would be expected to eat his share.

When the eggs were “done,” the water used for boiling them, instead of being thrown away, was economically employed for cocoa-making; irregular, greasy-looking blocks of sweetened chocolate being thrown into the pot, which a woman stirred with a stick till it was a thick, boiling paste; and into this each person dipped his or her gourd.

The meal being ended, the men lay and smoked long cheroots, and recommenced their light-hearted gabble of the morning. Froebel intimated that he was willing to pay for his meal, but the Indians stoutly refused his offer of money, and with such an air of gentle reproach that he began to feel as small as though he had asked for a bill after dining at a friend’s table. Something of the dignity of manner of their Spanish conquerors seemed to have descended to these Indians; though they were far from holding themselves aloof from their guest, or from making any secret of their own affairs, not one of them ventured to ask the German a single question as to his coming or his going. They told him that they were Niquirans—a wandering, gypsy-like tribe of the Nahuatlán stock; and that, as they had heard of the discovery of a gold-mine at the village which they were approaching, where everyone might go and help himself, they thought—being in the neighbourhood—they might as well bring away a few sackfuls of the metal.

The journalist pricked up his ears. El Dorado, Tom Tiddler’s Ground, was not a fable after all, then?

“Are there any white men there?” he asked.

The chief of the Niquirans smiled. He was a great deal too polite to say that, had there been, the gold would not be there long, but that was what his smile seemed to imply.

“We have heard of none as yet, Señor; but we did not know of the gold till this morning. The village, as you perceive, is quite away from any main road, and ordinarily there is nothing to bring white men in this direction.”

When all had rested sufficiently, the journey was resumed, and a short ride brought them into the village, which was as deserted as “sweet Auburn” itself. Not so much as a dog was in evidence; but the murmur of voices in the little valley beyond was a sufficient guide to the quarter where the inhabitants had collected. Very soon the gold-seekers came upon these, three or four hundred of them, encamped between a stream and a small bluff; and, round this, horses, mules, ox-waggons, and tents were drawn up in the form of a crescent.

No sooner did the new-comers show their faces than the villagers, who seemed to have been taking their siesta, rose up and armed themselves with stones or sticks, and some few even with bows and spears.

The Niquirans drew up hesitatingly, and Froebel, dismounting, approached the threatening crowd with every sign of friendliness. He asked to see the chief, and, on being taken before him, demanded to know the cause of such a hostile reception.

“We have found a gold-mine here,” said the chief, “and our people at first mistook your party for unfriendly Indians who might have come to drive us away from it.” He went on to say, with delightful frankness, that the villagers intended removing as much of the gold as possible, and that, as soon as their own claims were satisfied, anyone would be welcome to what remained.

“But *will* there be any remaining?” asked Froebel, with an incredulous smile. “There are many of my people who would gladly give you money and cattle in exchange for your gold. You had better show me

your mine.”

The chief eyed him with some amount of suspicion, discussed the matter with one or two cronies for a few minutes, and at last invited the stranger to “come and see.” Following his conductors through the line of vehicles, animals, and babies that marked off the precious spot, Froebel came to the bluff-face, at which one or two of the more zealous Indians were now beginning work again. He had been prepared to see nothing but quartz, or possibly a few grains of the metal mingled with sand; therefore he was fain to stand still and rub his eyes when he beheld a broad golden stratum in the cliff on which the sunrays flashed as on a looking-glass. It was a sight that would have made the least covetous of mortals gasp.

The chief pointed proudly to a row of bushel-baskets, piled to the brim with the glittering substance, and intimated that, since the white stranger’s intentions were peaceable, he was at liberty to fill his pockets.

There are some white men who, when they have an unpalatable truth to disclose, do not trouble to choose a tasteful or tactful or kind method of performing the task; and it is to be feared that Herr Froebel was one of these. He knew little about metallurgy, but one glance at the shining lump that he took from the nearest basket told him that the “gold” was pyrites, worth perhaps twopence a cart-load. To the amazement of the Indians he flung it contemptuously away.

“That’s no gold; it’s rubbish; worth nothing,” he blurted out.

Not gold? But not an Indian believed him; not one of them could see anything but jealousy or intentional insult in this frank piece of information; and the chief and his followers turned threateningly upon him. One and another took up the cry, and Froebel, who had left his only pistol in his holster, fancied that he saw death staring him in the face; for the excitement that he had created in the little community could not be quelled by a man who only knew about a thousand words of the language. He dodged between two mules and into the open; but the crowd of loiterers there had already invented another version of his crime; he was running off with their gold! There was nothing for it but pure and undisguised flight, and he set off as fast as his legs could carry him to the spot where the Niquirans were awaiting him. Sticks, stones, and mud whizzed about his head, and he could hear swift feet pursuing him.

Luckily, it was a time of day when no Indian, however fleet of foot, will run very far or fast; his pursuers turned out to be only some mischievous boys who were not going to throw away an opportunity of pelting a fugitive; and, at sight of the grim-looking Niquiran horsemen, who began to move a step or two forward, even these returned to their camp. Mounting his horse again, Froebel looked back and saw that the villagers were making ready to repel any advance of the strangers; they were again collecting their weapons and shouting defiance at the Niquirans. Doubtless these would have had a very easy victory; for they were better armed and infinitely finer men, in the habit of fighting at a moment’s notice; while the simple villagers had had no quarrel with their neighbours for a quarter of a century.

“There is nothing to fight about; it was all my fault,” said Froebel; and he hastily explained the whole matter.

His companions laughed, and turned their horses’ heads; they were happy-go-lucky, hand-to-mouth folk, to whom the disappointment was far less bitter than to the German; and they rode away cheerily enough, leaving the gold-diggers to bask in their happy ignorance.

As he had nothing better to do, Froebel threw in his lot with the wanderers, and, in this manner, spent many happy months in seeing the country. But, to a man of his restless disposition, even this roving life became wearisome; he returned to Granada and there fell in again with two of the Yankee traders with whom he had arrived. For the next year or so he travelled with them, visiting almost every town in Central America; and at last decided to return with them to the States by way of Mexico.

Mexico, as will be seen in a later chapter, was in a state of great unrest at this time (1853); and, in the wilder parts, it was unsafe for white men to travel without escort; but, as troops of soldiers were often scouring the country, the three strangers relied on being able to travel with one or other of these. They had a pleasant ride through Guatemala, visited the wonderful ruins at Uxmal in Yucatan: ruins nearly a thousand years old, that tell practically all that can be told of the civilisation of the ancient Mexicans; and at length entered upon the longer and more perilous portion of their trip.

But fortune was more favourable to them than to the generality of Mexican travellers in those days; for they covered the long journey, of over a thousand miles, from the frontier to Chihuahua in North Mexico, without a single misadventure. While in this city, Froebel discovered, first that he was leading too uneventful a life for his constitution, and secondly, that his purse was now empty, for while his companions had been ants, he had been a cricket. It happened that the Mexican Commander-in-Chief, General Trias, was going north to put down a rising, and Froebel obtained from him the post of temporary transport-agent; he was to follow the troops with ten waggons and a hundred mules, and assist generally in the commissariat.

Every day, from the time of starting, horrible reports of atrocities committed by the Apache Indians reached him. In one place, fourteen women and children had been slaughtered; in another, a flock of sheep had been stolen and the shepherds killed; while in a third, the prairie had been deliberately set on fire at a time when the wind could not fail to carry the flames to a cluster of huts, many of whose occupants were burned to death. Yet the soldiers could not so much as get a sight of the culprits, who, on their fleet horses, made nothing of covering fifty miles in a few hours.

But one night, when Froebel and his muleteers were encamped some few hundred yards behind the main body, a volley of musketry sounded close at hand; and an attendant, who was in the act of handing the transport agent his supper, fell dead. The muleteers snatched up brands from the fire for torches, and, gun in hand, ran in search of the enemy.

“Shoot; shoot,” cried Froebel, himself setting the example by firing at a group of shadowy figures that were already on the move. But it was too late; the Indians could be heard scampering away across the prairie. The agent dared not take his men in pursuit, leaving the mules unguarded; but he rode across to the cavalry tents where General Trias and twenty men, who had heard the firing, were already in the saddle.

“Fall in with us, then, as you know the direction in which they went,” said Trias hurriedly; and away they all galloped.

Far away across the plain they could hear the regular beat of the fleeing horses’ hoofs. Without stopping, Trias gave the command to fire; the twenty carbines went off like one, and, from the sudden wild screaming ahead of them, Froebel knew that some of the bullets had hit their random mark. This was confirmed in a minute or so when, in the clouded and uncertain light of the moon, he caught sight of three Indians and a horse lying on the ground as the troop swept past.

“There they are; load again,” shouted Trias; and all could see the feather head-dresses of the Apaches waving in the breeze, still within gunshot. But the next volley took no apparent effect, the shapes were growing dimmer again, and the sounds less distinct.

“On; on; we must have them,” shouted the General; and, as the horses were tolerably fresh, the task was still not hopeless.

“Hark! They have reached the road,” cried one of the soldiers, who was perfectly familiar with the neighbourhood. This was the high road to the Texan frontier, in places a mere sand-strip bordered on either side by forests, in others a smooth, well-beaten track bisecting a vast prairie. The news was the

reverse of good, for now the Apaches might at any moment separate, and disappear among the trees. The forest part of the road wound very considerably, so that the pursuers would no longer be able to profit by the light of the already setting moon.

Half an hour went by; an hour; and still the Mexicans rode on, now certain that they heard the Indians' horses, now equally certain that all of them had dispersed over the prairie or in the woods. But all of a sudden a faint scream sounded along the road, together with the undeniable tramp of horses. The scream came nearer, and the soldiers spurred their breathless chargers round the bend of the road.

"There are lights," shouted Froebel.

"Yes; carriage-lamps; they have stopped the mail-coach," roared Trias. "Keep it up, my men; we must have them now."

"Why, they are running to meet us," said Froebel; "they must have been reinforced."

The lights were certainly coming nearer, and, with them, a body of horsemen; and now the soldiers could hear the quick popping of pistol-shots. Then all at once a loud shout arose from where the lights were, the sound of wheels came nearer and nearer, but the accompanying horsemen were obviously riding now in the other direction.

"Are you the soldiers?" shouted a chorus of voices from the coach as it came up.

"Yes."

"You can catch them yet; they tried to stop us and rob us; and would have done, but for hearing you."

The troop did not draw bridle, but wheeled away on to the prairie in pursuit of half a dozen moving figures on whom they were easily gaining. A minute later a voice in front cried: "All right; we'll give in. Don't fire."

"Why, those are not Indians," said Trias in astonishment.

Nor were they; they were six Mexican brigands who had been pursuing the mail; the Apaches were probably safe long ago, in one of their forest camps. The highwaymen were soon seized and bound, and as it was ultimately discovered that they were some of the revolutionaries for whom Trias was on the look-out, the night-ride was not altogether a wild-goose chase.

CHAPTER XVII

ACROSS THE UNITED STATES IN A WAGGON

From the foregoing chapter it will have been seen that Mexico, in the middle of the nineteenth century, was not a neighbourhood wherein a man might look to find rest and quiet; and it is safe to say that if any one part of it was less to be desired than another as a place of resort, it was the United States frontier.

When the war between Mexico and the United States ended in 1847, this frontier had to be overhauled and settled afresh, and within the next two years Presidents Polk and Taylor appointed a Boundary Commission. One of the commissioners was the late John Russell Bartlett, secretary to the New York Ethnographical Society, and subsequently one of the greatest authorities on the Indian races.

Mr. Bartlett did not leave New York for his southward journey till the summer of 1850, and one of the first lessons that he learned on that journey was that redskins, like other men, cannot be understood from books or from mere surface examination. Anxious to see as much as possible of the Indians of the southern States, he elected to travel by waggon, there being no immediate hurry for him to present himself at El Paso. Such a course meant passing through wild regions of prairie, plain, and hill, peopled by Missouris, Choctaws, Bannocks, Comanches, Chicasas, Araphoes, and perhaps a score more of savage tribes, the majority of whom still regarded the white man as their natural enemy; and the details of that ride, with his subsequent adventures in and round Mexico, would occupy more than the whole of this book.

His first acquaintance with the Missouri Indians came about while the waggon was crossing the great undulating plains near the Arkansas River. He was seated under the tilt pretending to write letters, but, in actual fact, dozing off to sleep under the influence of a sudden spell of heat, when a wild shriek from the direction of his leaders' heads aroused him. He looked up and found that he was alone, though this was nothing out of the ordinary; for his negro attendant and his two waggoners not infrequently got down and walked when the horses were obliged to move slowly or when there was an opportunity of filling the pot. Before he could reach the forepart of the waggon, the black's curly head showed above the front-board, eyes bulging and teeth chattering with terror.

"Look, Massa; look!" he shrieked.

"Catch hold o' them ribbons, *will* ye?" he heard one of the teamsters shout; but the negro was too paralysed with fear to obey. The next moment the man who had called out, and had now got possession of the reins, landed with a flying leap on the footboard, and was followed with no less precipitation by his mate.

"Gun; quick!" panted the second man, while the first endeavoured to control the frightened horses.

Stumbling over the cowering nigger, Mr. Bartlett joined the teamsters. The four horses were still shying violently and kicking in every direction; and, not fifteen feet from the two wheelers, was a bison, charging with furious determination straight at them. He caught up his gun, which hung in slings close to his hand, and emptied both barrels at the formidable beast, which fell on his knees, gasping and bellowing, till two more bullets from the second teamster made him roll over.

“Reckon we’ll have some of his meat, when them hosses have done rearing,” said the shooter. It took time to quiet the terror-stricken creatures, and, in the end, the driver was forced to give them their heads for a while; and they had hardly settled to their normal condition when a fresh incident occurred to trouble their peace.

A succession of single shouts from various directions sounded from beyond the hill which they were now passing, and suddenly swelled into a long, howling, shrieking chorus that was echoed by maddened bellowings as from a thousand bulls. With difficulty the horses allowed themselves to be held in, and as they were walked past the final spur of the hill, a truly wonderful sight broke on the spectators. They had come to the mouth of a pleasant, grassy valley, in the midst of which a herd of over two hundred bison were running hither and thither, butting each other, falling over, or trying furiously to reach the slopes; while, down the hill on either side, a great troop of mounted Indians swept like a torrent; spears slung at their backs, arrows flying from the bows in their hands. With all the order and method of a cavalry brigade, they slackened their speed suddenly, and, spreading out, formed themselves into a huge circle; then straightway continued with their spears the work of slaughter which their arrows had begun.

For ever on the move, now to right, now to left, now charging into the heaving brown mass, they plied their lances untiringly, time after time avoiding, with no visible effort, the desperate charge of one or other of the bison. To a man who loved sport, but not slaughter, it was a revolting sight; yet fascinating as well, by reason of the skill and pertinacity which these savages displayed in their task of blood. Now and then one or two energetic bulls would force a way through some opening in the line, in the fond hope of being allowed to flee over the hills; but there was always some vigilant horseman ready to give chase or else to send half a dozen arrows in rapid succession, and so to cut short the creature’s chance of escape. Not till every bison lay dead did the redskins stay their hands or condescend to turn an eye on the onlookers who had drawn up at the entrance to the valley.

Bartlett waited with curiosity to see what the Indians’ next move would be. As concerned himself they might be perfectly harmless; already he had come to the conclusion that the redskin is a very much maligned man; but, whether harmless or offensive, the hunters had now caught sight of the waggon, and to attempt to flee before men, mounted as well as they were, would only be a ridiculous waste of energy. A few turned their horses his way, but the great majority continued to hunt down the game; but whatever work these had still to do, was very soon done; for, by the time their brethren had come up with the waggon, they were following in their wake.

From the teamsters Bartlett learned that the horsemen were Missouris—a branch of the Sioux—and accordingly he stood up in the waggon and began hesitatingly to address the foremost in what he had already mastered of the Siouan dialect. The effect should have been flattering; they didn’t give him “three cheers,” their education in that form of enthusiasm being as yet imperfect; but they smiled encouragingly and turned their spears points downwards, while the more demonstrative pressed up to him, patted his shoulders, his ribs, and his leggings, telling him that he was a great man, a wise chief, and a “good medicine”—whatever that might mean.

Three men who appeared, from their more ornate dress, to be rulers among the tribe, now turned and gave some directions to those who were coming up behind them; and, as these rode forward, Bartlett noticed that every man of the division that had stayed to cut up the carcasses carried one or more semi-globular lumps of bison-beef on his saddle-bow; and it was to bestow some of these lumps on the stranger that the chief had called them. In a couple of minutes the footboard was like a butcher’s stall, for meat enough lay there to feed the four occupants of the waggon for about a month. On Bartlett’s asking where was the best place to cross the river, a chief told him there was a ferry fourteen miles farther, to which the troop would have great pleasure in escorting him.



A BISON SURROUND

The Indians would surround a herd of bison and wantonly kill every member of it. They would cut off the hump only, leaving the rest of the carcass for wolves and coyotes.

"We have finished our hunting for the day, and are going home to our camp, which is a few miles this side of the river," he said.

"Finished?" reiterated Bartlett. "Then who is going to carry the game home?" He pointed to the carcass-crowded valley.

"Oh, *those* are for the coyotes and wolves," said the oldest chief contemptuously.

"Then why kill so many?"

The chief pointed to one of the blocks of meat.

"That is all that we care to eat; and just now we have no need of hides or hoofs, so we can afford to leave those."

The meat that had been cut away was just the "hump" of the animal; the raised portion of the withers. In his old age, Mr. Bartlett was not surprised to hear naturalists and sportsmen bemoaning the scarcity of bison after what he saw that day, and on many subsequent occasions. The Indians had surrounded and slain a whole herd, with the wanton love of destruction that the child and the savage usually display. They were in the habit of using the horns for spear-heads, and the hoofs to make the glue with which they fixed their arrow-points; but here were enough horns and glue to equip a dozen regiments of Indians—and all left to waste and rot.

The ferry was reached before dark; the Indians were rewarded with bits of finery, and a plug or two of tobacco, and went on their way.

As the wagon neared the "Llano Estacado," Bartlett began to hear news of redskins who might not accord him so amiable a reception. At the Red River tributary of the Mississippi, he was told that several American travellers had been murdered in the valleys and passes by Apaches, who were popularly supposed to be a sort of hired assassins of the Mexicans at this time. The tidings did not sound encouraging, but he had now travelled through about twelve hundred miles of Indian territory without encountering so much as an angry word or a petty theft, and he was not prepared to go out of his way on account of a mere rumour.

He had scarcely crossed the first part of the hill-ridge that encloses the celebrated Llano, when his waggon broke down without the least warning. Tools were got out and the damage examined, and the axle-bar of the hind wheels was found to be so injured as to necessitate repairs that would take a good deal of time.

Jim, the black, had just unharnessed the horses, and was pegging them down, when one of the teamsters reported a small batch of Apaches overtaking them, as though they might have followed the waggon from a distance.

“I see they all have muskets,” commented Bartlett. “That doesn’t look promising. We must make as big a show as we can. Here you, Jim; you must pretend to be mending the waggon, and we others will stand by and look as innocent as we can—but with guns and pistols ready.”

The negro’s courage was not remarkable, and this was a very satisfactory means of keeping him out of the way, for he would be perfectly happy under the waggon; the teamsters, on the other hand, were men who had been through the recent war, and cared no more for Indians than they did for Mexicans. They and Bartlett picked up their guns, taking care to hold them as unconcernedly and inoffensively as possible; but at the same time keeping a sharp eye on the horsemen, and prepared to fire the moment they saw any of them inclined to take a preliminary shot at them by way of greeting.

Perhaps this attitude disconcerted the redskins; perhaps they had had no evil intentions from the beginning; at any rate, they rode up harmlessly enough, asked what was the matter, and offered to act as guides if the travellers would give them a little powder and tobacco. While the teamsters betook themselves to the repairs, Bartlett talked with the Apaches, questioned them about the way, and told them smoothly but decisively that he could not part with any ammunition, though he would give tobacco and some scarlet cloth. The cloth was received rapturously, and, as soon as the waggon was mended, the procession moved on, the Apaches proving very satisfactory and friendly guides.

At parting, Bartlett gave the chief—who, by the way, called himself “Mangus Colorado”—an old overcoat, and his delight, his pride, and his antics forthwith convulsed the beholders. Months afterwards, while scouring the valley of the Rio Grande with Captain Buford and his dragoons, who were hunting for Indian horse-thieves, the Commissioner came across Mangus again; he was still wearing the overcoat, though it was a stifling day, and though he had, all his life, gone naked as far as the waist.

The guides left the waggon at the beginning of the El Paso road, whence, though the way was rough and sometimes nearly impassable, there could be no difficulty in finding the city. On the evening of the following day, Bartlett, hearing gunshots close at hand, sent a teamster forward to reconnoitre. The man soon came running back; some Apaches were besieging a wayside inn, he said. He mounted to his place and the horses were whipped up to the gallop.

“The more show and noise we make, the better,” remarked the driver as he reached for his gun.

As soon as they were past a belt of boulders they could see what was taking place. Twelve Indians on horseback were surrounding the house, while, from behind a half-shuttered window, a man and a woman were firing despairingly, though the Apaches were sheltered from their bullets; no one but these two seemed to be about the place. As the waggon stopped, one of the Indians got off his horse and began to batter at the flimsy door with the stock of his gun. The second teamster raised his rifle and fired with as much coolness as if he had been shooting a prairie wolf, and the redskin fell dead.

“Now they’ll make fools of themselves, and get between two fires. Leastwise they ’most always do,” he said.

After a moment's hesitation the Indians charged with a frightful howl at the waggon; but, in so doing, they brought themselves in full range of the couple who had been trying to get a shot from the window. Two more of their number dropped, and the rest pulled up as suddenly as they had begun their charge. Bartlett and the driver fired, wounding a man and killing a horse.

Such a reception was more than the Apaches had bargained for or could stand; they fired one wild, almost aimless volley which flew well clear of the waggon, then, urging their horses forward, they spurred past Bartlett's team like a whirlwind and disappeared.

The inn was one kept by a Mexican and his Yankee wife; and they, too, told fearful tales of the Apaches' depredations; and were both convinced that, but for the happy arrival of the waggon, they would have been killed, and their house plundered and burnt.

CHAPTER XVIII

A JOURNEY TO THE GRAN CHACO

The Gran Chaco, or “great hunting-ground” of Western Paraguay, is a land of wooded plains and little patches of primeval forest, about which astonishingly little is known even to-day. White men have never yet explored more than the fringe of it, and it was to an Englishman that the honour fell of being the first European in a period of forty years to venture into the unknown region, as well as of proceeding farther through it than any of his predecessors had done. This was in 1853, when Mansfield made his celebrated journey up the Paraguay River.

Charles Blachford Mansfield, the dearly loved friend of Kingsley, Maurice, Carlyle, and other great thinkers of a bygone generation, was one of those men whose physical bravery and spirit of enterprise are hidden from all but close observers by the shyness natural to a scholar, and by the gentle earnestness of a man who takes life very seriously. While travelling down the South American coast from Pernambuco to Buenos Ayres, he incidentally heard much talk of this mysterious hunting-ground from his fellow-passengers; but he no sooner hinted at his desire to see it than he brought a hail of ridicule on himself. Who but an Englishman would think of trying to go where the Paraguayans themselves dared not venture?

The same doubts or ridicule assailed him when he spoke of his intention to the Spanish skipper of the river steamer on which he took a passage from Buenos Ayres to Corrientes.

“Ask the crew, Señor; some of them are of Indian blood; they will tell you all about the Paraguay,” said he scornfully.

To the quiet scientist, whose pursuits kept him mainly among people of his own social standing, this crew was something of a revelation: Zambos, blacks, Mestizos, Italians, Spaniards, most of them as dirty and lazy and insubordinate as they were high. The negroes and whites had never been farther up than Corrientes, but some of the half-bloods had been as far as Asuncion, and these said unhesitatingly that even if the Englishman could get canoemen to take him up the Paraguay to the capital, every inch of the way was dangerous on account of the uncivilised Guaranis; and that—supposing he reached Asuncion alive—he would not be permitted to enter upon the Chaco.

“Take me as far as Corrientes and I will be responsible for the rest,” said Mansfield. “At least I can but try.”

The voyage up the Parana was monotonous, for the boat was seldom close enough to either bank to admit of more than a confused view of the country, and the solitary Englishman was relieved when the two days’ journey came to an end. On the second morning, when he went on deck the boat was making a stop, and he profited by it to slip off shirt and trousers and take a cool, delicious header into the river. Coming to the surface again he glanced up at the steamer, for the crew were all screaming one against the other; a charitable Zambo was heaving him a life-belt which (on finding that there were no objectionable reptiles anywhere near him) he laughingly refused. He had his swim, swarmed up a rope, and reached the deck again.

“Did I not say he was possessed, or mad?” he overheard the skipper growl in Spanish.

“What made the Señor do that?” asked the friendly Zambo soothingly.

“For pleasure, *amigo*; and in order to be clean. In my country it is the custom to have a cold bath or a swim every morning.”

The half-breed turned away, tapping his forehead gravely, and communicated this piece of news to the white men, who seemed even more astounded. Wash? What *for*, in the name of all the fiends? They had scarcely ever heard of such an operation.

In Corrientes, Mansfield whiled away a few days in trying to obtain further information about the Chaco; but without much success. The civic authorities, from whom he had first to gain permission to move any higher up the river, made little demur; privately they thought the town would be well rid of a wandering maniac. They told him that he might possibly find Indian canoemen who would take him to Asuncion, though he would be almost the first Englishman who had ever been there; but that he must assume entire responsibility for such a venture; they would offer no hindrance, but no help either.

As luck would have it, while he was loitering on the jetty one evening, a large canoe, manned by four Indians and laden with oranges and plantains, ran alongside. That they did not belong to these parts was evidenced by their great size, their strange dress and easy motions, and by the number of native words with which their Spanish was interlarded. A crowd of buyers gathered round them, and their cargo was very soon disposed of; indeed, the townsfolk seemed only too anxious to let them do their business and take themselves off again, the brawny forest-giants being about as welcome here as Genseric’s Vandals were in Rome.

When the crowd had dispersed, Mansfield approached the Indians and asked if they were going up the river again. They stared at him, more in wonder than in ill-humour.

“Yes,” said one of them at last. “To-morrow.” (No one in South America ever yet did anything “to-day”; has not *mañana* fever become a byword?)

“I want to come with you. I will pay you well, if you will take me and my luggage up to Asuncion.”

The savages hesitated, muttered among themselves, and at length one remarked half-sulkily that it was a long journey; nearly two hundred miles. The Señor was doubtless in a hurry, and speaking for themselves they objected to being hurried. They would want to kill deer to take back with them; perhaps to catch fish as well. Mansfield said that that would be no objection, and, in the end, they agreed to set off with him in the morning.

Their respect for the stranger increased somewhat when, the next day, his luggage appeared, and was found to contain a very excellent double-barrelled gun; they themselves had only spears and bows, and were inclined to pooh-pooh firearms except for fighting. Who ever saw a gun kill a manatee, they asked; or a cayman, or even an inia (fresh-water dolphin)? The boat pushed off and swung rapidly round the bend of the river, and out of sight of civilisation. Then the Englishman began to cultivate his crew’s acquaintance. Physically they formed a striking contrast to any of the town Indians he had seen; all were naked but for a waist-cloth of deer-skin; their hair, done in either one or two plaits, reached almost to their heels, though not one of them was under six feet three. At first they were very reserved with their employer, but when, treating them like children, he began to distribute sweet cakes and other confectioners’ ware, such as they had never beheld, their tongues were loosed, one topic led to another, and they soon forgot to be shy or suspicious.

On the first day they showed no disposition to stop or land till night-time, and as they hugged the left bank

all the way, Mansfield had the advantage of seeing what was to be seen without the delays that he had anticipated. Whatever else happened on this hazardous journey, starvation would surely be kept at a distance, for in that vast forest through which the Paraguay runs, are no less than four hundred and fifty varieties of birds, from eagles to creatures the size of a thumb-nail, together with deer innumerable; while the fish in the stream almost plead to be caught. Mansfield already knew enough of the climate to be aware that, even in summer, when the sun has gone in, warm coverings are necessary; and he had supplied himself with a pair of good blankets, thinking that he would be expected to sleep in the canoe. But, at sundown, the Indians ran inside a tiny creek and three of them took up their bows and arrows, while the fourth clambered up the bank, spear in hand. Mansfield started to ask questions, but was immediately frowned into silence.

The Indian disappeared behind a thick curtain of bush and creeper, and was followed by one of his friends, who stood on the bank within sight; while the other two remained in the boat, standing like beautiful copper statues, their bows bent, their eyes fixed on the trees or the bank. After a little rustling behind this natural curtain, there came the sharp click of a flint and, a little later, the crackling of burning grass; but not till a great burst of smoke arose, followed by a roaring flare, did the other Indians drop their weapons.

“That will keep the jaguars away,” said one of them. “They come down to drink just about this time.”

“Were you afraid that one of them might spring out on your comrade?” asked Mansfield.

“Who knows? It is not only they that have to be guarded against. Do you hear that noise? That is a puma; ocelots sometimes will spring upon us from a tree; a tapir will attack us if her young one is with her. And what of the snakes and the alligators?”

“Then why land at all for sleeping?”

The Indians shivered. “Have you never heard of water-boas? The Paraguay is full of them; by day they rarely come up; but at night! Come; our fire is big now; we are going to moor the boat and land.”

When he got ashore, the traveller found that a whole bush formed the substance of the fire; a little dry grass had been laid to the windward side of it, and the bush, being of a resinous nature, soon flared up like an oil-barrel. The fire-maker was returning from collecting fuel, and had both arms full of fallen wood, with which he banked up a solid fire before the bush could roar itself out. The Englishman had his own opinion on the wisdom of lighting fires in such overgrown spots, and was not surprised when, during that river journey, they passed many patches—some over a hundred acres in extent—where almost every tree had been consumed by some recent conflagration.

“So there are water-serpents here, are there?” he asked as they seated themselves as near to the fire as was consistent with comfort.

“Yes; some of them thirty feet long, or even forty. They will sometimes upset a whole canoe, or will lift a man out of his seat and drag him to the bottom.” This may or may not be an Indian exaggeration, but it is certainly a fact that the anaconda and his many brethren in the Paraguay make no trouble of carrying off a calf or small deer that has come down to drink.

“To-morrow we must kill something,” said another Indian as he unwrapped a slab of *carne seca*, or dried beef, from a strip of grass matting. “This is all that is left. See after the water, one of you.”

A redskin had brought a great pot full of water from the river, and this he wedged nicely on the fire where the ashes were the most solid. Mansfield sighed; were they going to make chocolate, a drink which he loathed? By the time the beef was eaten, together with the French bread which the explorer had brought as

a special luxury for his guides, the water boiled; and it transpired that they were not going to drink chocolate, for one of the men produced from a bag a great handful of dry, curled leaves, whipped the pot off the fire and dropped the leaves into it, stirring the whole vigorously with a stick.

The leaves were the *yerba maté*—generally abbreviated to *maté*—or Paraguay ilex; a sort of holly which occupies exactly the same position among the South Americans as tea does with the Chinese. Another Indian cut five hollow stalks of a plant that looked to the scientist suspiciously like hemlock; but he supposed the man knew what he was doing, and accepted the one that was offered to him. As soon as the decoction was sufficiently stirred, the redskins thrust their stalks into the almost boiling liquid and began to suck greedily at it. Mansfield took his place in the circle round the pot when its contents had cooled somewhat, and found it exceedingly refreshing, though rank and bitter to anyone not used to it. But as he drank more freely, he became aware that, like many other good things, it may become a curse instead of a blessing to a man; for he soon found himself growing drowsy under its influence; but the Indians, more accustomed to it, were equal to his share as well as their own, and emptied the pot unmovedly. On later occasions he saw natives quite stupid or unconscious through over-indulgence in the beverage.

He rolled himself in his blankets and was soon asleep; but he was awakened at daybreak by the ceaseless chatter of the monkeys in the trees overhead. The Indians were already astir, packing up their weapons and cooking-utensils, and showing generally that this was the most energetic period of the day with them. The most noticeable feature of their behaviour now was that they had become as careless and bold as, over night, they had been vigilant and calculating; and this point perhaps marks more strongly than any other the difference between the Indians north and south of the Mexican frontier. The attacks in the dark, the night marches so common among the northern redskins, are almost unknown in the south and centre; and in all likelihood this has arisen from the comparative scarcity of nocturnal animals in the north. For one square mile of the Amazon contains more animals of the cat tribe than a hundred miles of the Mississippi, and the only beasts likely to be abroad after dark, apart from a few pumas, are the wolves, of which the North American Indian has no fear.

Mansfield and two of the guides had got into the canoe, when those on the bank held up each a warning hand and fitted an arrow to his bow. A rustling noise came from among the trees and a very graceful though short-legged deer came bounding from between them. No deer ever moved at such a speed unless frightened or pursued, and the Englishman was not surprised to see a dark-skinned animal rise from the ground some few feet behind the fugitive and fall full on its back with a snarling roar that a good-sized lion could scarcely have beaten. A confident smile played over the faces of the Indians in the boat, who took no more notice of the slayer than they would have done of a rabbit.



STOCKING THE LARDER

As they watched from the canoe a graceful deer darted out of the thicket closely pursued by a full-grown jaguar.

No sooner had he slain his prey than the two Indians coolly approached and planted one arrow in his neck and another in his ribs, and while one of them dragged away the carcase of the deer, the other put an end to the jaguar with his spear.

“Why should not the *tigre* save us the trouble of hunting?” said one, disdaining all pretence at silence.

Just then the roar was repeated, this time more ear-splitting than before; the yell of a beast in great pain. Mansfield peered through the bushes and saw the Guaranis walking in very leisurely manner towards the place where the deer had fallen. Almost as its assailant—a full-grown male jaguar—put an end to its struggles by taking the head between its immense paws and breaking the neck, two arrows had pierced him simultaneously; one through the ribs and the other through the neck, and the howl which the watchers in the boat had heard was his last.

The taller of the Indians dragged the deer’s carcase free, while his companion contemptuously drove his spear-blade into the expiring jaguar, and the venison was quickly butchered and brought in triumph to the canoe. The two hunters chuckled as they got into the boat; they had now enough food for to-day’s needs and meant to take it easy: another difference between the Indian who lives within the tropics and him who lives outside; only hunger or strict business will prompt the one to exert himself to go a-hunting; the other is a sportsman born.

No event worth chronicling befell the little crew till, a day or two later, they were within ten miles of Asuncion. The canoemen were dipping their paddles lazily, and Mansfield himself was inclined to doze, for it was getting towards the middle of the day, when a horrified whisper, which he could not catch, passed from mouth to mouth. In an instant the Guaranis threw off their lethargy, and the explorer saw that a look of terror had come into every eye; the paddles flew through the water, the men straining till the sweat streamed down their faces, and till their veins swelled as though they must burst.

He spoke encouragingly to them, but obtained no answer; the Indians only paddled the faster, till their panic began to communicate itself to him; for it is always the unknown that is most terrifying. Two minutes passed, and they did not abate their speed or answer the questions put to them. Surely it could not be anything so very awful, for, only ten minutes before, a schooner-rigged vessel had overtaken them on its way up the river; whatever the peril was, she seemed to have escaped it. Mansfield had known what danger was, for he had worked like a hero among the poor of South London during the cholera outbreak of five years before; but, when the third minute had passed, he found that the suspense was becoming unbearable. A minute is a short time, but those who have passed through great danger or uncertainty know that it can sometimes seem like a week.

“Well; now what was it?” he asked, breaking into a laugh as the men, uttering exclamations of relief, rested on their paddles and wiped their brows.

“Hornets!”

“*Hornets?*”

“You laugh, Señor. God help us if they had followed us. Did you not hear their murmurings? Some fiend-begotten monkey had disturbed their nest; ’tis to be hoped he has got his reward. Two of my brothers were stung to death last year in less than a minute by a swarm of them; and there is a man of our tribe who is stone-blind through them.”

Asuncion is, to-day, a town of only forty-five thousand inhabitants, and had not then half that number. With the exception of W. P. Robertson and a few other bold traders, Charles Mansfield was probably the only Englishman who had then set foot inside it. He made it his head-quarters for the next two and a half months, and, during that time, made various excursions into the Gran Chaco.

On one occasion he joined a party of Indians who were going out there deer-hunting; and, though there was nothing specially new to him in their methods, he was enabled to examine the country under

favourable circumstances. No doubt there was something in the report of its inhabitants being dangerous; for the men with him were hardy, fearless fellows, well used to bearing arms; and even these would not attempt to reach the more distant of the inhabited regions.

To him the hunting was more wearisome than agreeable, for it consisted mainly in crawling along on hands and knees mile after mile—so it seemed—till the sportsmen were within bowshot of a herd, which promptly fled before a single arrow could be launched at them. The crawling began again, and in course of time another or the same herd was reached, and these fled at the first discharge of arrows. The carcasses were collected and hidden, and the creeping was begun afresh, but no more herds were overtaken. Then the Indians had recourse to a very common though unsportsmanlike dodge; they concealed themselves, shortly before sundown, by a river where, as the wind was, the deer would not scent them when they came down their usual path to the water. But, further disappointment, a thunderstorm came on, the deer spent the night under the trees, and the Indians went home disgusted.

With the practical eye of a real philanthropist, Mr. Mansfield noted all the advantages of this great and fertile hunting-ground—or as much of it as he was able to see. He returned to England full of a great project for colonising the Chaco and educating the Indians—a scheme which was never carried out. For, only a few months later, while he was performing a chemical experiment, a naphtha-still ignited; and, while pluckily trying to throw it into the street to save the house from catching fire, he sustained injuries which caused his death, at the early age of thirty-six.

CHAPTER XIX

AMONG THE SERIS OF MEXICO

It is a fact generally acknowledged throughout the American continent, that the Indian population have never yet failed to take advantage of war, revolution, or other political crises among the white settlers, to make themselves more than usually troublesome. From 1810 to 1867, Mexico went through a troublous period of rebellion and warfare; which is another way of saying that, for fifty-seven years, the Mexican Indians saw themselves at liberty to plunder and slay without the least fear of organised opposition; and judging from the account given by the German-Polish traveller, Gustav von Tempsky, they seem to have made use of their opportunity.

After three years' residence in California, Herr von Tempsky, with an American friend, Dr. Steel, took ship from San Francisco to Mazatlan, intending to explore the southern spurs of the Sierra Madre, and to return to the States overland. This was in 1853-4, a time when the Government, such as it was, had perhaps reached the summit of its helplessness; which will explain why, on arriving at Mazatlan, the travellers found plenty of counsellors ready to confirm the advice they had heard in California: "Keep out of Mexico, if you value your lives."

Not to be deterred by mere hearsay, the two friends hired mules and guides, and at once set out eastwards, far more anxious to escape to the highlands from the tropical heat of Mazatlan, than apprehensive of interference from Indians. Yet, as the country grew lonelier and more rugged, the mules less tractable and the guides less self-confident, the journey certainly began to lose some of the romantic charm which, from a safe distance, it had promised to possess; and when, towards nightfall of the third day's march, a tropical thunderstorm suddenly burst upon them, and the Mexican guides announced that the nearest shelter was at a hill village ten miles distant, both the adventurers found themselves thinking wistfully of the cosy steamer which they had recently left. Those ten miles seemed like a hundred; the rain continued to fall like a cataract; a baggage-mule took to flight and had to be pursued; then the animal ridden by the doctor got his forefeet in a hole, and for some time refused to move; and, by way of a little further diversion, the guides began to quarrel among themselves as to the precise direction in which the village lay.

The end of the journey came at last, however, but not the end of their annoyances. As the drenched men came within a stone's-throw of half a dozen feeble lights for which they had been making, they heard an excited buzz of voices, and, without warning, a dozen or more guns were fired in their direction. A baggage-mule dropped screaming from a skin wound on the shoulder, and one bullet passed so close to the doctor's head that the broad brim of his *sombrero* was perforated.

"Back, everybody," shouted one of the guides. "It is an Indian ambushade. They are firing from shelter, and we can do nothing."

But von Tempsky had caught the sound of something which gave him a little comfort; to wit, an expression in French from one of the shooters.

"Who are you?" he shouted in French.

The reply was in the same language. "Halt there; stay where you are and let us know your business."

"Do you think we want to stop here to get soaked a little more?" shouted Dr. Steel, urging on his mule before his friend had had time to frame an explanation. "Come along; we guessed they were Indians, and they paid us the same compliment."

The volley was not repeated; but a crowd of men with rifles and lanterns came scurrying to meet the little cavalcade; and, after some laughter and expressions of regret, their leader began a voluble explanation, which von Tempsky cut very short by announcing that he and his party were wet to the skin and required shelter. Thereupon they were ushered into the building whence the shots had been fired, which proved to be a tumble-down inn kept by an old Frenchman.

"We have been much beset by the Seris of late," he said apologetically. "Three times during the past fortnight have we had the village surrounded by parties of them; and, when we heard you approach so late at night, we naturally supposed you to be Indians."

The tavern offered little enough comfort; but provisions were plentiful, and there was a good fire where clothes could be dried. The tales which the *rancheros* had to tell were certainly appalling. Several villages had been entirely depopulated by the savages; many inoffensive travellers had been killed, and others had escaped with the bare life. These Seri Indians were—and even now are—a fierce, intractable people, utterly different from the typical Mexican Indians, who (the Comanches and Apaches apart) are a mild, diligent, and strongly religious race. Mexico still possesses some fifty tribes of redskins, most of which are subdivisions of the very ancient Nahuatl family; but, with the exception of the three tribes just mentioned, many of these had, before von Tempsky's time, begun to intermarry with Europeans and settle in the towns.

At first all the guides except Jago, the leader, flatly refused to go any farther, on hearing these gruesome stories; but when, on the next day, a dozen of the *rancheros* offered to accompany the party as far as Durango, on condition that they would combine with them against any Indians they might meet, the grumbling ceased; for no one was averse to getting a shot at the men who, at one time or other, had robbed every one of them of friend or property. Von Tempsky and Steel were nothing loth, either; the one came from a country where persecution and death were everyday matters; while the other had roughed it for five-and-twenty years, first in the backwoods and latterly at the Californian diggings, where it was a case of "a word and a blow—and the blow first."

For a day or two no sign of Indians was observed, and despite the irregularity of the road and the alarming prevalence of rattlesnakes, the journey was not unpleasant. But on the third afternoon, as the guide Jago was seeking to point out from a distance the village where the company was to pass the night, he uttered a horrified exclamation, and made the sign of the cross. At the same moment an angry hubbub arose from the group of *rancheros*.

"What is it? What are they all looking at?" inquired von Tempsky.

"Smoke; and plenty of it," said the doctor, who was shading his eyes with his hands.

"Ay; smoke," said Jago, who spoke English quite well. "They have burnt another village. Let us go forward quickly, Señors."

An hour's sharp riding brought them to what, a day earlier, had been a fertile settlement or *rancho*, but which was now nothing but a pile of smouldering wood-ashes, round about which lay fully fifty corpses of men, women, and children. At the sight, both guides and *rancheros* went almost mad with indignation; and von Tempsky himself was eager to press on immediately in pursuit of the wretches who had been

guilty of such relentless slaughter. It was then that the more phlegmatic Yankee doctor showed the rest the value of a cool and calculating head.

"See here, boys," he said in his best Spanish, when he could make his voice heard above the howls and oaths of vengeance; "I reckon a redskin's a redskin, whether he hails from here or 'way north. *I'd* got no quarrel with these particular vermin, till I saw *this*. Now I fought Indians before some of you were born; and I'll do it again if you'll let me. But there'll have to be none of this tear-away sort of game that some of you are after. Will you make me captain? You can soon turn me out of it again if you're not satisfied."

The *rancheros* wavered for a moment. Why obey a perfect stranger, who knew neither the country nor the Seris? But the look of simple honesty, yet of bull-dog determination and pluck, in the man's face, gave confidence even to the most hesitating.

"Very good, Señor Doctor; we will obey you."

"They mean they'll *try*, poor fellows," said Steel, in English, to von Tempsky. "They don't know what discipline is."

By his orders, mules and horses were ungirthed, and while he, Jago, and the oldest of the *rancheros* made a careful examination of the first mile of the track left by the murderers, the others lay down to rest and eat.

"They have crossed the ridge," said Steel when he rejoined his fellow-traveller. "We'll all of us take four hours' rest now. It'll be no real delay. Those rascals are fifty miles away by this time, as like as not; perhaps a hundred, for these poor souls have been dead a good many hours. We needn't worry; we shall come up with them later; or with more like them, who'll have to pay for this picnic."

The doctor was probably not exaggerating the distance covered by the Seris. The youngsters of the tribe were put on a horse as soon as they could straddle him; their only toys were bows and arrows, and the generally Spartan upbringing which all underwent enabled them to ride or march or fight for a whole day without food or rest. Large bodies of Seris or Comanches would move a hundred and thirty miles in a day.

Stifling their impatience as well as they could, the avenging party waited till the four hours had expired; then all set off on their mountain climb, though darkness would be coming on almost immediately. Half a mile from the top of the ridge, von Tempsky was seen to spring from his saddle and make a dash at some dark object that lay in the shelter of a rock. Before he had reached it, however, a scuffling, clattering sound arose near him, and a horse, saddled but riderless, struggled to his feet. The others halted.

"Show a light some of you; I've got him," shouted von Tempsky. "But—why, the man's dead!"

Jago dismounted, and, striking a light, revealed the pallid face of a Mexican, who lay with an arrow through his back. Von Tempsky, who had been the only one of the riders to notice the recumbent figure, had imagined it to be that of an Indian spy or sentinel, and had at once made a grab at his throat, only to find the body stiff and quite cold.

"One more score against them," cried the doctor. "Ride on."

They travelled all night and till long after daybreak, without meeting or seeing anyone; and at length Steel called another halt for a few hours. Presently, as he and von Tempsky sat chatting, the latter drew his attention to a body of mounted men riding slowly across their projected path, a couple of miles away.

"We've got them this time," said Steel, jumping up.

"Those are not Indians, Señor," said Jago.

“Tch! Look at their spears, man.”

“I do. They are our Mexican lancers. There; do you not hear their bugle?”

A faint note or two from some brass instrument was carried to them by the wind.

“All right; mount,” cried the doctor. “We’ll have a look at them, anyway.”

They had not gone more than a few hundred yards, when the new-comers caught sight of them riding down the incline; they reined up and, waving their lances, greeted them with jubilant shouts.

“Well—of all the scraggy-looking donkey-drivers!” exclaimed Steel in an aside, as they came up with the “lancers.” There were about eighty of them, all more or less in rags, each man armed with a lance, a very rusty sabre, and a carbine. In their midst, two men held their lances aloft, each spear-point being decorated with the head of an Indian. The men were hearty-looking, happy-go-lucky ruffians, brave as need be, but woefully undisciplined, and out of gear generally. After one glance at them, von Tempsky no longer wondered that many an Englishman, Irishman, Scot, or Yankee who would think himself lucky if he ever rose to the rank of sergeant, at home, could here become a field-marshal or an admiral in half an hour. For the Mexico of those days was, like the southern republics, a happy hunting-ground for foreign soldiers of fortune.

“And they send *these* fellows to put down an Indian rising!” he muttered to the doctor; adding aloud, in Spanish: “Is that all you have killed? Who is your officer?”

The lancers grinned. No; they had killed at least thirty, out of some two hundred. Officer? H’m! Nobody was quite sure. The two men with the heads were *supposed* to be something in that line; but really they couldn’t say for certain.

“All right; pray go on. I and my troop will follow you,” said Steel.

There was one advantage in having fallen in with these ragamuffins; two at least of their number were half-bloods, with eyes like hawks for a trail; and this put an end to all doubt as to the way which must be followed now that the plain was reached. Some of the lancers had more terrible tales of the Indians to add to what the travellers already knew. A priest and a farmer had been murdered two days before; and, only that morning, three ladies had been found speared to death near an *estancia* (farm).

The track wound in serpentine fashion, now skirting a town, now going straight through a *rancho* whence the occupants had fled. By late afternoon the pursuers were within half a dozen miles of Durango; but here the track—more visible than ever now, in the long grass to which they had come—broke away at an obtuse angle, towards the more hilly ground on their right. The doctor pulled up, and he and von Tempsky began to confer with the soldiers. Horses and mules and men were all jaded, urged Steel; and the trail might lead them on through another all-night journey; and to no purpose. Why not ride for the town, take a short rest, and beat up recruits?

The question was being argued and re-argued, when a series of whistles, followed by one concerted and unearthly yell, proceeded from the hills; and, like a pack of wolves, the Indians for whom they had been hunting came charging down the slope; full three hundred of them, stark naked, their bodies painted scarlet and black, their hair and their horses decked with feathers. Steel looked glumly at his own little army. Oh for a couple of dozen well-armed men who had learned the virtues of obedience and combination!

“You lancers prepare to receive their charge,” he shouted; and motioned to his own men to draw off and be ready to attack the Seris in the rear. He was obeyed indifferently; further urged by von Tempsky and Jago, the guides and *rancheros* were wheeling slowly northwards; but the lancers were evidently more than half minded to charge wholesale at the oncoming savages.

It is proverbial that the greater the pain or the danger or the suspense, the more readily a man finds time to notice minute detail that has little or nothing to do with the matter in hand. Steel observed, on this occasion—though the yelling mob was within thirty yards of him—that apparently not a man of them was under six feet in height; that every man sat his horse as though he were a part of it, and that each carried a spear, bow, and quiver, and also a trumpery-looking round shield, studded with bits of brass, shell, and looking-glass. As he had half anticipated, the savages suddenly changed their tactics on reaching the hill foot, and wheeled sharply towards the smaller force.

“Lancers, charge, the moment our volley’s fired,” shouted the doctor. “Fire!—Charge! *Charge*, you thick-headed clod-hoppers, can’t you?—O Lord!” His voice died away in a disheartened little groan.

For the lancers might so easily have had it all their own way; at least twenty redskins had fallen before the carbines of the *rancheros*, and clearly the rest were surprised and confused. Yet there sat these intelligent lancers, their spears in rest, calmly unslinging their carbines for a volley that was quite as likely to hurt their own side as the enemy.

“Can’t be helped now,” said the doctor to his followers. “Blaze away at them as best you can.”

There were no quick-firing magazine-rifles in those days, and with the exception of von Tempsky and Steel, who had each a couple of revolvers, every man was armed with a muzzle-loader; but necessity had long been the mother of invention with the *rancheros*, as with the trappers and the Gauchos. Wads were dispensed with; a generous pinch of powder was thrown into the barrel, and each man had his mouth full of bullets, ready to spit one after the powder; a cap was hastily stuck on the pin and everyone was ready for another volley. But even as it was fired, a shower of arrows was launched at each troop, and many a man dropped forward in his saddle. Already the boot was on the other leg; it was the whites who were confused now, while the Indians had recovered their coolness; and, with a discord of howls, they swiftly separated into two parts, one preparing to charge at each white division.

“Pull yourselves together!”—“Die like men!” cried Steel and von Tempsky respectively, as, abandoning their bridles and with a revolver in each hand, they rode straight to meet the charge; while one half of the lancers fled, and the other half sought to cut a way through their assailants and rejoin the *rancheros*.

The doctor fired off six shots into the front rank as the two forces met, and four Indians fell dead; but his own mule dropped under him, transfixed by a spear.

“Here you are; mount,” bawled von Tempsky in his ear, just when, in imagination, he was already being trampled down by the Indians’ horses.

The ready-witted Pole had sent a bullet into the head of the redskin nearest him, and as he fell, had caught the bridle of his horse. The old backwoodsman, active as a cat, sprang to the horse’s back, and the next moment was emptying his second revolver into the faces of the enemy. Meanwhile, the lancers fought furiously but spasmodically. Their lances could not avail them against the war-hatchets of the savages; and while one half clubbed their carbines, the other made but fruitless play with their sabres, seeking at the same time to drown the howls of the Indians with their own.

But suddenly, when the fight was at its hottest, and when the issue was very much in the balance, a cry of dismay broke from one batch of redskins, who, pointing towards Durango, began to wheel round with the obvious intention of taking flight.

“Help is coming,” cried Jago encouragingly; and, looking back for an instant, Steel saw about forty men, splendidly mounted, and coming up at a gallop from the direction of the town. The second division of the enemy followed the example of the first, and turned to flee. The forty strangers, without uttering a word as

they swept past, dashed in pursuit, firing while still at the gallop. It was vain for the Indians to goad their tired horses; those of the rescuing party were fresh. Before they had gone a mile they were overtaken, and Steel, who had followed as best he could, heard a voice cry in English:

“No quarter; they don’t deserve mercy. If we take prisoners, the Mexicans will torture them to death.”

In a few minutes there was not an Indian left alive; every man of the fugitives had fallen before the ceaseless shower of bullets poured into their ranks by the strangers.

The very sort of men for whom Steel had been longing had come; forty of the Texan mounted militia, who had been sent down-country to treat for mules, had put themselves at the disposal of the Durango police for the suppression of the Indian hordes; and on this, as on subsequent occasions, the punishment which they served out was so terrible that the redskins fled south and east, or hid in the hills, and for a year or two, at least, little was heard of their attacking either travellers or homesteads.

CHAPTER XX

A HOLIDAY AMONG THE OJIBEWAS

We have already spoken, in Chapter VIII, of the Algonquin branch of the red race. This vast family, comprising Ojibewas, Shawnees, Crees, Araphoes, Blackfeet, etc., once owned practically the whole of South Canada, as well as the eastern portion of the States as far down as Kentucky. The territory peculiar to the Ojibewas ran in a rough curve from Saratoga to Winnipeg, and round about the lake district; but as the construction of the railway from New York to Montreal seemed to establish the definite claim of the white men, the Indians retreated farther north, some taking service under the farmers, or settling down to farm for themselves; others wandering in what was left of the prairie and forest land, and turning an occasional dishonest penny by robbing unprotected travellers.

When Charles Richard Weld made his tour from Boston into and through Southern Canada in 1854, only a part of the railway was made, and the greater portion of the journey had to be accomplished by coach, by canoe, or on horseback. Mr. Weld (who must not be confused with Isaac Weld, the explorer, his half-brother) was a barrister and literary man, in whom a close personal friendship with many great travellers, including Sir John Barrow and Sir John Franklin, had bred a strong ambition to see the world and make discoveries on his own account. But a busy man, who adds to his other duties the secretaryship of the Royal Society, must perforce stay at home, and it was not till 1850, when he was a man of thirty-seven, that he saw his way to travelling; and that only by devoting the long vacation of each year to visiting some special quarter of the globe.

It was while journeying northwards on this railway that he encountered his first real “sight,” which was a prairie-fire: a swiftly-moving mass of flame and smoke that rolled almost up to the very rails, making the occupants of the cars feel as though they were in an oven. The fire raged for a good many days, for long after Weld had left the railroad and transferred himself to the coach for Lake George, he could still see the smoke and flare in the distance.

The major part of the coach-route lay along a plank road, bounded on either side by miles of monotonous prairie, or by dark patches of pine-wood, where squirrels, deer, and red foxes abounded. The “coach” was an open arrangement—a *char-à-bancs*, in fact; and Mr. Weld’s travelling companions consisted of three farmers, a couple of French trappers, a wheezy old Irishwoman and her two granddaughters. On the last stage of the journey, when they were within a few miles of the lake-shore, the Englishman’s attention was attracted by the driver to a dark mass that was moving rapidly through the long grass, towards the road.

“Injuns; see em?”

About a score of Ojibewas in full war-dress were riding at the top of their speed, with the apparent intention of cutting off the vehicle.

“Well; I suppose they won’t hurt *us*?” said Weld.

The coachman whipped up his horses. “I reckon they hadn’t better.”

As nobody seemed in the least alarmed, the tourist watched the approach of the Indians rather with interest than with anxiety. Nevertheless, as the redskins, on coming within a hundred yards, suddenly set up an inharmonious howling, and brandished spears or tomahawks, he thought it time to produce and examine his revolver. Just then the horses were pulled up short, and the driver took from beneath his feet a very workmanlike double-barrelled gun; and, looking round him, Weld saw that the other men were doing the same; while even the old woman and the two girls, albeit without a sign of undue excitement, had each brought out a revolver from her reticule.

"That's the way to let 'em have it," said the driver, having fired off both barrels at the advancing mob. Before a second gun could be fired, the whole troop had wheeled about, and were riding away as quickly as they had come. The coachman reloaded as though nothing unusual had happened, put away his rifle, and started the horses again.

"Biggest cowards on the yearth," he mumbled to Weld. "That was only a couple o' charges o' birdshot I give 'em. Bless ye, we know 'em by heart now. Years ago they'd put-up a mail, and tomahawk everybody; but nowadays they seem to run away as soon as they see a gun. If there'd only been you an' me, or nobody but women, they'd ha' tried to bluff *something* out of us, if 'twas only a keg o' spirits, or a bit of tobacker; but half a dozen men'll frighten the lives out of 'em. One time o' day they'd send a charge of arrows first; but they're shy of that if they see any rifles waiting for 'em."

This was Weld's first and only experience of an Indian assault, for the few wild tribes with which he came in contact were quite disorganised, had lost confidence in their traditional weapons of war, and had as yet a wholesome horror of gunpowder. But this absence of hostilities enabled him to get a good insight into Ojibewa forest and river life, and afforded him plenty of interesting adventure where hunting was concerned. At the lake-side inn, where he stayed for a few days, the host invited him to attend an Ojibewa rattlesnake-hunt, a form of sport of which he had never before heard.

"What weapons must I take?" he asked before starting.

"Oh, nothing. Put a gun (revolver) in your pocket if you like," was the careless reply.

A small party of redskins were squatting outside the inn, and seeing that the two white men were ready to accompany them, they led the way to a hilly and well-wooded spot, just on the eastern shore of the lake. Weld noticed that the only arms carried by them were a knife and a long, slender stick, and from all he had heard of the terrible rattlesnake, this appeared a poor equipment indeed wherewith to kill reptiles which might be any length up to eight or even ten feet. Being prepared for a very great deal of wariness and of elaborate preliminary on the part of the Indians, he was, of course, *not* prepared for the entire absence of such preliminary. One of the hunters who walked beside him stooped unconcernedly, picked up a strip of something, gave it a shake, and put it in his game-bag.

"*He* always seems to find the first one," remarked the innkeeper.

"The first *what*?" queried Weld. "And what on earth is this awful stench?"

"Rattlesnake," chuckled the Yankee. "See'd him pick it up, didn't ye? Come on; here's a chance for *you*, now.—Bah! What in the 'nation did ye want to do *that* for?"

For, without any hesitation, Weld had pulled out his revolver and sent two bullets into the body of a snake which, coiled up like a wire spring, had placed itself across a narrow path, and was rearing its head in an uncomfortably suggestive manner.

"What did you expect me to do?" asked Weld with some impatience.

"Why, *this*.—Stand clear!"

But the Yankee was too “cocksure,” as the boys say; and was only too glad to spring back again to the side of his guest. What he had *tried* to do was to seize another snake by the tail and “snap” it, as a carter cracks a whip; but the creature’s mouth and poison-fangs happened to be very much in the way just then, and the innkeeper left the task to the more expert Ojibewas.

Now that he knew what to expect, Weld retired to a safe distance and began to note all that took place. The overpowering smell of which he had complained arose from the snakes themselves. The rats, rabbits, squirrels, etc., on which they feed begin to putrefy as soon as they are swallowed, owing to the action of the poison, and one snake is often enough to make a whole neighbourhood intolerable.

The majority of those captured were small, averaging about three and a half feet long, and the activity of the Indians in detecting, seizing, and killing them was almost incredible. In most cases the snake was lying, straight or coiled as the case might be, in the tracks usually followed by small animals in their periodical path to the water, for rattlesnakes are singularly slow in their movement, and so are forced to rely more on their proverbial “wisdom.” The moment one of them was discovered it was whisked off the ground so rapidly that it seemed to fly up; one deft jerk, or whip-like flick, dislocated its backbone and it was dead. To an Englishman the process sounds about as sane and as safe as lifting a bull-terrier by the tail; but the Indians did their work unmovedly, not a man was bitten, and Weld learned later that not once in ten years was such hunting attended with fatal results to anyone; for should a man be bitten a rough sort of cautery, or the sucking of the wound, together with drugs taken internally, generally gave the lie to the popular belief that a rattlesnake’s bite is incurable.

Where a captive was inconveniently large or long, or where he refused to uncoil himself, the savages used their sticks, either to rap him on the head, or to “straighten-out” his coils. The object in killing was to obtain the oil and gall, which were highly valued for medicinal and other virtues; therefore, any blow that might wound the body was avoided if possible. In Weld’s opinion the “rattle” of the animal has been much exaggerated by travellers; “creaking” or “rustling” would be a better term, for the noise resembles that made by stiff paper, or parchment, when crumpled in the hand. A few days later, when travelling up-country by canoe, he realised that these snakes can swim with perfect ease, for the Ojibewa guides whom he had engaged more than once drew his attention to one of them gliding down the bank and into the water in determined pursuit of a rat that had refused to become a victim to its supposed (and very doubtful) powers of fascination.

For the first time in his life, Mr. Weld now found himself completely cut off from association with white men, for he had before him a lonely journey by river and lake to a backwoods settlement, where an old friend, Major Strickland, had set up a model farm. Fortunately, one of the Ojibewas spoke English fluently, and the other three had at least a smattering of French. Perhaps they were not remarkable for their intelligence, save where canoeing and hunting were concerned, but at least they were amiable, obliging, and contented.

His first acquaintance with rapids was worthy of remark, for it came without a moment’s warning or preparation. He and two Indians travelled in one canoe, while the other two followed, in a second, with his baggage. Weld was lying back, idly smoking, and probably lost in admiration of the solemn, rugged beauty of the steep banks, fringed with pine and cedar trees, when all in a moment the world seemed to turn over and slip from under him; his head struck the gunwale smartly, and he gradually got a dim notion that he was standing with his back against something hard and his body at right angles to that of the Indian in the bows, who nevertheless continued to ply his paddle stolidly, and without a smile or a word. For a few seconds the boat trebled her speed in some unaccountable manner, then followed another jerk, another knock on the head, and once more he was lounging in his former position, and the canoe moving along as before.

He now threw a glance behind him, and shuddered, for what he saw was a sheer fall of water, apparently about sixteen feet high, studded everywhere with ugly-looking rocks. He began an angry remonstrance with the Indians for not having warned him, but just then a weird cry, something between the bray of a jackass and the wail of a peacock, echoed through the forest. One second a large white body was seen flapping over their heads; the next, the same body lay fluttering on the water near the boat. One of the Ojibewas had dropped his paddle and, like lightning, sent an arrow through the noisy creature, which turned out to be a pelican that they had disturbed from its evening fishing.

On the following morning, as Weld was finishing his breakfast over his camp fire, he was aroused from his meditations by one of the Indians pointing significantly towards the thicket behind him.

“Morning! Have you got a drop of tea left; we’re thirsty,” cried a voice as he turned his head, and a second added, “Well, Peter; what are you doing round our neighbourhood?”

The Indian who spoke English jumped up delightedly, and greeted with much respect three strapping young fellows who suddenly stepped out from among the bushes.

“I don’t know who you are, gentlemen,” said Weld as he rose to welcome them, “but it’s good to hear one’s own language spoken again.”

The lads introduced themselves as farm pupils of Major Strickland’s, and, leaving the Indians to bring Weld’s luggage by water, they showed him a short cut to his friend’s house, which, in a straight line, was but seven miles away.

At the farm he was surprised to find Indians performing all the domestic offices of a civilised household, and dressed more or less in European garb; for, tired of the ingrained laziness of negro servants, the Major had long had all the menial work of his house and estate done by redskins, and these, as far as Weld could see, worked diligently and honestly. One small body of them were kept constantly employed as hunters, and instructors in woodcraft to the pupils, and, judging from their abilities as deer-trackers, the lads could have had no better tutors.

An animal much coveted for the sake both of its skin and its flesh was the *cabrit*, prong-buck, or prong-horned antelope, as it is variously called; and the stalking of this creature was Weld’s principal amusement during his stay. In spite of frequent slaughter among them, large herds were often to be seen in the neighbourhood, and one day no less than a hundred carcasses were brought home, to be dried for winter food.

The hunting party on this occasion consisted of Weld, Strickland, and six other Englishmen, together with about thirty Ojibewas, a dozen of whom were given a start of five hours. These, leaving the farm at daybreak, moved swiftly through the sparse forest to the hills beyond, and started a herd of over two hundred. Taking up positions at wide intervals from each other, the Indians succeeded in frightening and mystifying the bucks, and gradually driving them towards the spot for which the main body of the hunt was now making. This was some ten miles from the farm, and so rapidly did all his companions cover the distance, that Weld had great difficulty in keeping up with them, though himself a strong and athletic man.

One old Ojibewa was always a few yards ahead of the party, and Weld was instructed to watch and obey every signal made by him. Sometimes he came to a dead halt, and the whole troop followed his example, not so much as a whisper being uttered; then again, he would lead the way at a good swinging pace, often talking freely and even loudly with those behind. All of a sudden, however, he broke off his conversation; a gun-shot had sounded from some three miles away. He held up his hand, and everyone stood breathless. Presently he moved on again, but more slowly, for several hundred yards, the rest gliding along in his wake, and at last he stopped dead again. This was the most irksome, or the most disciplinary, period of

the hunt, for the tyrannical leader kept everyone standing motionless for quite ten minutes; and when Weld merely took out his handkerchief to mop his brow, the Indians nearest him eyed him as reproachfully as though this were a penal offence.

The next thing the guide did was to fall flat on his face, and each man mechanically imitated him—except Weld, who had visions of a dislocated shoulder, if not of a self-discharging gun, and who consequently performed the manoeuvre by degrees.

Now that his ear was so close to the ground, he could plainly detect the uniform tread of a large body of light-stepping animals, but he dared not risk spoiling sport by raising his head to peer among the tree-trunks in front of him. In a few minutes a gun went off, half a mile to their left front, and was immediately echoed by one to the right, and another well ahead, whereat the trampling increased in speed and volume. Immediately the leader raised his hand to a perpendicular, and the redskins began to crawl on, worm-fashion, in two diverging lines. Weld started awkwardly to imitate them, but a strong hand caught him by the ankle and held him still. Screwing his head round, he saw that Strickland was his captor.

“Hold on,” whispered the Major. “We get our fun from this side.”

Another three minutes’ silence followed, only broken by the tramp of the approaching herd, slower now, and more hesitating.

“Now then; roll away or crawl away to your right, as far as you can, and as sharp as you can; and jump up when I open fire,” whispered the old soldier, and Weld could see that, at a wave of his friend’s arm, all the Englishmen were swiftly separating. He obeyed; but by the time he had covered a dozen yards, he became convinced that the Indians had all gone suddenly demented, for from every direction there arose a succession of demoniacal yells that almost drowned the crack-crack of the rifles that now sounded on his left.

He leapt to his feet; not an Indian was in sight. The white men, all standing up, were blazing away as hard as they could, into an immense herd of bucks, which were falling in numbers out of all reasonable proportion to the shots fired. Then he discovered that, from the other three sides, the Ojibewas, lying in the long grass or crouching behind trees, were pouring volley after volley of arrows at the bewildered beasts, which, butting each other, were starting hither and thither, completely panic-stricken.

“Ware horns!” shouted the Major’s son as, hurriedly butting his rifle, he felled an antelope that had charged despairingly at him; and very soon Weld was glad enough to follow the example, as a stout young buck rushed, head down, in his direction.

More terrified now by the noise of the guns and the sight of the white men than by the arrows and shouts that proceeded from the other three points of the compass, the herd turned to flee back towards the hills. But this was only the signal for every Indian to spring erect and brandish his long spear. That effectually broke up the herd; the distracted creatures squeezed a passage for themselves wherever they could, and fled out of sight, leaving a good half of their number to be carried back to the farm in the waggons which were now on their way to the scene of the battue.

CHAPTER XXI

CHIPPEWYANS AND COLUMBIAN GOLD-DIGGERS

While human nature is what it is, the sudden discovery of gold in any country must ever be the signal for all the available flotsam and jetsam and riff-raff of society to flock to that country, in the sorry hope of finding a shorter road to wealth than the old-fashioned one of steady plodding.

Before mining concerns were regulated by governments or by syndicates, the edifying spectacle of men wrangling and fighting over a claim or a "find," like dogs over a bone, might be witnessed at any hour of the day. Add to this the constant disturbance between the strangers and the original inhabitants, and you have a condition of affairs which must quickly call for some intervention by the State. This is what our Government thought when, in 1857, the discovery of gold in British Columbia began to lead to rioting among the miners and to petty insurrections of the Indians of the vicinity. In order to nip such disorders in the bud, a few troops were landed near what is now called New Westminster, on the Fraser River, and a man-of-war, H.M.S. *Plumper*, commanded by Captain Richards, was ordered to keep a watchful eye on the river mouth. Rumour said that the ship had been sent to hold the Indians in check; but Admiral Mayne, who was then first lieutenant of the *Plumper*, tells us that it was the white immigrants who required handling, and that, but for them, the Columbian Indians, who had long been quiet and inoffensive, would have confined their attentions to their fishing and farming.

One day, just at the beginning of winter, news was brought to the ship that fighting was going on among the miners and Indians at a camp near a small town called Yale. The *Plumper* had a steam-launch which was ordinarily used for river work, and an armed body of bluejackets under Lieutenant Mayne at once put off in a large pinnace for the spot—two miles higher up—where she was lying in dock, with the intention of hastening to the scene of the disturbance. To the young officer's dismay, the launch had disappeared, and, on inquiry, he learned that Colonel Moody of the Engineers, who had been the first to hear the news, had immediately put off in her with twenty-five men and a howitzer. A mounted messenger was soon dispatched back to the harbour and, in half an hour, returned with orders from the Captain, for the firing-party to hurry after the soldiers and offer their services.

By nightfall the place was reached; a cheerless, rugged spot where the crew had some difficulty in landing. The pinnace was made fast to the launch, and, following the directions of the men who had been left in charge of her, the sailors marched quickly over a hill and were soon at the diggings.

"You've come too late," were the Engineer officer's first words. He pointed to a group of prisoners, Indian and white, who, under the guard of an armed picket, were making themselves comfortable for the night. "We've had a heavy day, though," continued Colonel Moody; "and three of my fellows have been badly wounded. Your men pretty fresh, I suppose?"

"Quite, sir."

"Give them half an hour for supper, and then I shall want you to march them about ten miles across country. I have guides ready for you. Come and have something to eat, and I'll tell you all about it."

The Colonel, a subaltern, and a regimental surgeon had established themselves in a miner's hut, and here, over a very unconventional meal, Mayne learned what had happened. Scarcely had the soldiers put an end to the rioting, when six Chippewyan Indians had galloped into the camp. The miners at the next claim had fired on them, they said; had threatened to burn their winter fodder-stacks, and meant to drive them out of their old settlement.

"Of course, we've only heard one side," concluded Colonel Moody. "Don't trust your guides too far, Mr. Mayne. Let one of them keep his horse, in case you want to send me a message in a hurry, and make the other five march between your men; they can leave their horses here." He turned to the surgeon. "You'd better go, too, Campbell; you may be wanted. They've a very good doctor here if we need him. Good-bye, and good luck to you both."

The doctor buckled on his sword and Mayne collected the sailors, placing five of the Indians in the centre, and all set off at a brisk step. The mounted redskin led them some miles along a curving valley and then across an open tract of country, whence they were soon able to see the lights from some settlement.

"Is that the place?" the lieutenant asked of a redskin who spoke intelligible English.

"Yes; we have but four miles to go now."

"There seems to be plenty of light in the place; how is that?"

The Indian did not reply, but spoke in his own language to his neighbour.

"You don't understand them, do you?" said Campbell in a low voice. "More do I, worse luck. They seem to be very proud of themselves all at once. If I were you, I'd have an answer out of that chap."

The lieutenant laid his hand sharply on the redskin's naked shoulder.

"Answer the question, my friend. We don't want all that mumbling and whispering."

The man remained sulkily silent, but the Chippewyan to whom he had spoken, a brighter, more intelligent fellow, said:

"We are pleased because our warriors have come down from the mountains, and are burning the town."

"Your warriors'll get hurt, if that's their game," said Mayne; and for a while nothing more was said. But as they came nearer to the lights, the Indians all began talking at the top of their voices, and Mayne was obliged to call for silence. Presently the mounted redskin stopped his horse, and a halt was called.

"We had better go back, or wait for more warriors," he said; "we are too few."

"What are you talking about?" asked young Mayne sharply.

"It is not the white men's camp that is burning, but our own. It is clear that our brethren have not come, as we had hoped. There are over seventy of the miners, and you are but eighteen. They will massacre you."

"Ride on, and hold your stupid tongue," said the sailor. But the redskin suddenly struck his horse across the withers and would have galloped away, but that Dr. Campbell made a deft spring and managed to seize the thong that did duty for a bridle.

"Thanks, Doctor.—Now, my man, you get down and march with the rest."

Mayne turned to his sailors. "Can any of you lads manage a leather jib-sheet?"

"Ay, ay; let me have her, please, sir," volunteered a young seaman. The guide was made to dismount and the sailor began to lead the horse in the rear. After a few minutes the Indians resumed their talk among themselves again and—evidently taking courage from the careless demeanour of the bluejackets—began

to handle their tomahawks more or less jubilantly, as though waxing eager to be at their enemies; so much so that the two officers held a muttered debate. They had come out here to make peace; but if these savages once saw themselves backed by resolute and well-armed white men, they would never rest till they had butchered as many of the diggers as possible. It was a trying position for a young man who would be held responsible for whatever evil might happen; and Mayne, though he had gone through the Crimean War with distinction, gaining his first lieutenant's step in the Sea of Azov, was still only a lad of twenty-two.

"What would *you* do?" he asked.

"Disarm the jolly lot, straight away," said Campbell, who was his senior by a few years.

Mayne halted his men, explained the position to them, and told the Indians what he and his colleague had decided; and they, with many grunts of dissatisfaction, gave up their arms on condition that they should be restored if necessary for self-defence.

"You know, *this* begins to look like business," commented the surgeon when, within half a mile of the glaring flames, a chorus of hooting, yelling, and singing greeted their ears.

"*I* think it looks like advancing at the quick step," said his companion; and he gave the order.

Very soon only a fringe of pine-trees separated them from the scene of the tumult, and, as they reached these, three men jumped up from the ground, and cried:

"Who the blazes are you?"

"Firing-party from H.M.S. *Plumper*."

"Then git off back to your mothers and mind your own business, afore ye git killed," hiccupped the first, who carried a lantern in one hand and a revolver in the other. The next moment he was lying on his back, for Dr. Campbell had wrenched the pistol out of his hand, and, with a single blow of his fist, had knocked him clean off his feet. The second man put his hand in his pocket, doubtless in search of a pistol, but, without waiting to make sure of that, Mayne had him round the arms and waist and was soon squeezing half the breath out of his body. The third man turned to give the alarm, but a petty-officer sprang after him and dragged him back by his shirt-collar.

"Take away their weapons," cried Mayne as, with a smart trick of the heel, he threw his captive violently to the ground. "No time for prisoners.—Forward!"

A few steps more and the sailors were past the trees, and in full view of all that was going on. And a pretty sight it was. Thirty or more miners, many of them delirious with drink, were capering round one or other of the fuel and fodder stacks to which they had set light; Indians and white men, to the number of a score, lay on the ground dead or wounded; and, beyond the stacks, was a heaving, struggling, shrieking mob of miners and redskins, the former brandishing knives and pickaxes, and shouting to their drunken allies to come to their assistance; the latter spending all their savage energies in defence of their homes and families.

A whisper of indignant disgust ran through the little knot of sailors; a fair and square sea-fight, or even a "set-to" in a Portsmouth or Chatham slum, was respectable in comparison with all this. The men at the fires were the first to be aware of the new arrivals; they broke off their dancing and, some awestruck, others bombastic, lurched towards them.

"Halt!—Now listen to me, you sweeps, if you've got sense enough left," cried Mayne, drawing his sword. The wild-looking, drink-sodden crowd—English, German, French, and Yankee—ceased their babel for a

moment. But when they saw that the little force consisted of only sixteen men led by what they considered a couple of boys, their appearance became mere matter for uproarious jesting; the noise broke out afresh and was echoed by despairing wails from the Indians in the background, who only saw a powerful addition to their persecutors.

“Who’s your leader?” shouted young Mayne.

“That’s me, gov’nor,” said a tall Englishman, who carried “escaped convict” in every line of his face. “All right, boys; they’ve only come to lend a hand; why, they’ve got some Injun pris’ners. Come on, Lootenant; I was a seaman afore you was born. Shake hands.”

The noisy ruffian came swaggering forward, and the sailors breathed hard for a moment. Surely their favourite officer would never stand that sort of talk. Yet it was no time for words; these men were harmless, compared to the other blackguards who were trying to burn the Indians’ wigwams and huts over their heads.

The lieutenant sheathed his sword and took a half-step forward, at the same time clenching his left fist; then let drive, straight at the digger’s chin. The fellow went down like a sack of flour, apparently stunned, for he made no attempt to get up again. But immediately several revolver-barrels flashed in the fire-light and three shots were fired; a burning pain in his left arm told Mayne that he was wounded, but the other shots went wide. He stepped from in front of his men.

“Open order!—Out of the way, you red men.—*Present!*” The rifles flew to the sailors’ shoulders like magic. There was no time to be lost now; only thirty yards away, Indians were murdering and being murdered, and the shrieks of the women made the young fellow’s blood run cold. Yet he dared not place his few men between two forces of desperate maniacs. The rioters had again ceased their gabble.

“Hands up, every one of you.” The lieutenant waited for a few seconds. “Make up your minds; you’ll not get another warning.”

However mad the diggers might be, it began to dawn on them that they could not hold their own for three minutes against men who regarded fighting as part of their day’s work. Still they hesitated, for the more curious or less pressed of the other body were leaving the huts and coming over to them. They looked from these to the sailors, in whose faces there was no sign of wavering; already the officer’s lips seemed to be framing the word “Fire!” Then they could bear the tension no longer. Some in ill-tempered silence, the rest whimpering for mercy, threw up both hands.

“Dr. Campbell; take charge here till all arms are collected; then join me.—Rear rank; ’tion! Left turn. Trail arms. Double!”

But when Mayne and his eight men reached the wigwams, it was plain enough that it would be the Indians who would give the trouble. They had at last discovered that the white warriors were with them, and now, though their disheartened assailants were already ceasing to fight, other than on the defensive, and were retiring as fast as they could get clear of the crush, they began to strike with double fury, shrieking their war-whoops, hacking and stabbing wherever they could. Mayne gave a command, and every sailor slung his rifle and drew his cutlass.

“Now separate them, lads.”

The bluejackets dashed into the crowd with a cheer, and good-humouredly flung themselves between miners and redskins, employing fists, shoulders, and, where necessary and practicable, the hilts or flats of their cutlasses. By the time Campbell came running up with his eight men, the wonder-stricken Indians had drawn back, and were meditating on the apparent illogicalness of their Queen’s warriors.

“Serve this lot the same as the others,” said Mayne; and those of the miners who had not fled were soon holding up their hands, while the grinning sailors crammed their haversacks with pistols and bowie-knives, or stacked rifles and pickaxes out of harm’s way.

The Indian guides now asked for their weapons and were curtly refused by Mayne, who, intimating to the miners that they were now under arrest, made them fall in, preparatory to a return to their own camp, which was but a few hundred yards away. While the indefatigable doctor was singling out the more sober and respectable of these to help him in an examination of the wounded of both parties, a German digger who had fled came running back to the camp, hysterical with fright.

“The Chippewyans!” he screamed, clutching at Campbell’s arm, and sobbing convulsively.

There was no need to ask what he meant, for the thunder of horses’ hoofs could already be heard, and, by the time the sailors were brought to attention, the wild war-whoop of a body of Indians was resounding over the slopes.

“Our pistols. Give us our arms,” roared the terrified miners; and again the lieutenant found himself in an uncomfortable predicament. Only a minute before, he had been considering the advisability of disarming the redskins in case of a treacherous attack during the night. The new arrivals were mounted, and doubtless strong in numbers; and, backed by the forty or more Indians already present, they might easily be a more powerful force than he could deal with. Already the savages, seeing vengeance for their burning stacks within their grasp, had gathered together and were chattering and waving their war-hatchets.

“I can’t trust you with pistols,” he said coldly, and beckoned to him the most reliable of the Indian guides. “You must tell your people who are coming that the White Queen’s judges will punish these men. If they attempt to do it themselves, they also will be punished.”

The Indian hurried away to repeat the message to his chief, who appeared to be haranguing his warriors; while Mayne spoke a few cheery words of caution to the sailors.

A whistle from the doctor made him turn round. “Here they come. By George! how many more of them?”

In the shifting blaze of the stacks, the body of horsemen who suddenly shot from among the trees seemed to be at least a thousand; in reality, there were between eighty and a hundred; some belonging to this camp, but the majority of them braves from the Cascade or other mountains, whom the messengers had hurriedly collected. The unarmed miners huddled together, shivering or cursing; while the seamen, with their rifles “shouldered,” stood in a single line between them and the advancing savages. At a sign from the chief, the horsemen drew up and a palaver began.

“Come on. You and I’ll take a hand in this,” said Mayne. “They seem to be in doubt. Where’s our interpreter?” He and the surgeon walked over to the chiefs, and, for some time, it seemed as though there certainly would have to be bloodshed; for the Indians who had come from a distance wanted value for their money, and were not disposed to hear reason. But presently the interpreter cut into the conversation, reminding the chiefs that the “warriors with no hair on their faces” had easily subdued a large body of white men; and that, only ten miles away, there were “braves in red coats, with hair on their upper lips,” as well as a large number of miners, who would take a speedy vengeance on them.

“Tell them, also,” said Mayne, “that unless they agree to keep the peace, I shall give the miners their weapons again, and we shall fight for *them*.”

His heart was “in his mouth” as he uttered this high-sounding threat; for, of course, he no more dared do such a thing than he dared head a mutiny on board his ship. It was a chance shot; but it carried the day. A

buzz of conversation arose among the Indians of the camp. Set those white fiends about their ears again? They would fight their own allies first. An agreement was speedily arrived at, and Mayne marched both sailors and prisoners back to the white camp.

But it was an anxious night for him. His wound, though only a flesh cut, was causing him great pain now that the excitement of the evening was over; his men were getting hungry and sleepy, and the doctor—no less so—had his hands full with those whom the Indians had injured; there were not a dozen miners who, in their present condition, could be relied upon to fight if need arose; and the redskins, to whom treachery was as the breath of their nostrils, might, instead of keeping faith, swoop down on the camp at any moment. But sailors are used to short spells of sleep; sentries were relieved every two hours; there was no more disturbance, and by morning the diggers had come to a rational and penitent frame of mind. How the quarrel had begun was one of the things that will never be found out; when white men allow the beast in them to come uppermost, there is nothing to choose between them and savages of any other colour. Before the day was ended, Colonel Moody and a squad of soldiers had arrived; the ringleaders on either side were on their way to Vancouver for examination, and peace was once more restored.

CHAPTER XXII

THE CHIPPEWYANS OF THE COLUMBIAN MOUNTAINS

In a former volume^[4] the writer has related a hunting adventure which befell the late Lieutenant John Keast Lord; but, as the career of this intrepid traveller was so full of romantic and striking episodes, the reader may be glad to hear a little more about him.

After his eventful mule-buying expedition into the States, he returned to British Columbia, where he was acting as naturalist to the Canadian Boundary Commission; but he had no sooner reached New Westminster than he found other instructions awaiting him; this time, to report on the fauna of the coast Ranges. This was in 1858, when already the Chippewyans and Kuchins had been unsettled and rendered ripe for assault and murder by the newly-arrived gold-diggers; and Mr. Lord wisely decided to take with him a bodyguard of half a dozen young Canadian hunters, whose bravery, judgment, and fidelity he had many times proved.

New Westminster was indeed new in those days; in fact, it was not a year old; and much of the ride from there to the Cascade Mountains was a pathless, hilly waste, dotted with mountain-like rocks of granite, and occasionally varied by chasms and cañons; and in this cheerful neighbourhood many Indians who feared the vengeance of the Government, for some of their various crimes, had taken up their abode. The soldier-naturalist's intention was to reach the seaward slopes of the range, which had been but very little explored, and were known to be covered to a great extent by dense forests.

By the second day of his journey he had begun to have serious thoughts of sending back at least three of his companions, realising that a troop of seven mounted men, fully armed, and accompanied by five baggage-mules, had very much the appearance of a punitive expedition on a small scale. Certainly this must have been the view of the first few parties of redskins with whom he met; for these either fled hastily as though to warn their friends, or else defiantly threatened the strangers with their bows or muskets. Lord's absolutely perfect knowledge of the Athapascan tongue, and of the character and customs of the Chippewyans, was really the surest weapon of defence for him to rely on now; and, bidding his men conceal all arms but their rifles, and endeavour to look as much as possible like a peaceful hunting or travelling party, he resolved that, whenever they met with Indians, he would get in first blow with his tongue and conciliate the savages.

This very soon proved to be a promising plan; for on the third morning, not long after the little troop had begun its day's march, a score of Indians burst out from the shelter of one of the huge boulders and, in a chorus of wild yells, ordered the white men to throw down their rifles. Signing to his companions to stay where they were, Lord cantered across the strip of broken ground, and, with no sign of anxiety, pulled up before the noisiest of the Indians and gave him a laughing good morning.

"Have you not yet learned to distinguish between friends and enemies?" he asked. The redskins ceased their clamour and looked at each other in a puzzled manner. They had been prepared for violence on the part of the new-comers; or they would even have beheld their meek surrender without betraying great astonishment; but that the white leader should treat them and their demands as a huge joke, and further,

should speak their tongue with an accent as pure and natural as their own, were facts not to be grappled with hurriedly. And, while they hesitated, Lord continued airily, "What do you fear, my brothers? We have not come to hurt you. Why did you beseech us to drop our guns?"

"You have tracked some of our tribe from the mines, have you not?" said the chief cautiously, and more, perhaps, to gain time than because he sought information.

"No; we have nothing to do with the mines, nor do we wish to poach on your hunting or your fishing. We are going to look for beasts in the forest on the distant slopes. If you will guide us to a place where we can cross the range with our horses and mules, we will pay you well."

To do him justice, though the Indian may be treacherous, he is seldom a liar; consequently he is less prone than the rest of the world to doubt another man's word. From the chief's increasing hesitation it was clear enough that he believed the Englishman's statement, and was not unwilling to be friendly. All the same, Lord's mind was not entirely at ease; none of the Indians had horses; few of them had firearms; and the covetous glances cast at his horse and his rifle showed plainly enough that at least the majority of his new neighbours would like the opportunity of robbing him and his men. Some of them began to consult in low tones, but he turned on these with a sudden severity, partly assumed and partly real.

"What?" he shouted. "Do you make a stranger of *me*? Do you exclude from your palaver one who speaks your tongue; who has smoked the peace-pipe and hunted with your brethren everywhere, from the Nipigon Lake to these very mountains, and from the white man's gold-camps to the country of the Apaches and the Navajos; who has taught even the wisest of your tribe; who can charm away pains in the jaws, and can put new life into horses and dogs and cattle when they are sick?"

The muttered conversation broke off abruptly, and, with some approach to deference, the chief explained that it only related to the price which they should ask for guiding the Big White Chief, and to the doubts that some of them had as to the good faith of his followers. The Big White Chief (he stood six feet four) answered curtly that he would be answerable for his men, and, by way of payment, would give a supply of tobacco and rum to each Indian, and a revolver, with fifty cartridges, to the leader. The last item clinched the bargain in a moment, and the chief at once agreed to show the way to a gorge through which the travellers and their beasts could pass with ease to the other side. This, he said, was more than a day's journey away; if the white braves would stay the night at his camp, which they would reach by sundown, he would undertake to bring them to the gorge by noon on the following day.

"Go on, then," said the Englishman. "I will inform my men and we will follow you"; and in a very few words he explained the situation to the Canadians, warning everyone to be on his guard.

The Indians, though laden with the spoils of a brief hunting expedition, set off at a rapid jog-trot, seeming quite heedless of the broken and ever-rising ground, over which the white men's horses had much ado to keep pace with them. At times this difficult road gave place to a winding but well-worn track that seemed as though it would eventually lead, corkscrew fashion, to the summit of a mountain nearly ten thousand feet high.

Some distance up this, Lord called a halt for dinner, and, when it was ended, he had one of the mules disburthened, and, with much show of friendly condescension, insisted upon placing it at the chief's disposal for the remainder of their climb. By this means he gained as it were a hostage in case of treachery; for it would be easy for one or other of his party to place himself between the now mounted chief and the rest of the Indians, with whom he had for a long time been carrying on a mysterious and disquieting conversation in an undertone. Lord was a poor hand at playing eavesdropper, even had his life or liberty depended on that form of acquiring information; but, from odd syllables he had overheard from

time to time, it had not been difficult to gather that his guides had become two factions, the one strongly disagreeing with the policy of the other.

Late in the afternoon the path wound suddenly into a thick grove of red and yellow cedars and Douglas firs; and the half-muffled sounds of life in the distance told the travellers that the Indian camp, or some other, could not be far away. The sounds soon separated themselves so that the barking of dogs, the blows of an axe on a tree-trunk, etc., could easily be distinguished; then lights peeped out among the trees, and the chatter of women and screaming of babies grew plainly audible.

Since he had been compelled to ride among the white men, the chief had become more and more moodily silent and ill at ease; and now the Indians ahead were throwing apprehensive glances back, and renewing their whispered arguments.

“What is it? What do they fear?” asked Lord of the chief, who was then riding abreast of him.

He answered nervously, “I will not deceive my great brother. They fear lest you or your companions should tell other white men what you will have seen at our camp.”

“And if we did?”

“You would no longer be the red man’s friend. If harm should come to us through any of you, my tribe would take a fearful vengeance.”

The big veterinary surgeon laughed negligently, and remarked that the chief need not be uneasy. Whatever curiosity he might feel was soon to be satisfied; for one more twist of the path brought them on to a large clearing, dotted everywhere with fires and wigwams. Lord had half expected to see a considerable reinforcement of Indians here; and was much relieved to find the camp guarded only by women and six or seven elderly men.

The guides separated, each going to his own wigwam, and the chief signified that the strangers would be expected to share a banquet with him over his particular fire. The food was good, the chief and his own special cronies who sat with him very hospitable and entertaining. Bed-time came, and two tents were placed at the guests’ disposal, Lord, of course, arranging a system of “watches” to guard against surprise. But no surprise came; the night passed quietly and peacefully, and the Englishman was at a loss to understand the fears and suspicions of the Indians. But while he was washing at a stream close at hand, one of the Canadians joined him.

“I’ve got at their mystery, I think,” he said in a whisper.

“Ah?”

“Chinese prisoners; three of ’em. I’ve been talking to one while you were having your breakfast. I take it that this is a refuge-camp for all the rascality of the neighbourhood. John Chinaman tells me that the whole crew are ‘wanted’ at Vancouver for sundry attacks on the mining camps. Why, these are some of the varmints who burnt Thomson’s store last year.”

Lord finished his ablutions and sat down to discuss the position, which was certainly not a pleasant one. In a sense, he was on his honour not to betray his entertainers; yet, as a Government servant, it seemed to be his duty either to arrest the chief or else lay information against him. Moreover, though the few Chinamen he had met had not impressed him favourably, his blood boiled at the notion of slavery on British soil, and of the unnameable cruelties to a captive of which the redskins were capable. Before he could arrive at any decision, however, a terrible scream resounded through the camp, and both men rushed towards the wigwams.

On the ground lay a Chinaman, pierced by an arrow, and Lord saw at a glance that he was dead.

“The brutes,” muttered his companion. “That’s the poor beggar’s punishment for breaking out and speaking to me.” Lord called to his men and then rounded on the chief, who was hurriedly approaching.

“Where are the other two prisoners?” he said. “You must hand them over to me. I am a warrior of the White Queen’s, and can have every one of you hanged.—No, no; I’ll have no secret discussions. If you disobey the Queen you are no longer my friends. (Look out, you fellows!)” In another moment he had pulled a revolver from his pocket and was covering the chief. “I give you one minute in which to bring out the other prisoners.”

Bows or muskets were hastily raised, but the Canadians had unslung their rifles like lightning, and were grouped behind Lord ready to fire on the first man who dared to aim at him. The chief shrugged his shoulders, smiled, and ordered the prisoners to be produced. They soon appeared, unbound but strongly guarded, and, in pidgin English, told how, a few days before, their camp near the sea had been raided, their employers put to flight, and themselves brought away to slavery.

“Can you guide us to the sea?” asked Lord. Yes; they could. It was but a few miles distant. “Very well, then,” he continued, turning to the chief. “If you will give me these men, and will swear by the Great Spirit that you will not again trouble the white men’s camps, we will promise not to betray your hiding-place.”

A rapid exchange of glances took place between the Indians, and then the chief said emphatically:

“I give up the prisoners, and I swear that my tribe will keep faith with yours.” Lord then swore to his part of the bargain, and, anxious to escape from the Indians at once, paid the guides and set off immediately in the wake of the liberated prisoners.

“What do you think about it?” he asked the eldest of the Canadians, when they were well on the road through the wood.

“I think they were a sight too ready to give way. We haven’t seen the last of ’em, I reckon.”

“Well; we shall be in open country directly, according to the Chinamen,” said Lord. He was disposed towards a hopeful view, the more so that he had given the Indians plainly to understand that they would pay dearly for any attempt at treachery. Once or twice, on looking back, he perceived men walking slowly behind them, but as these were only armed with bows, and made no pretence of secrecy, he took little notice; and, in another hour, the wood came to an end. But where was the promised gorge? The only path he could see was a granite ridge, which on one side was bounded by a stretch of rough rising ground, and on the other became a precipice. The guides, however, remained confident, and, after hinting that it would be bad for them if they led him wrong, he followed them.

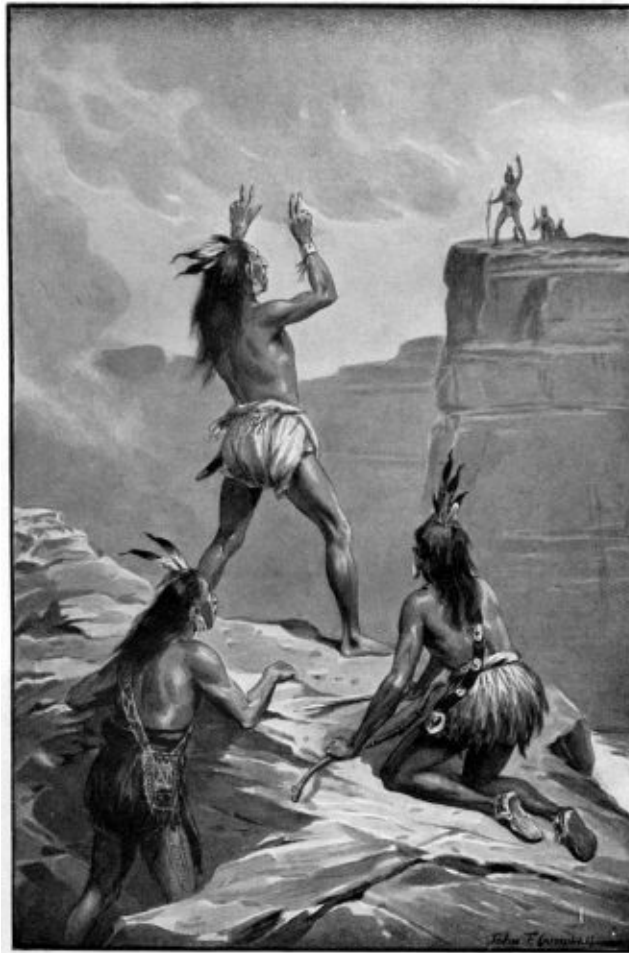
“What’s that?” he cried suddenly, when they had travelled about half a mile along the ridge in single file. All reined up at a sound similar to that of a “moose-trumpet,” or bark horn. Then they saw that three Indians had appeared from the wood behind them, had come to a stop on the edge of the cliff, and were looking across the chasm towards a precipice twice the height of that on which they stood. Evidently their trumpeting was intended to rouse somebody across the chasm, for two or three indistinct figures soon appeared on the farther cliff. Then one of the Indians who had followed Lord’s party raised his arms and began to make signs to those on the other side.

“Signalling, eh?” said one of the men. “Can you read it, Mr. Lord?”

The redskin was, in fact, transmitting a message across the chasm, employing a system of telegraphy similar to that used in Japan, or among our own sailors: a form of “deaf and dumb alphabet” not

uncommon among the Indians of the hills and prairies.

“I can read enough to see that these rascals are warning someone to stop us,” said Lord. “Though how they reckon to do that remains to be seen. Let’s get on as fast as possible.”



A PRIMITIVE SYSTEM OF TELEGRAPHY

The Indians are able to transmit messages by movements of their arms and fingers at greater distances than the voice would carry. In this case the question is “Who are you?” The answer “Pani,” transmitted from the lofty crags of a wide gorge.

They moved swiftly up the ridge, till the ground began to slope downwards again, and very steeply; then a final bend brought them almost opposite the mouth of the long looked-for gorge, which was wide enough for all the horsemen to ride abreast in comfort. The road was now beautifully level, and but that the Chinamen would not risk their necks on mule-back and knew nothing about horses, the whole party could have galloped. The gorge proved to be some six miles in length, and, at the end of a couple of hours, the travellers knew that they had come to the outlet.

The fact was made known in a not very pleasing manner, for all at once two musket-shots echoed down the ravine, and the Chinamen, who were some ten yards ahead of the horsemen, fell prostrate.

“Charge for it,” shouted Lord, though he could not as yet see the mysterious assailants. “Don’t give ’em time to load or aim”; and the seven men, pistol in hand, galloped to the mouth of the gorge.

Here they were greeted by a flight of arrows, launched so hastily that no one was hit. The ambush consisted of a dozen redskins, who, in obedience to the signalling, had hastened round the head of the chasm, easily arriving in time to cut off the more slowly moving party. Fortunately, only two of them had

firearms; and the majority, seeing at once what chance they would stand against mounted men who were desperate and well armed, fled like chamois down the slopes. Three of the party were, however, speedily stopped by revolver-bullets from the horsemen, and so rendered an easy capture.

Then the truth, or something like it, came out. The Chinamen were gold-thieves who had escaped from the mines and had fallen into the hands of the Chippewyans, who cared nothing for their stolen gold but a good deal for the labour which they would have been able to extort from them. Lord had neither time nor inclination to sift the matter. Finding that the Celestials were not so badly injured but that they could ride back to prison, he had them bound on to baggage-mules, made the three wounded Indians mount behind three of his men, and so conveyed all the prisoners in triumph to the coast, where he handed them over to a military picket for a journey to Vancouver jail.

CHAPTER XXIII

TWO DAYS IN A MOHAWK VILLAGE

A very voluminous writer, and an explorer of no small repute in Germany—Johann Georg Kohl—has drawn up, from personal experience, as exhaustive an account of the Mohawk section of the Iroquois Indians as Surgeon Bigsby gave of the Huron and Cherokee branches of that once powerful family. Herr Kohl spent the years 1859-60 in travelling about the north-eastern portion of the United States and Southern Canada, and thus was able to gather some interesting and valuable information concerning the tribe, which the writers of story-books seem to have maligned very much. He shows us the Mohawks of Quebec as hard-working farmers, respectable traders in fur, bold hunters, and pious Christians; and he reminds us that there is nothing extraordinary in all this if we take into account a century and a half of French influence at its best, together with the splendid labours of the Jesuit missionary heroes.

From Lake Champlain, Herr Kohl travelled across the boundary in a Canadian farmer's waggon, which eventually set him down at an Indian village that stood on the verge of an immense pine-forest. To be "dumped" down suddenly in a place where there is not a single white person would be disconcerting enough to any but a man of inquiring and adventurous disposition; but Kohl, on learning from his companion that here was a purely native population, eagerly jumped out of the cart with his gun and his luggage and bade the farmer drive on. Of course, he was stared at; but so he would have been in an English or German village; with this difference: that these Mohawk women and children possessed a native politeness and readiness to oblige that few English and fewer Germans can muster up. Kohl spoke encouragingly to the starers; was there an inn in the place? he asked in French. No; there was not. Where could he get a night's lodging then? Anywhere in the village; perhaps the gentleman would like to see the chief's house, as being the largest and most fitting for his reception. A neat little old woman called a youth who was repairing a timber-trolley.

"Go, my son; carry the gentleman's *paquet* and show him the chief's house."

The idlers drew back, and though they continued to stare, made no attempt to follow the stranger. He began to ask questions. Where were all the men? The men were at work, a few in the fields, but most of them in the forest—hunting, wood-lumbering, or clearing the traps set for foxes, squirrels, etc.; many of them would be home by sundown.

The German looked curiously up the little street; nearly all the houses were on one side of it; on the other there were but four buildings; the church, which—said the lad—was visited three times a week by a French *curé* from a neighbouring town; the school, the chief's dwelling, and the "assembly house"—a long wooden shed where public functions took place; e.g. certain games and sports, the entertaining of chiefs from a distance, tribal discussions, etc.

"This is where the chief lives, Monsieur," said the Indian lad, pointing to a wooden hut about thirty feet square, painted a dull red, with a bright yellow door. The place was not architecturally beautiful, to be sure; but it was the residence of the ruler of the place; and, as the lad tapped at the door, the traveller began to experience the same diffidence that a stranger in London might feel in asking for a night's lodging

at Buckingham Palace.

A buxom serving-woman opened the door, and, on the boy's explaining the visit, bade him bring the luggage in and courteously asked the German to follow her into the chief's presence. Kohl gave the lad about a shilling's-worth of coppers, whereat both he and the servant exclaimed. The man must be a prince! A halfpenny would have been thought a more than sufficient tip for such a task as the Indian boy had performed.

The woman led the way through the house—which was so ill-lighted, that anyone coming in from the bright sunshine could at first see nothing—and out by another small door to a huge space which seemed to be cornfield, garden, meadow, and orchard all in one. The back of the house was as tasteful as the front was grotesque; the porch was covered with honeysuckle, now in full bloom, and all kinds of creepers ran over the blank wall. In the middle of the garden a man was digging early potatoes. He looked round as the two walked up the path, and, to Kohl's surprise, the woman introduced the potato-digger as the Mohawk chief. When she had gone, the intruder entered into explanations to which the chief—a bright-eyed, gentle-looking old man—listened with polite attention.

"You are very welcome," he said. "We country people are always glad to see visitors and learn all their news; strangers seldom come this way now; they go over there instead—they travel by the *chemin de fer*"; he pointed westwards, where, fifteen miles away, ran a line of railroad. "But—it must be an awful thing to go about the country like that, sir. I myself have never been in a train, thank God." He spoke the ordinary Canadian *patois*, though he evidently understood Kohl's Parisian French quite well.

"You do not travel far, I suppose?" said the white man gently.

"No; I am over eighty years of age. But in my time I have been far, very far. I have traded and fought with the *Inwi*" (Eskimos); "I have guided white hunters through Ungava; I have seen steamboats and railway trains."

While he was speaking the old gentleman shouldered his fork, picked up his potato-basket, and turned towards the house.

"You will like some refreshment. We do not dine till my sons return."

They entered the house again, and, as soon as Kohl's eyes were accustomed to the gloom, he saw that it was simply one large room. The floor was of planks, beautifully clean; and the walls were almost entirely hidden by the skins of various animals; these certainly made for snugness in winter, stopping the draught that otherwise would have come through the chinks; but the effect was more startling than artistic, for some ambitious soul had dyed or painted most of them, a magnificent elk-hide being daubed with alternate stripes of green, red, and yellow, while a black bear-skin had little yellow crosses painted all over it. Two of the walls were partitioned off into a sort of loose-boxes, each six feet wide; these were the bedrooms; the light came through a hole in the roof (which was also the chimney) and from two small windows, where a clumsy attempt had been made at fitting ready-made sashes into openings that were anything but "true." Near the door hung a crucifix and holy-water stoup, not ill-carved in wood; but this was the only attempt at civilised wall-decoration.

The woman whom Kohl had imagined to be a servant came bustling forward with a platter of cakes and a basin of cider, which she pressed on the visitor.

"This is my youngest son's wife," said the chief. "I have three sons, and they and their wives live with me."

"And their children?" asked Kohl.

"Only one girl; all the others are married; and she is to be betrothed to-morrow. To-morrow we keep holiday; there will be much dancing and ball-play and feasting."

Then they fell to talking of the old man's early days. He could remember the time when it was still quite a new thing for the English to be regarded by the French colonists as anything but tyrants; he had heard his father talk of seeing the white soldiers of General Wolfe; he himself had fought against the Sioux many times. Bah! the Sioux were bad men; cruel men, who would not keep faith.

His reminiscences were so engrossing, that Kohl lost all count of the time, till the sound of footsteps, voices, and horses' hoofs past the house told him that the men were returning from their day's work. The eldest son, the future chief of the tribe, now entered. He was a very tall, lithe man, between fifty and sixty, less formal in his manner than his father, but quite as modest and agreeable. He had been superintending the carting of the hay from some distant meadows which he owned; and Kohl could not refrain from smiling at the talk that went on between father and son. He had come out here prepared to see bloodthirsty robbers and torturers and bear-slayers; and behold, the chief dug potatoes, and the chief's son performed his ablutions in a bucket of water, and talked of the hay-harvest and the amount of cider consumed by the mowers that day, as if he were in Kohl's native Bavaria. He was now almost ready to see a telegram or a Munich newspaper brought to the door.

As soon as the other sons returned from their hunting, two of the women dragged a deal table from one side of the room, and all sat down to supper. This was the first time that Herr Kohl had seen the women sit down with the men; here it seemed a recognised thing. The unmarried granddaughter—a pretty girl of seventeen—did most of the waiting, and that by helping an enormous stew of onions, beef, chickens and hare from the pot on to wooden platters, and handing them round. Forks were not used.

After supper they all adjourned to the benches outside the house. The visitor had brandy and cigars in his portmanteau; and, while he handed these delicacies round, another surprise greeted him; the chief was a teetotaller! and even the sons partook very sparingly of the brandy, though they appreciated the cigars as having a flavour of town life. He was beginning to understand now why there was no inn in the place. The street was the village public-house. Men sat and smoked outside the huts, or strolled up and down in twos and threes; some even squatted in the middle of the road. To-night, as there was a stranger in the place, a

knot of Indians stood looking on from a respectful distance at the chief's party; and presently, most of the elders of the tribe came and sat or lounged near the chief. Each of these greeted the stranger with a guttural "Bon soir, M'sieu" (one or two of them promoted him to "Monseigneur"). Had they forgotten their own language even? For a while the talk was of the morrow's festivity, and a tall young brave, whose face was indistinguishable in the twilight, was introduced to Kohl as the future bridegroom; but this topic soon flagged, and the traveller guessed, from the general turning of faces towards him, that it was "news" that everybody wanted. Before he had talked many minutes he had become a personage; for he had read and travelled widely, and had the rare knack of being able to suit himself to whatever company he happened to be in. He could tell the redskins nothing of Quebec City, for he had not been there; but what pleased them more than anything else was his talk of England; he had once stayed in London; had even seen their White Queen. They wanted no fresher news than that, though it was more than three years old; and they let him talk till his head was nodding with sleep.

After a night passed in one of the loose-boxes and between two bear-skins, he rose early and started off to the woods with the three sons of the house, who had to clear some traps a few miles away. For some time their talk mystified him, for they continually spoke of the animal for which the snares were set as *le chat*. He knew that wild cats were almost unknown so far north, and the tame ones could scarcely be so plentiful in a pine-forest as to need trapping. He asked for an explanation, which his companions laughingly gave.

"We call him that because it is easier to say than *le loup cervier*; many of the French trappers call him *le lynx*. It is only lately that we have taken the trouble to catch him."

"How is that?"

"We must catch what the fur-dealers ask us for, sir. Just now, they tell us, the white people in the towns are very fond of wearing lynx-skin as part of their dress."

When they arrived at the line of traps the Bavarian perceived that the Mohawks' progressive notions extended even to these, for they were steel gins bearing the trade-mark of a Montreal hardware firm. In all, ten well-grown lynxes were taken from the traps, which were reset and baited with fresh meat. Then the four hungry men sat down to their breakfast of cold meat, barley bread, and cider, and chatted gaily over it, finding far more rational matter that they could discuss in common than the average English gentleman would often find in conversation with three average English peasant-farmers. Yet Kohl, who had a healthy admiration for the fighting-animal in man, was becoming conscious of a certain melancholy as he looked at his companions. Of course, a Mohawk who went to church, paid his taxes, and sent his children to school was a more desirable neighbour than one whose merits were reckoned according to the number of human scalps in his possession; still, one could almost have wished——

He got no farther with these reflections, for, just then, something happened that upset all his fine theorising, and proved conclusively that there is something in the old saying about scratching a Russian and finding a Tartar. All in a moment the Indians dropped their cider-horns and sprang to their feet, shouting:

"*Musquaw! Musquaw!*"

It was almost the first native word he had heard, and it meant a black bear. Peering among the trees, he at length caught sight of a large animal hastily turning his back on them and preparing to beat a retreat. The Mohawks ran in pursuit like deerhounds, though all of them were over fifty years of age. Their rifles—modern breech-loaders—lay to hand ready charged, but they left them behind; those were all very well for money-getting, but just now it was sport that they wanted. Kohl picked up his own gun and hastened

after them. They were shouting at the top of their voices—and in Iroquoian; reviling the bear, daring him to turn on them, and taunting him with his cowardice; in a word, hunting as their fathers and grandfathers had done before them. Each had slipped a formidable-looking hatchet from his belt, and now, as they came up with the fugitive, the youngest brother dealt him a blow across the haunches that made him stop and bellow with pain.

As a rule, the *musquaw* is a perfectly harmless beast if left alone; but, when he turns to bay, he is as ferocious and almost as strong as a grisly. Maddened and almost maimed, the great brute now reared, and so suddenly, that the eldest Indian, who had been aiming a similar blow to his brother's, lost his balance and fell with his head actually touching the bear's back as he rose on his hind feet. But this was only matter for laughing; he was up again in a second, and striking for the back of the bear's head, while his brothers sprang backwards or sideways with terrier-like activity, dodging his outspread claws and awaiting an opportunity to bring him down with a blow across his snout.

Kohl had now reached the scene of the combat, and took up a position whence he could easily cover the enemy with his rifle, which he had just loaded with ball. But the Mohawks wanted no such help as that.

"No; don't fire, we would kill fifty like him," screamed André, the second brother; and, as he spoke, his hatchet fell, cleaving the forepart of the great creature's skull. The blade stuck fast, and it was only by letting go of the haft and taking a tremendous backward spring, that he saved himself from the paw that struck out at him almost automatically. The bear was tottering now, and another blow on the back of the head from the Indian behind brought him down, stone-dead. Other redskins, attracted by the shouting, had now left their traps and come up, and to these was given the task of flaying the carcase and bringing home the skin; while the chief's sons, happy as a boy who has killed his first rabbit, went back for their guns.

When they reached the village again, they found it *en fête*. On the wide space between the chief's house and the church, all the inhabitants had collected to do honour to the hero and heroine of the day; and, coming out from the house, were the chief, a French priest, and all the womenfolk of the family.

"Come along," cried the old man gaily to his youngest son; "we are only waiting for you."

Then ensued a quaint mingling of ancient and modern Mohawk custom. Much of the success of Catholic missions probably lies in the fact that the clergy have never opposed those traditions and customs of savages which were in themselves innocent; here was an instance. A girl was about to become engaged to her future husband, and there was no difficulty in grafting on to the Indian ceremony the mediæval religious rite of betrothal.

The chief's youngest son, the girl's father, approached the lover, carrying a bow and four arrows.

"My brother," he said solemnly; "you have asked to have my daughter for your wife. But, before you can take the bird to your own nest, you must catch her."

He fitted an arrow to his bow and shot it so that it stuck in the ground about a hundred yards away. Then, amid dead silence, he stuck a second arrow in the turf at the young man's feet, and, taking his daughter's hand, led her to where the first arrow had dropped. He shot a third arrow, this time high in the air, and it fell about twenty yards away from where the girl was standing.

"Will you try to catch my bird?" he shouted to the bridegroom-elect; and of course received "yes" for an answer.

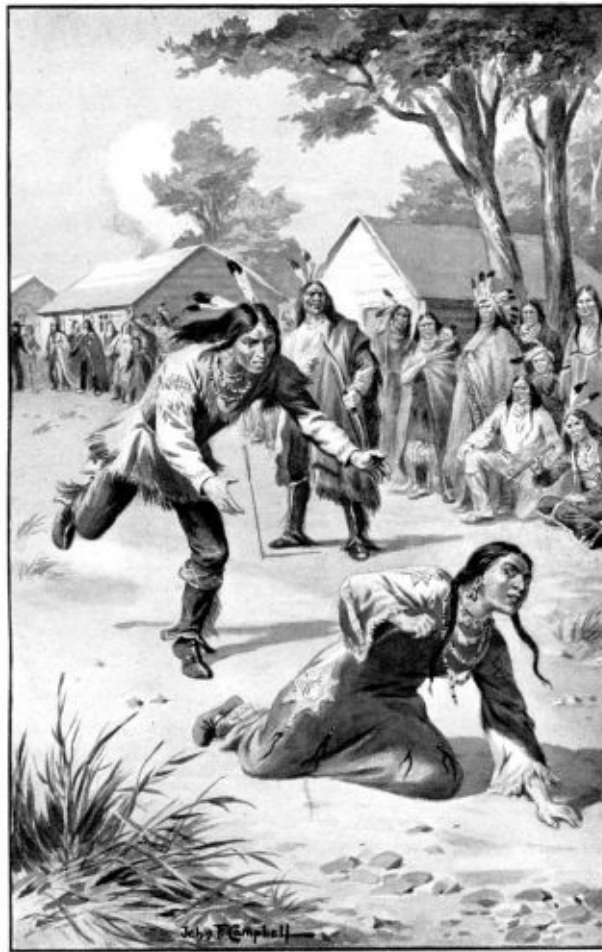
"Then fly," and he shot his fourth arrow as a signal for the start.

It was queer handicapping—a hundred yards start out of a hundred and twenty—but the girl had doubtless made up her mind beforehand. After hurrying off at full speed, in coquettish pretence of wishing to

escape, she contrived to stumble, fell on her face, lay there till the happy man was within a yard or two of her, and allowed herself to be caught before she reached the goal. Of course, the ceremony was a survival from a time when an Indian girl received no other intimation of the wishes of the man who wanted her for his wife, and might reasonably wish to bestow her hand on some other suitor—in which case here was an escape for her; but the result of the race was received with as much applause as though everything had been real earnest.

Immediately afterwards, everyone went into the church; the lovers stood at the altar, and the priest read the short betrothal office (*Fiançailles*) which had been introduced by the early French settlers. Games and dancing followed; not the genuine Indian dancing which Kohl had hoped to see, but a rough imitation of the French peasants' dance; and the day ended with a great feast in the assembly house.

Kohl was obliged to proceed on his way in the morning, but he made many subsequent visits to this queer little community, and always found himself treated like an old friend.



A NOVEL BRIDAL CEREMONY

Among the Mohawks a suitor must pursue and capture his bride. She is given a start, and if her lover captures her before she reaches a certain point she becomes his wife, and to bring about this happy result she coquettishly trips, or gets exhausted.

CHAPTER XXIV

CANADIAN LAKE AND RIVER INDIANS

The Athabaskan or Athapascan family of Indians may be found anywhere between Alaska and Manitoba, and some of the more unsettled or enterprising tribes have even wandered as far as the Mexican boundary. In Southern and Western Canada they are principally represented by the Kuchins and Chippewyans, hardy hunters, canoemen, and fighters, many of whom are to this day very unsophisticated in their views and habits. In the 'sixties, Canada still knew little about railways; lakes and rivers were the recognised highways of travel, and the Eastern Chippewyans made a steady income as carriers, boatmen, and guides; to which occupations, says the Rev. C. Colton, they applied the same combination of energy and deliberateness that their tribe has always displayed in its hunting or its warfare.

Mr. Colton was rector of an Anglican Church in New York, and, in 1860, he set out to visit some friends who lived on the Saskatchewan River—a journey similar in point of distance to that from London to Moscow, or Palermo to Dublin. After a stay at the famous Niagara Falls, he embarked at Buffalo for Detroit, which meant a three-hundred-mile run across Lake Erie; then made his way to Port Huron, whence a little steamer would carry him to Port Arthur, Ontario.

The morning before the boat came in sight of this place, he observed quite a swarm of Indians on the near bank, leaping into their canoes in the greatest excitement; none of them had guns or bows, but—which looked neither promising nor peaceable—every man had, either beside him or in his hand, a long, barb-headed spear. Indians had, on many occasions, paddled out to the steamer, but it had always been with the sole object of selling fruit or furs or fish, and this was the first time that Mr. Colton had seen them carrying weapons of any sort.

He asked the master of the boat what it meant; but neither he nor the engineer could account for the demonstration; and the four negroes who formed the crew showed by their restless motions and their inattention to everything but the three or four dozen canoes that were flocking towards the launch, that they were considerably alarmed. The only passengers besides the clergyman were three ladies, and a Canadian journalist named Barnes, who was returning to the British Columbian gold-diggings, and who, like the rest, did not know what to make of the sudden and rapid approach of the Indians.

“They’re Chippewyans,” he said. “And, by the look of it, they mean to board us. Have you got a ‘gun’? Then take this one; I’ve another in my bag.”

“Look out for yourselves and your baggage, gents,” cried the Yankee skipper, producing a six-shooter. “They mean to hold us up. Ladies, please go into the cabin.”

Mr. Colton was dumbfounded. One minute they had been gliding easily along with no more thought of piracy or highway robbery than you have when on a Thames penny steamer; the next, a revolver had been thrust into his unskilled hands with the recommendation to “look after himself.” It was too absurd, yet decidedly awkward; and it would not be a mere case of driving off the canoes by a distribution of grapeshot, but—unless their engine was more powerful than Chippewyan paddles—of being outnumbered

by about ten to one and robbed of every cent and every thing they possessed, even if not killed.

And worse was behind all this. Why on earth was the boat stopping instead of steering out? Stopped it certainly had, and a cursing match was in progress between the infuriated master and the engineer. In their excitement they had, between them, managed to run the steamer on to a pebble-bank. A yell of delight arose from the Indians; their paddles flashed through the water with greater rapidity than ever, and in another minute the canoes were round the steamer's bows, the paddles dropped, and the spears picked up.

Colton had never fired a pistol in his life, but, like many of his cloth, he had a very pretty notion of using his fists when need arose, and he took his stand fearlessly by the side of the journalist, determined to sell his life dearly. Barnes regarded the matter coolly; he had had many a brush with Indians, and had more than once "stripped-to" and thrashed an offensive digger.

"What do you want? What's your game?" he shouted to the redskins in their own dialect.

"Look; look!" cried the skipper. "Do they conclude to stave her in?—What is it they say, Boss?"

Sure enough, every Indian was stooping low, spear in hand and point downwards, earnestly studying the water, and as much of the boat's underside as they could distinguish. A conversation was proceeding meanwhile between Barnes and the Indian nearest him; and all of a sudden the journalist fell back into the arms of the skipper, choking and convulsed with laughter.

"*Say!*" remonstrated the skipper mildly. "Don't keep it all to yerself, Squire; if they don't mean mischief, what the plague *do* they mean?"

"*Sturgeons!*" gasped the Canadian. "Oh, my aunt! Somebody's been plumbing them up that the 'fire-canoes' are towed along by great sturgeons. Look at the noble savages."

With breathless anticipation, every Indian was gravely watching the water round the bows, ready in an instant to plunge his spear into the first sturgeon that came handy.

"Wal," said the skipper, "even then their intentions wasn't more'n middlin' benevolent, I allow. How did they calc'late we'd make any way when a neefarious gang had cleared out our propelling gear for us—*s'posing* we was towed that way? You'd better argufy with 'em, and bring that p'int home to 'em, Mr. Barnes."

After another conversation the journalist turned to the master.

"If you'll pay out one or two tow-lines, skipper, they'll soon have us off this. I've told them it's their fault we ran aground, and that, if they don't tow us off, we shall report them at the next cavalry depôt, and they'll get hurt."

No time was lost in throwing over four tow-warps, and the Indians, much impressed by Barnes's representation to them of the measure of their iniquity, considered themselves let off very cheaply. The canoes were divided into four lots, one to each rope, and as soon as they had "tailed-on" one to the other, the four long teams paddled with a will, and the launch—no bigger than a Brighton fishing-smack—was towed free without the least difficulty.

Only too glad to fall in with a companion who, in addition to being a decently educated man, undoubtedly "knew his way about," Mr. Colton readily agreed to the young Canadian's becoming his companion as far as his destination. He still had a very long journey before him, but the newness of all his surroundings and the beauty of the country made it seem all too short. Sometimes they got a lift in a farm-waggon or were able to hire horses as far as the next water-way; failing these, they walked, sleeping at night at a farmhouse, or sometimes in the forest; and in this way they came to the Lake of the Woods, whence they

would be able to travel all the way by water to the Saskatchewan River, where the clergyman's journey ended.

They reached the lake early one morning after having passed the night at a fur-agent's house on the Minnesota boundary; and, before they were aware of it, they had walked straight into a camp of wandering Chippewyans, who had been resting on the lake shore for a few days before returning northwards from disposing of their furs. Evidently they were used enough to meeting with white men, for, beyond a cheery "good morning," they took no further notice till the strangers addressed them; and then it appeared that several of them spoke English or French. They had just finished their breakfast, for the fires were still smoking, and cooking utensils and broken food lay about the ground, though most of their other property had already been stowed in the canoes.

"We also want to reach the Saskatchewan," said Barnes, when they mentioned their destination. "What reward do you ask for taking us there?"

The braves conferred in a low voice, and at last the chief said:

"We will take you there, and feed you by the way, for five dollars each"; which meant that, for a guinea, a man might travel four hundred miles by water, in beautiful weather, and be fed for a whole week at the least. Colton was about to offer them more, but his companion checked him.

"Give them what you like extra at the end of the journey, but we must haggle now, or they'll think we're worth robbing"; and he actually had the face to beat the redskins down to three dollars a head, money down.

"What did you get for your furs?" he asked, when his terms had been agreed to. They named a sum which was a disgrace to the white agents, for it meant that they had bought skins which the Indians had toiled for months to get, and had brought all the way from the Saskatchewan, for a sum that would yield about five hundred per cent profit.

"You see?" he whispered to his companion. "They've no idea of values, poor chaps; a few dollars seem a gold-mine to them; and then, when a man comes along and offers an honest price without any bating, ten to one he'll be robbed and murdered because they think he's a millionaire."

But the day was rapidly coming when unscrupulous persons could no longer defraud the savages; writing only ten years later, an English traveller deplores the extortionate charges made by the redskins for even the most trifling service, and points out that he could have bought furs in Regent Street as cheaply as they would sell them to any private individual.

The two travellers paid their money, of course prepared to add liberally to it at the journey's end, and their boat was pointed out to them. The canoes were most of them very large, and capable of seating a crew and a family. The one assigned to the white strangers was manned by a chief and five braves; the other men, with their wives and children, distributing themselves pretty equally between the remaining canoes.

"How will they get these down? Or are they going to leave them?" asked Colton, pointing to the huts, or lodges, as Barnes called them.

"Get them down? You might as well talk about taking home empty wine-bottles and lobster claws after a picnic. They may take the matting, but I doubt it. They can make and erect a hut in less than an hour."

Hitherto the only Indian dwellings they had passed had been huts, or else the well-known wigwams made of grass-cloth, or coarse linen; but these "lodges" were very different. They were nearly dome-shaped; more strictly, they were octagonal with a convex roof, and were constructed by eight long, slender rods of

some flexible wood being stuck in the ground at equal distances; the tops were bent down till they met or overlapped, and then bound securely together with vegetable fibre. Lengths of bark, cut from the paper birch, were tied over these to form a roof; and the sides were made, in some cases by hanging strips of matting from pole to pole, but more commonly by erecting thatch walls, speedily improvised with fibre and bundles of wild rice stalks, which grew like rushes in the shallows. No attempt was made to remove them, and they were left to the next comer—an altruistic practice which had its reward; for other wandering Indians had done the same thing higher up the lake, and more often than not, when the flotilla stopped for the night, there was a camp of ready-made tents awaiting the travellers.

All that week the two adventurers lived, like the proverbial fighting-cock, on the fat of the land: sturgeon, salmon, woodcock, wild-duck, venison, eggs, and sometimes fruit, were all to be had for the asking; for, though the Chippewyans had no guns, they had spears and arrows and quick sight. The boat's crew were decent fellows, who soon lost their taciturnity and suspicion when they found the passengers kindly and conversationally disposed; and they made no demur at being asked, from time to time, to turn out of their way a little, that Colton might explore one or other of the channels, side-creeks, and rivulets that form part of the complicated water-way between Minnesota and the Saskatchewan.

On one of these experimental cruises, the explorers found themselves in an adventure which missed little of ending tragically. Barnes suggested following a little stream that appeared to run parallel to the main channel, and the Indians, who, of course, knew almost as little about the byways of the vicinity as their passengers, were not unready to indulge their own curiosity; if the stream did not bring them into the open water again, they could soon turn back. The banks were low and sparsely wooded, and suggested little in the shape of either game or human habitation; but these features did but add to the romance of the scene, and the two travellers were well content to go on; more particularly when they saw that ahead of them the banks promised to rise mountains high.

"We are coming to a cañon," murmured an Indian lazily. All the better; Mr. Colton had never seen a cañon worth the name.

Gradually the speed of the canoe quickened, and the rowers' labours became proportionately lighter; so much so that the chief looked grave.

"We must go no farther," he cried. "With a current like this, there must surely be rapids ahead."

"Then here's one who's for going back," said the Canadian, who knew, far better than his companion, what this might imply; shooting low rapids in small canoes, with Indians who knew every inch of the way, was all very well; but who could say that there was not a second Niagara within a few miles of them?

The Indians at once rested on their paddles, only to find that this did not greatly arrest the progress of the boat. For once, curiosity and indolence combined had got the better of their characteristic wariness. The chief signed to the white men to move to the other end of the boat, for there was no difference in the shape of her bows and stern, and, the weight properly adjusted, she could be worked either way and needed no turning. But even while they were obeying, the canoe moved swiftly on again; two of the Indians, in the confusion, had had their paddles swept from under them for a moment by the water, the canoe swerved a little more towards midstream, and was at once caught in an irresistible current.

"No good; we must take our chance now," said the chief. The note of something approaching despair in his voice was not comforting to his hearers.

"Come; we must make some effort," said the clergyman briskly. But his friend shook his head.

"Leave them alone; they won't miss a chance. They know they may do more harm than good with their

paddles in a wash like this.—I say; this *is* going it.”

The canoe was fairly held by the tide now, and the utmost that could be done was for the chief and the bowman to keep her head straight. The banks flew by at an appalling rate, rising higher and higher till they formed an imposing cañon. Suddenly Barnes whistled under his breath.

“Can you hear?” he said.

The distant rumble which had hitherto passed unnoticed, or at least unconnected with coming danger, was swelling to a thunder roll that could only proceed from a mighty rapid. Their plight was only too horribly apparent now; in the ordinary course of events, nothing could save them from the destruction awaiting them, and to attempt to make matters better by trying to reach the smoother water under either bank, would only be to make that destruction quite as sure and much more swift. And the black dots ahead, where the current split into forty currents and joined again beyond; what were they? Rocks, beyond a doubt. That being the case, it was not easy to understand why the chief’s morose expression suddenly grew brighter. He made a motion with his head, and one of the braves picked up and loosened a coil of rope, muttering words in dialect to the other canoemen.

“O-ho! Sit tight,” whispered Barnes.

The Indian had doubled his rope, so that the bight formed a loop-noose; and now, on his knees across the bottom of the boat, with the three unoccupied canoemen ready to bear a hand at a quarter of a second’s notice, he was watching a spike of rock that rose two or three feet above the torrent, between which and a flat islet of stone, the current was bearing them. Colton involuntarily half closed his eyes; safety was so near now; yet so sickeningly doubtful. Now they were up to the passage. At any rate, the bows had not dashed on to either rock. Now they were through. Only a few yards beyond was a ghastly vision of boulders—a whole bed of them, over which the torrent surged and bubbled, and which they could never hope to pass. He opened his eyes wide again. If they were alongside the little pinnacle of rock, why did the Indian still remain motionless?

But, at that very moment, the lean brown arm shot past his head, as though the brave had struck at him; the three waiting Indians fell almost on to their faces grasping at something; there was a jerk that brought a frightful spasm of pain to the face of the man who had thrown the rope, and the boat had come to a stop. The bight had fallen over the splinter of rock, and already the ends of rope had been made fast to the canoe by the three waiting redskins, while the fourth held the double line together till the chief had bound the two cords with a thong, so completing the noose.

The men could now take enough breath to enable them to realise that, so far, their case was not much better than it had been. As long as the line held, they were in no danger of being dashed on to the rocks, or beyond, to the distant rapids; but they could never paddle back; and, though there was a little food in the boat, they must starve to death in a few days if they stayed here.

“*There’s* the way out,” said Barnes confidently, after a lengthy silence.

Ay; it was a way out, but only such as a man of strong nerve could follow. They who dared might leap on to the flat rock on the other side of the canoe, walk across it, and, by a series of jumps, from one to another of the three stepping-stones beyond, reach a low spit of rock that ran out from the cliff foot; and from there the face of the cañon might be scaled with tolerable ease, in one place, by means of a series of ledges and boulders.

“I will climb up and examine,” said one of the redskins; and he leapt lightly across the awful current and began his walk over the rocks, the rest watching in breathless suspense. In half an hour he was back again,

with the report that the top of the cliff was a narrow, barren hill, sloping gently down on two of its sides; would they not do well to abandon the canoe and walk back to the lake shore?

This course did not recommend itself to anyone; least of all to the white men, who could not afford to leave their baggage behind. The only other plan was to land, drag the canoe as far as possible out of the current and into the fringe of smoother water, and then tow her; and this they agreed to adopt. Five of the redskins were to climb up to the cliff-top, carrying a tow line, and the remaining one was to stay behind and steer.



AN ARDUOUS TASK

Five of the redskins climbed up to the cliff-top carrying a tow-line, and the remaining one stayed behind to steer.

Barnes and Colton were for accompanying the Indians; but when he came to face the six-foot leap over that roaring torrent, the clergyman, who was no longer young or very active, felt that in his case it would be sheer suicide to attempt the jump; and he stayed behind with the steersman. In so doing he well knew that he was not choosing the safer course. For, the moment the mooring rope was removed, the boat began to kick frightfully, and water was soon streaming over her bows. He caught up a copper pot and began baling for dear life, till the sweat ran out of him and his arms grew weary, and till the water had ceased to flow in. Then he looked up at the other men; there they were, fifty or sixty feet above him, straining like horses going uphill, in their effort to fight the current below. What wonder that he looked almost despairingly at the tow-line—a wretched contrivance hastily rigged up by joining together all the ropes and thongs that the canoe contained? How long was it going to stand the mere strain, let alone the sawing and chafing that it must get from every abutting rock? At such a time a man can do no more than keep a stiff upper lip, and humbly leave his fate in the Hands that, for wise purposes, made Nature at once as

beautiful and as terrible as she is.

Suddenly the rector was aroused by the chief's voice.

“Can paddle! Yes! You see!”

The men at the top had paused for breath, but the line was no longer so horribly taut, and the fact that the chief was beginning to propel the boat at least sufficiently to cause the rope very soon to sag, showed that the worst was over. In due time she was towed as far as the low bank and the six men were taken aboard; but Mr. Colton never again trusted himself down a strange river with canoemen who knew no more about it than he.

CHAPTER XXV

A WALK ABOUT URUGUAY

Taken as a whole the Indians of Uruguay are—and have ever been—a brave but peace-loving people, engaged principally in sheep and cattle-rearing. No doubt the mildness of their character and pursuits is largely due to considerations which are purely geographical; for the sea and the Uruguay River together make the country almost an island, to which the Argentine and Brazilian Indians would never venture to penetrate. Further, there are—apart from the native cattle—no large or fierce wild animals.

The latter fact is by no means generally known; and ignorance, or doubt of it, led the late Thomas Woodbine Hinchcliff to take a trip across from Buenos Ayres to the little state in the hope of finding jaguars, pumas, or other animals more worthy of a sportsman's gun than those which he had seen round about Buenos Ayres.

Mr. Hinchcliff was a London barrister, but is better remembered as the first president of the Alpine Club, and the man who did more than any of his contemporaries to popularise mountaineering. In 1861, while touring in South America, he went ashore from a Uruguay River steamer, quite alone and with only provisions for a couple of days, determined to explore one of the mountain forests, and, if possible, to reach San José, the largest of the inland towns.

A fourteen-mile walk across a well-wooded plain brought him in sight of a Gaucho farmstead, where he was made very welcome and persuaded to stay the night; and it was here that he learned the futility of attempting to find any big game shooting in the country, and that there was nothing special to see at San José.

In consequence, he altered his course in the morning, making direct for the most accessible of the mountain forests, and, arrived here, he wandered about with the ecstasy of a man who has discovered an earthly paradise. It was the Amazon forest over again, with all its beauties and advantages and none of its drawbacks; a climate similar to that of Algiers, a wealth of fruit and flowers and streams and birds; and no deadly swamps, no suffocating heat, no jaguars or alligators, and apparently no snakes. He made his dinner of fruit and continued his wanderings, with a result that he might well have foreseen: when night came, he was utterly lost. He slept sweetly enough, however, under a tree, and after a hearty breakfast, continued his wanderings.

By evening he came to an outlet, and found himself on an undulating grass plain, but, as no habitation was in sight, he finished his provisions and philosophically resigned himself to another night in the fresh air.

He awoke early, conscious of two things; the one that he was hungry, the other that a beast whose like he had never seen, in or out of a show, was gravely inspecting him from a distance of a few feet. Was it a bull, or a bison, or a nightmare? Without question it had the body of a bull, but the face was far more like that of a bull-dog, for the nostrils were placed high up, and the lower jaw protruded in such a fashion, that the teeth showed ferociously, whether the mouth was closed or open.

He reached for his gun, which he had laid ready loaded on going to bed; the beast looked well capable of

goring or trampling him to death at less than a minute's notice. But even while, half sitting, half lying, he took aim for the creature's eye, a general lowing sounded from farther down the hill, and the bull turned and ran swiftly down the slope. The bewildered Englishman arose and was now able to learn the cause of the lowing. A dozen mounted Indians were in the valley, their horses standing motionless, while two more, approaching from the left and right sides of the hill, were seeking to frighten a small herd of the remarkable-looking animals into the valley. The bull, no doubt the recognised protector of his tribe, whom curiosity had betrayed into a momentary neglect of duty, had heard the bellowings of alarm, and was hastening to the defence of his kindred.

But even as he charged wrathfully down the hill, the nearer of the Indians made a motion with his arm, and he fell with a crash that was distinctly audible to the spectator above; while the second Indian, spurring his horse and bawling at the top of his voice, rode straight at the retreating cattle; these, of course, became panic-stricken and ran helter-skelter down towards the spot where the unruffled horsemen were awaiting them with lassoes. From his vantage ground, Hinchcliff watched the proceedings with breathless interest. For a minute or so a whole maze of lassoes showed against the background of the next slope, curling and twirling; then the herd fled, some right, some left; some to rush away out of sight, others to be pulled up in mid-career by the fatal thong that had been deftly thrown over their horns; and so suddenly and sharply, that in most cases they fell to the ground.

The Englishman walked quickly towards his particular bull, which lay roaring piteously, but the animal was up again before he could reach him; the Indian had dismounted, slipped a noose over the roarer's head, and untwisted from his forelegs what Hinchcliff at once recognised as a *bolas*—three thongs of equal length, the upper ends joined, the lower loose, and each terminating in a ball of metal or heavy wood.

The redskin, whose only garment was a pair of loose-fitting trousers made of deer-skin, looked inquisitively at the stranger and gave him a respectful "good morning" in Spanish; adding to the bull, which was beginning to toss his head and stamp, "Useless, old friend; useless; we have coveted you this many a day," and even while he spoke he vaulted across his horse and started away at a breakneck speed, dragging his captive after him, willy-nilly.

By the time the pedestrian reached the valley, the prisoners seemed to have become sullenly reconciled to their fate, for they were making no attempt to struggle, and some had even begun to crop the grass at their feet, leaving their captors free to inspect the stranger. Hinchcliff told them, in Spanish, that he had lost his way and wanted some breakfast.

"It is many miles to our town," said the young man who had caught the disturber of his peace; "but we shall breakfast here when we have made our cattle fast. You are welcome to share our food."

His companions echoed the invitation, and, the cattle being secured to the neighbouring trees, the Indians seated themselves by a pool and shared their breakfast of chocolate-cake, bread and beef with their guest, who now began to notice the queer bulls and cows more closely. The hind legs were markedly longer than the front ones, and, whenever they moved, they seemed to be looking for pasture, for they persistently kept their heads low and their necks sloping.

"We call them *niata*," was the reply to a question of his. "The best and youngest will be kept for breeding; the rest will be slaughtered for *carne seca*."

Carne seca, the very meat to which the hungry Englishman was doing such abundant justice, is beef dried in the sun; and for the last fifty years, Uruguay has been exporting immense quantities of it all over South America. The *niata* cattle are peculiar to Uruguay and La Plata, and are probably the only kind indigenous

to South America.

When breakfast was finished, the question naturally arose, whither did the señor wish to be guided? In point of fact, the señor had seen quite enough of the woods and hills for one while, and lost no time in making up his mind that he would like to visit their village, provided there was some means of riding there.

One of the Indians pointed to his horse.

“Neither of us is very heavy; you can ride behind me. If you hold by my waistband you will be perfectly safe.”

It was a method of locomotion new to the explorer; but now that the morning was growing warm and he was away from the shade of the forest, it would be decidedly preferable to walking; and he meekly mounted behind this good Samaritan.

At starting, the cattle became obstinate for a while; but superior force and intelligence prevailed; the horses were not the deplorable scarecrows of the Argentine, but stout, well-fed animals, that understood the business of catching and driving refractory bulls as well as their masters; and they closed in on the *niata*, hustling them with knees and shoulders, till they were glad enough to walk in sober fashion. All the same, the journey to the Indian town was not to be entirely void of adventure. Outside the village was a stream some forty feet wide, deep, but easily fordable in some places; and this would have to be crossed.

“We always swim our horses across,” said Hinchcliff’s companion; “but if we have cattle with us, it is safer to go a little out of our way to this ford. Why, good Lord! only last year one of our men was killed—cut nearly in halves, if the señor will believe me—through a bull hanging back on the bank after his horse had started to swim. The horse took fright, and backed so that the man got the lasso drawn round him and—Bah!”

Cattle and horses plunged into the water and all landed safely on the other side without more ado, except the horse that carried the two men. Whether it was that he was less used to the water, or was merely restive at the unaccustomed weight, it was impossible to say; but, when he was about a fifth of the way across, he stopped and began to kick; and the Englishman, with the gruesome story of the man who was sawn through by a lasso still in his mind, felt that he was in no enviable position.

“Sit tight, Señor,” shouted the Indian, putting the bridle into his hand and jumping down so suddenly, that Hinchcliff had barely time to clutch at the saddle and steady himself.

“Keep his head straight; don’t let him jib.” Then water began to splash liberally in the face of the disobedient horse, which immediately plunged forward, stopping whenever the splashing ceased. The Englishman could not refrain from throwing an inquiring glance over his shoulder, and then he was very much tempted to burst out laughing; for the Indian, up to his shoulders in water, was grasping the animal’s tail with one hand, and beating the water into his face with the other. And so, with much patience, horse and rider and helmsman landed on the other bank.

The town, its inhabitants and their actions, were very much what Hinchcliff had seen in Brazil and the Argentine; very orderly and simple and not too cleanly. The people refused to take any money for their hospitality, and it was only with difficulty that he persuaded the chief, on bidding him good-bye the next day, to accept a small sum to hold in trust for any one of his subjects who might happen to be in want. The truth is, that where they have not been demoralised by white people, savage tribes are usually simple enough in their habits; none of them is ever in want, and poverty, as understood in civilised countries, is almost unknown. A man works (or, more properly speaking, makes his wife work) not for a fixed sum, but

for the necessities of life merely; and the Indian tribes, whether of North or South, have little of the insatiable cupidity of the Asiatic or the negro.

After a night in the village, Hinchcliff set out to find his way back to the river by a different route, avoiding the woods and endeavouring to follow a faintly-marked horse-track over the grassy hills. This procedure nearly led him into a difficulty far more serious than that of losing his way in a luxuriant forest, for he missed his road and got on to one where there was no sign of a stream, and where the pools had nothing but dry mud to offer him, so that he went all the afternoon and night without tasting a drop of water. He woke before daybreak, almost delirious, and set off at the best pace he could contrive for some low-lying land, which he had failed to notice overnight.

All at once a strongly built Indian started up from the ground fifty yards in front of him, and, after one look at him, began to flee down the hill.

“Stop! I want you; I want water,” shouted Hinchcliff.

The fleeing figure turned its head as though straining to catch the words, but still ran on. Then the thirsting man grew desperate, and, determined to make the man help him to find water, raised his gun and pretended to take aim at him. Immediately the fugitive stopped.

“Water!” shouted Hinchcliff. “I have lost my way, and am dying of thirst.”

The Indian appeared to reflect for a moment, and at last made towards his pursuer, disengaging a large water-gourd from his belt as he walked.

“What made you run away?” panted the Englishman, when he had emptied the gourd at one draught.

“I saw your gun and I was frightened. We do not like firearms, Señor; and here in the lowlands we seldom see white men.—You have lost your way, you say?”

“Yes; I want to reach the river.”

“I am going that way and will show you it; it is but a few miles. But first, with your permission, I will finish what I was doing when I caught sight of you.”

He sat down, and from a round wooden box, began to cover his fingers liberally with a lard-like substance which he proceeded to rub over his face, shoulders, breast, arms, and waist.

“I have been much indoors, lately; sick,” he explained; “and the insects trouble me greatly. They will not sting through this ointment. Some of our more ignorant people use mud instead; but I—I have lived in towns at times; I am more learned.”

The Indian was, in truth, a very intelligent man, and Hinchcliff found him a most interesting companion. He soon discovered a stream where they could drink their fill; he asked questions about the weapons that had frightened him so much, and even so far overcame his fear of firearms as to offer to carry the gun a little way; an offer that was declined with thanks. When the wonderful instrument brought down a fine young ostrich for dinner, the unsophisticated fellow actually put his lips to the barrel. Quick to turn his hand to any open-air work, he plucked and cleaned the bird and collected sticks and dry pampas grass for the fire; whereupon another surprise awaited him; for Hinchcliff was growing very short of matches, and was in the habit of economising them by using a burning-glass for lighting his pipe and his fire. And this was the only occasion on which an Indian ever asked him for anything, even indirectly; on receiving a hint that his companion would give the world to possess such a wonderworking implement, he handed it to him readily enough; for, if necessary, he could easily use one of the lenses of his field-glass for getting a light.

Shortly before sunset, as the two trudged along towards the river, which had long been in sight, the Indian, after a sudden glance behind him, set off at a sharp run, making for a tiny valley that opened between the hills on his left.

“Now what?” shouted the astonished Englishman. As he turned to look back, the sound of approaching horses caught his ear, and he saw an Indian and three Gauchos riding at full speed, followed closely by a man who rode like a European. They wheeled for the valley at once, and reached it long before the fleeing Indian, who turned back shrieking towards Hinchcliff.

“Shoot, Señor; for the love of all the Saints; shoot them dead; they are bad men,” he gasped in an agonised voice.

This was rather a large call on a man who came from a country where to shoot people is a capital crime; but the piteous appeal for help in the fugitive’s face was irresistible. If an Englishman is averse to taking pot-shots at strangers, he is generally quite as loth to see the weaker side go to the wall. While he was

asking himself what was the best thing to do, the foremost Gaucho made a sudden motion with his arm, the noose of a lasso dropped over the Indian's head, and he was jerked over on to his back. At sight of the bulging eyes of the half-strangled victim, Hinchcliff pulled out his knife and was about to slash the thong through, when the second Gaucho, springing to the ground, flung himself in the way and presented a pistol.

"We are acting under orders," he said. "Be careful what you do.—All right; loose him and tie his hands, Juan."

"You are sure that's your man?" asked the European stranger, hurrying up. He had spoken in such execrable Spanish, that Hinchcliff said unceremoniously:

"Englishman, aren't you?"

"Yes; I am British vice-consul for this district. Question for question—is this a friend of yours?"

"No; merely a paid guide; but——"

"Then you don't know that he is the cleverest thief and prison-breaker in Uruguay, if what these fellows say is true. I only met them by accident a little higher up; but I know it's a fact that an Indian prisoner broke loose from San José gaol the other day."

"There's no mistaking *him*," said the man who was binding the prisoner. "But let the tracker decide." (A "tracker" is an Indian who hires himself out as a sort of blood-hound, to catch horse-thieves, stray cattle, etc.) "He knows him well enough."

No mistake had been made; the simple—but teachable—Indian was the man who was wanted; and a most respectable barrister of the Inner Temple had spent a whole day chatting affably with a notorious criminal, who would assuredly have robbed him of his gun and money had the opportunity arisen.

CHAPTER XXVI

THE EXPLORATION OF THE SALADO VALLEY

When poor Charles Mansfield made his journey up to the unknown Chaco, he passed, on his way, a district equally unknown at that time: the valley of the Salado River, which remained unexplored till 1863, when Hutchinson, the African traveller, traced the river to its source. Thomas Hutchinson, F.R.S., had been appointed British Consul at Rosario in 1862, and, before leaving England, had been instructed by the Foreign Secretary (Earl Russell) to take the first opportunity of exploring the Salado and its basin, and to test the truth of the report that the Indian territory there abounded in wild cotton.

It was not till the following year that he could spare time for a task which might occupy an indefinite period; and then he ascended the Parana by steamer as far as Parana City, rode across to Santa Fé, which is on the Salado River, and there began to make inquiries. Generally, a man on such an errand finds plenty of people ready to pour cold water on his schemes and to draw his attention to innumerable obstacles; but this time the reverse was the case. Though he could find none of the inhabitants who had ever been more than a few miles higher up than Santa Fé, when he returned to his hotel that evening, the landlord informed him that a gentleman who was now in the smoking-room had just arrived by private steamer from Buenos Ayres, and had been asking the same question as himself: did anyone know anything of the upper part of the Salado?

The stranger was one, Don Ruberta, a young Argentino engineer who had studied in London; he had been making a survey of the Colorado and Rio Negro, and aspired to do the same on the Salado. He proposed starting on the following morning, and at once begged the Consul to accept the hospitality of his little launch; and so it came about that outlying Guaranis, Quiteños, and Chiquitos were enabled to behold a steam vessel—and probably an Englishman—for the first time.

The crew, which consisted of a Portuguese engineer and three Zambos, were as ignorant of the neighbourhood as their employer; but the main charm in river exploration lies in the fact that, so long as rapids, or dilemma-like forks, or mud-banks do not intervene, you have but to follow your nose. On the first day they passed sundry Indians in canoes, but these evinced no excitement or curiosity. Don Ruberta had divided his coal into two parts, and meant, if necessary, to steam for as long as the first half held out. At night the vessel stopped from dark till dawn, to avoid mud-banks, and in order that the explorers might miss nothing that could be of importance. By the middle of the second day they came to a *rancheria*, or collection of Gaucho huts, standing about a mile back from the left bank; and, as it looked as if some valuable information might be obtained here, the two men landed and strolled up the hill.

The place was a very large horse-farm, but the Gauchos could tell them little or nothing of what they wanted to know, for their trade was all with Santiago or Cordoba, and they never had occasion to use the river. But one of the employés, a Quiteño Indian who hailed from the Bolivian frontier, said modestly that he could tell the señors all they needed to know about the river.

“Then will you come with me as pilot for a few days?” asked Ruberta.

“I will come—that is, if you are well armed. For there are wild people higher up, who eat man’s flesh; they run from guns, but they do not fear arrows unless there are many bowmen. Then, too, there are the river Chiquitos, who may blow poisoned darts at us unless we keep them at a distance.”

No objection was raised by the Gauchos, to whom Hutchinson gave a small money present, and the Indian retired to “pack up.” The luggage with which he very shortly reappeared was doubtless cumbersome; but then it comprised all that he needed, whether for a journey to the United States, or for setting up housekeeping permanently. Over his shoulders were slung bow, quiver, blanket, lance, and copper pot; in one hand he carried a hatchet, a bundle of lassoes, and two bolas; in the other, some spare thongs, a well-seasoned paddle, a pair of stirrups, each as big and wellnigh as heavy as the skidpan of a waggon-wheel, the sharpened angles of which did duty for spurs; while at his belt hung a knife and a deer-skin pouch, the latter containing flint and steel, palmetto-leaves, tobacco, and a little bag of dried *maté*. Happy Quiteño; he was ready for any emergency; whether fighting, boat-building, horse-catching, or beast-slaying! Of the launch he had not much opinion; if it did not sink with all that weight of machinery, it would catch fire at any moment; nothing would persuade him to sleep in the tiny fore-castle with the Zambos, and he passed the night wrapped in his blanket on deck.

The *rancheria*, he said, was the last civilised spot they would pass, for Tucuman was many days’ journey away from the water; so was Salta; and, after that, the river became only a stream, running through the territory of the Aymaras. The cotton he knew nothing about, which, from Hutchinson’s point of view, was awkward, as it would mean many landings and perhaps many fruitless searches.

The next morning the Consul woke soon after dawn, to find the guide peering through the hatch of the little after-cabin where he and Ruberta slept.

“The man-eaters have come,” whispered the Quiteño; “they have been watching us all night, I suppose. If you bring your gun you can kill many of them.”

Hutchinson went on deck and looked towards the nearer bank, which was about eight yards away. Crouching behind the reeds were some fifty Indians. He called out to them in Spanish; they made no answer, but slunk backwards a few steps up the slope, so bringing themselves into full view. They were of medium height, stark naked, with no ornaments whatever, and armed only with short spears. The explorer had seen Niger savages and Fuegians, but neither had the debased, abject look of these men.

“Speak to them in your tongue. Tell them we mean no harm,” he said.

The Quiteño obeyed, and it was plain that they at least partially understood him.

“The dogs!” he said scornfully. “They think our boat is alive. May I kill them, Señor?”

“Rubbish. Tell them I and my friend are coming on shore after breakfast.—Ah, Señor Don; here are the cannibals, you see.”

“What do they say?” asked Ruberta, laughing.

“The dogs!” reiterated the guide. “They say that my people kill and eat them;” and he would have unslung his bow, but that Hutchinson stayed him.

“Tell them we will do them no harm, and that we are only coming to look for flowers; but that if they attempt to injure us we shall kill them.” This menace was more to the Indian’s taste, and he delivered the latter part of it with unction.

“They say they are not afraid of *you*, gentlemen, because you have no bows. It is I whom they fear.”

The crew had now come on deck, and at their appearance, one by one from the bowels of the boat as it

were, the savages retreated still farther. The Zambo cook, as usual, laid the explorers' breakfast on deck.

"Let's test them with a little Christian diet," said Ruberta, flinging a bunch of bananas towards the inquisitive crowd, who at once scrambled for it. Those who succeeded in getting one of the fruits ate it greedily, rind and all, which told a tale: there was no fruit about here, and the savages, not having energy or courage to travel, had never tasted such a delicacy. Hutchinson cut off a thick round of cold ham and threw it after the bananas. The man who captured it took a big bite, and while he coughed and spluttered at it, his neighbour snatched the remainder from him, and was soon coughing in like manner. They had never tasted salt.

"Try them with bread," said Ruberta to the cook, who took a steaming cake from his frying-pan and threw it on the bank. But no one picked it up. Already the smoke from the engine-funnel had surprised if not terrified them.

"They think it is alive," said the Quiteño, "because it steams. They are not men, Señors; they are monkeys; they do not understand half what I say to them, and I suggest that your excellencies should kill them all."

Hutchinson had already taken it for granted that they did not understand all that was said, for accustomed to listening attentively to uncivilised speech, he had detected in theirs that continual repetition of certain sounds, which argues a scanty vocabulary. When breakfast was finished he filled his pipe, and Ruberta rolled up a cigarette; this brought the Indians a pace nearer again, and made them stand on tiptoe; but when one of the white men struck a match they sprang back again, and, at sight of the smoke issuing from the strangers' lips, they set up a chorus of little shrieks that suggested even more fear than surprise; and was repeated with double vigour when the Quiteño and the crew also "lit up." That an Indian, of all people, had never seen smoking told a tale in itself.

"Now draw in, Pedro," said Ruberta to his engineer, who backed his engine, making towards a natural landing-place which had been observed on the previous night. "Diego; tell them once more we will not hurt them."

The Quiteño repeated the message, which seemed to be received with indifference; but, as he leapt ashore, every spear was poised, and levelled at him.

"Come back. Ask them what's the matter," said Hutchinson.

Diego jumped back to the deck.

"They are saying that I want to kill them with my spear and arrows."

"Well, then, let them see you lay them down."

"I cannot go without my arms, Señor."

"Stupid fellow; borrow Señor Pedro's revolver, but hide it in your pouch; if they see it, they'll want it, because it shines." Then the explorer, versed in the ways of such people, held up a string of bright beads. He might as well have held up a turnip, for all the excitement or cupidity it created; and some scarlet cloth met with no better reception.

"Shall I try them with these, Señor?" said the Zambo cook, coming aft with a small basket of yesterday's fish which he had been keeping for bait.

That they understood; their eyes brightened a little—a very little; and, as the half-breed threw each raw and anything but fresh fish to them, it was scrambled for and greedily devoured.

The Quiteño now jumped a second time; the Indians started distrustfully, but did not threaten him with

their spears, and the two white men followed him, their hands prudently on their hidden revolvers. The savages chattered excitedly, but still made no offensive motion.

“Ask them about the cotton, Diego,” said the Argentino. “Tall yellow flowers, with purple spots, tell them.”

“Yellow? What? Flowers? We eat them,” was the lucid reply which Diego obtained.

The truth was, the poor wretches were so degraded and helpless, that apart from obeying such elementary instincts as eating and killing, they knew nothing, thought nothing, understood nothing. They ate anything that they could chew or swallow: flowers, roots, slugs, beetles, and such fish, birds, or reptiles as they had the wit to kill; perhaps they filled their stomachs with mud upon occasion, as many savages are said to do; perhaps they actually were cannibals, and, like some of the Fuegians, ate their dead relatives instead of burying them. Altogether it was a sad spectacle; sadder still if one reflects that they may possibly have had in their veins the blood of a once powerful people.

As the strangers advanced, the Indians drew off, walking backwards and at a similar pace to theirs. The bank gave on to a shrub-dotted plain, covered with flowers of all colours, and, in patches, with giant thistles. Snipe started up from the ground at the sound of the voices; in the distance were a few ostriches and wild cattle; but as the only weapon which the natives seemed to possess was this kind of club with a fish-bone point bound to it with a strip of fish-skin, it is probable that neither birds nor beasts suffered much at their hands.

This visit was not thrown away, for Hutchinson soon found enough wild cotton to encourage the hope that there was more in the neighbourhood. Meanwhile, Ruberta asked how the savages caught their fish. It turned out that they had even forgotten how to make lines, let alone hooks; they had no boats, and were dependent on spearing such fish as came under the banks from time to time. Where the poor souls lived was a mystery; not a habitation of any sort was visible. Only once more did they show anger or animation. Diego was questioning them, when all of a sudden they stopped and extended their spears, as if to bar the intruders' passage; and, for a moment, their wooden expression gave place to something like ferocity and rage.

“What have you been saying to them?” asked Hutchinson anxiously.

“I merely asked what they had done with their women and children.”

The question was indiscreet, as the explorer could have told him; but their mode of answering it was interesting, as showing that the poor fellows had some little sense of proprietorship, if not of the duty of protecting those who should be dependent on them. Most likely they had sent the women and children away, on finding that strangers were in the neighbourhood—a sign of suspicion, if not of meditated war, common among all Indians from the Eskimos to the Fuegians.

“They needn't think we're likely to want to marry into their tribe,” said Ruberta. “I think we have seen about enough of them now. Let's get rid of them.” He drew his revolver and fired into a flock of wild duck that were making for the water. A startled scream rose from all the Indians; they turned and fled for perhaps fifty yards; then stopped and looked back; but just then the three Zambos who were loitering on the bank began running towards their employer, thinking the report was a danger signal; and this completed the panic of the savages, who fled over the nearest hill and were seen no more.

The launch proceeded another two days' journey up the river, and this brought the travellers in sight of the distant peaks of the Andes. It was a positive relief here to meet with Indians who could help themselves, after the animal-like beings seen lower down. They began to pass canoes, and sometimes neat and

prosperous villages peopled by Christian Guaranis and Quiteños; and now, as Ruberta wanted to stop and make geological researches, Hutchinson decided to continue the journey by land, and, taking Diego with him, agreed to return to the launch in a few days' time.

Diego enlivened the journey; he chatted, hunted, introduced his master to various wandering Indians, as well as surprised him by his dexterity in the use of the bolas. He had consented to leave his paddle, cooking-pot, and spear in the boat, but could not be prevailed upon to part with his lassoes, bolas, and stirrups. Such Indians as he are almost lost without a horse, and he showed Hutchinson before long that he meant to have one. As though to keep his hand in, he practised from time to time on the ostriches with his bolas, bringing down the ungainly birds with perfect ease from a distance of sixty or seventy yards. The weapon used for such work as this was lighter than that described in the last chapter, and consisted of only two joined thongs, the balls being pebbles covered with leather.

At the next village Hutchinson found that an ox-waggon was about to start for the spot which he wished to reach, and, having little admiration for the domestic horses of the neighbourhood, and no ambition to ride one of the wild ones which Diego was so confident of catching, he resolved to travel in this manner. But Diego had a soul above such a conveyance, and, that very evening, while the oxen were being unyoked, he stole away towards a small group of horses that were browsing on the plain. It was becoming a question of "do or die" with him now, for every step was taking the travellers farther from the region where horses are to be seen in any numbers. The Consul had many times seen a lasso used from the saddle, but he could not understand how Master Diego proposed to catch a horse while he was on foot; and he watched him eagerly through his field-glass.

Crawling on his belly, the Quiteño patiently worked his way towards the nearest horse, and no sooner did the animal turn his back on him, than he sprang up, and the noose had secured him. So far, so good; but did Diego expect the animal to follow him like a pup on the lead, or a donkey in the shafts? thought the Consul. The horse gave a wild spring, and, for a second, the Indian was almost dragged off his feet; then he began to "play" his capture.

Diego was a fine-looking man, over six feet high, and with limbs as hard as a stone, though they were so slender; and he had no hesitation in pitting his own strength against the horse's. With infinite patience he stood, the centre of a circle, while the frightened creature ran off his first fit of energy, round and round his captor; then, having spied a clump of trees not far away, the Quiteño let himself be dragged towards these; and, before the horse had realised that he was running to his doom, the lasso had taken a turn round the nearest trunk and was soon hitched there immovable.

By morning the prisoner was in a humbler frame of mind, and, under pressure, submitted to be loose-hobbled; Diego vaulted on to his back without thought of saddle or bridle, and, holding his mane, buffeted him so mercilessly over the face and withers, that Hutchinson was tempted to serve him the same. Less than half an hour of this management made the animal sufficiently tractable to submit to being saddled; and, with the skid-pan stirrups, the rest was perfectly easy—and disgusting.

CHAPTER XXVII

BUSINESS AND PLEASURE ON THE LLANOS

South America is the land of revolution and civil war, and Venezuela has not been far behind the other republics in its indulgence in such pastimes. In 1864, five out of seven provinces that had been enrolled the previous year seceded, and the Commander-in-Chief, General Paez, was kept busy between subduing seceders and warding off Colombian invasion.

It is common enough to find an English gentleman filling any imaginable capacity, from highest to lowest, in America; but one is scarcely prepared to meet, on the Llanos, a young Venezuelan speaking or writing the language of an educated Englishman, and carrying into his fighting, his hunting and his dealings with the Indians all the best traditions of manliness and fair play characteristic of our public schools. Yet such a man "might have been seen" (as Ainsworth or G. P. R. James would say) riding beside the Republican General as his secretary and aide-de-camp. This was young Ramon Paez, the General's nephew, who, on account of his father's exile, was brought up mainly in England, and educated at Stonyhurst; and who, after taking an Arts degree at London University, returned to his own country and joined his uncle in the north-west of Venezuela, in 1866.

Late in the year, while they were quieting the Colombian frontier, he received a commission which would have made an English aide-de-camp stare; his uncle sent for him, and told him without preliminary that he was to ride back to the Orinoco plains, catch three thousand wild horses, and bring them to the camp for the extra cavalymen who had enlisted.

"Take three troopers with you; it is all I can spare; it will probably be enough." Of course, Ramon Paez did not question his last remark, but he had his own opinion on the subject. "You can take three extra horses; two to carry your provisions, and the third you can load up with presents for the Indians."

So; it was the Indians who were to do the work! Young Paez had almost left them out of his calculations.

The presents—beads, knives, briar pipes, condemned small arms, etc.—were soon collected and packed, and the four men rode away in search of natives and horses. The Indians were not easy to find; at least not the Indians of the right sort; of the wrong sort—idlers, camp-followers, and hangers-on, who had quarrelled with hard work the day they were born and never become reconciled—there were plenty. But it was not till they reached the Orinoco and had travelled down it for a couple of days, that they came across any who looked like the men they wanted. These were fishing, and the workmanlike way in which they went about their task augured well for the success of the aide-de-camp's mission.

He entered into conversation with them and learned that, some miles farther south, horses of a very fine breed were plentiful; and, after a hint from him as to pecuniary reward and a probable distribution of presents, they agreed to refer the matter to their cacique, and if he should raise no objection, to start on the morrow.

The young Venezuelan watched the native sport with keen interest, for, till lately, he had seen nothing of the kind since his childhood. The net—a kind of ground-seine—was rectangular, with a square flap at

either end, and the back weighted at right angles to the bottom; in fact, while it was down, it might be likened in shape to an enormous box which has had the lid and one of its sides removed. It was shot from two canoes about fifty yards from the bank, its back and ends being stiffened and kept in place by canes, or lengths of *palma morice* stalks. When it had been down for about half an hour, the two canoes—strictly keeping pace with one another—moved so slowly towards the bank, that scarcely a ripple was made; the tow-lines were thrown ashore, and the net dragged into the shallow.

Considering the marvellous variety of fish which the Orinoco possesses, the result was a little disappointing to an onlooker; for the catch, though very large, consisted almost entirely of but two kinds: the electric eel, and a creature peculiar to tropical South America—the *payara*—the size of a small salmon; this had its lower jaw supplied with fangs, which the Indians said cut like razors. As the net was pulled into the shallows, an Indian waved his hand warningly to the four soldiers who were standing by.

“Be careful, gentlemen; beware of the *caribe*! Pray stand farther back; your red sashes will attract them.”

As he spoke, some small fish leapt out of the water and into the net. “Quick; quick with the forks!”

Half a dozen long slender canes, each ending in two metal prongs like those of a carving-fork, were instantly produced, and it was soon plain enough why such implements were required. Those few little green fish, so beautifully barred with red and orange, were like bulls in a china shop; they leapt, wriggled, or swam about the net, biting first the fish and then the net as viciously as rats; and Paez stared to see mesh after mesh snapped through before the Indians could eject them with their forks.

“If they could have got near you they would have bitten you in the same manner,” said the principal of the fishermen, when he had got rid of the last of the *caribes*. “Anything red will attract them. We dare not attempt to swim a spurred horse through here, for he would be bitten to death, or till he was mad, before he reached the other side. I have seen a white man killed by them, merely because he happened to have a red scratch on his leg when he entered the water.”

The cacique was interviewed, and not only granted permission for the whole tribe to go on the hunting expedition, but announced his own intention of going; and, early the following morning, they all started southwards with a good supply of lassoes. The Indians—one of the Cariban tribes—were the finest horsemen Paez had seen; and this was the more noteworthy, inasmuch as the Caribs as a whole care little for riding; many of those of the forest regions and of the Central American mountains have never seen such a thing as a horse; and we know that the cavalry of the Spanish adventurers terrified the sixteenth-century Caribs as much as Pyrrhus’ elephants disconcerted the Romans and their horses. Yet these Venezuelan natives rode as if they had been born on horseback, and made no more ado of eating their dinner while they were in the saddle than as though it had been an arm-chair.

The nearer the cavalcade drew to the softer grass of the Llano, the more wild horses they saw; and Paez, who had never yet used a lasso, was for making his maiden effort on one of these; till the cacique warned him that “horses can tell things to each other;” and that these scouts, if chased, would easily escape and caution the larger herds, thereby lengthening out the hunt by an extra week or more.

But at length they saw enough of the animals to satisfy the most wary of caciques; they could only be counted by the herd; it seemed as though all the horses in America had been turned out to grass on this particular spot. From the matter-of-fact way in which the three troopers went to work, the chief saw at once that they had little to learn from his tribe; but he bade Paez, in fatherly fashion, to keep close to him and “watch how he did it.”

The young officer’s riding was perfect; but, after his first one or two efforts with the lasso, he was

tempted to forswear horse-catching. The thing would not go right; either he ran his noose too small, or too large, or it fell short, or missed wildly; or, worse still, got in the way of the other hunters, so that they gave him a wide berth. However, he persevered, and towards the close of the first day, actually succeeded in dropping the noose over the head of a fine black stallion; and in imagination he saw himself bestriding him proudly, to the envy of all his mess. But the beautiful creature, finding the thong about him, gave a leap that seemed to tear his captor's saddle from under him; then another, that almost pulled the ridden horse off his feet; then sped across the plain as though he moved on wings.

Ramon Paez was certainly as strong as most young men of one-and-twenty who lead active outdoor lives, and he had distinguished himself in every variety of English sport from boxing to ferreting; but he could no more stop or haul in this wild horse, than he could have lassoed the Flying Dutchman. The line was as taut as a fiddle-string, and his own mount, unused to such diversions, was being drawn along irresistibly. How much farther did the outraged beast intend to drag horse and rider?

"Let him run himself out, Señor," bawled one of his troopers, as the stallion fled past the outer line of hunters.

The recommendation was superfluous, for this was the very thing the noble animal seemed to intend doing. He galloped another half-mile, then changed his mind, as though the strangulation were beginning to tell on him. He swung straight round as if resigned to the notion of going back to the rest, hesitated, then caught the slackening thong in his teeth and bit at it as savagely as a wild ass. Naturally the beginner at once turned his own horse, meaning to pay his prisoner out in his own coin; and spurring vigorously, headed towards the central part of the hunt. But this did not please the irate captive, and, after useless efforts to stand—first on his dignity and then on his head, he made a dead weight of himself for an instant, then took several successive bounds forward, easily outstripping his tormentor and slackening the pressure of the noose.

"Is the brute going to dance?" Don Paez asked himself wrathfully.

This was just what the brute was going to do; not after the common or circus fashion, but with the fixed idea of crushing the lad's arm with his great jaws. The young man's fine horsemanship was the only thing that could now save him from a bite which would not only mangle a limb, but would probably lead to blood-poisoning—a disease not exactly sought after in England, and almost sure to be fatal in the tropics. He backed, and the line tightened; but the stallion was on him again in another spring. He backed once more, dodged to the right, to the left, waved his arm at the infuriated creature, but to no purpose; and, though he would have bitten his tongue out before he would own himself beaten, by shouting for help, he felt that he was playing a losing game. There was just one chance left for him, and that was to spur his already enfeebled horse to a gallop and race his antagonist.

Never did Derby competitor work a horse more recklessly; Don Paez spurred and smote, smote and spurred, and only to lose at one minute the start he had gained the minute before; only just now he had been endeavouring might and main to slacken the lasso; now he would have given a five-pound note to feel it taut. Suddenly his horse seemed to turn round like a wheel, he had a confused vision of the sky falling on him, then of the earth coming up to meet him, and he and the horse lay on the ground together. He had obeyed his instinct to kick himself free from the stirrups, and so fell clear of the horse and escaped with only a severe shaking.

Then he looked up and saw the cause of his fall; an old Carib, who had watched his struggle from a distance, had pegged down his own capture, galloped across and neatly dropped a second lasso over the head of the rebellious wild horse.

The next few nights, all camped out on the Llano, and by the end of the week, were ready to start for the camp with fully three thousand horses. South American ways with animals are not our ways, and Indian methods of taming and transporting horses are not such as English readers love to hear of;^[5] it will be sufficient to say that, for transport, the captives were yoked up in long teams, each horse being thong-hobbled on his fore-legs.

Horse-hunting was not the only species of sport which Don Paez witnessed among the Caribs. On the journey to the camp, it became necessary to replenish the food-supply, and he accompanied six of the Indians on one of their curious deer-hunts. As a preliminary, the hunters made a call at a native village and each returned with a small bundle in his hand.

“They are our masks,” said the cacique, who was of the party. “Some of our people hunt with an ox, but you will see that the mask is as effective. I have brought one for you, Señor Commandante. Will you put it on?”



CRANE STALKING-MASKS

On the llanos the Indians use masks made of the head and feathers of the crane, then, imitating the actions of the bird searching for snakes and other reptiles among the reeds and grasses of the river bank, wait until the unsuspecting deer come down to drink, when they form an easy target for their arrows.

Paez had already humoured the Indians by leaving his gun at the camp and bringing a bow and arrows, about which he knew as little as they of gunpowder. But when the cacique produced a not too sweet-smelling head-dress of brown and white feathers, adorned with the bill of a *cariama* (a species of crane), he thought the good man was rather overstraining his willingness to become a savage. However, he put it on, and took up his bow and arrows, but so awkwardly that the cacique hinted that, on this occasion, he

might like to be a mere spectator.

The masks, as worn by men who knew the workings thereof, were very satisfactory disguises; when the Indians had fallen on their knees with their heads bent, they might easily be mistaken in the distance for cranes feeding; and in this guise they crawled down towards the edge of the river just before the deer came down to drink. Paez, concealed in the long grass, had an excellent view of the proceedings, and could well understand, at that distance, how the unsuspecting game might fall into the snare. The “cranes,” with their backs to the water and their heads bobbing so as to make the pendent bill move as if in search of the small snakes or other reptiles beloved of such birds, waited till a good-sized herd came within range; then the six bow-strings twanged, and six deer lay dead or helpless, while their startled brethren fled across the plain; and six more of these were brought down by a second volley before they could get out of reach.

THE END.

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[1]

See “Adventures in the Arctic Regions.” (Seeley and Co., 1909.)

[2]

For a further account of the turtle, see the “Romance of the World’s Fisheries,” by S. Wright. (Seeley and Co.)

[3]

See “Adventures in the Great Deserts,” Chapter III. (Seeley and Co.)

[4]

“Adventures among the Wild Beasts.”

[5]

A full account of wild horse-taming will be found in the writer’s “Adventures among the Wild Beasts.”

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Typographical problems have been changed, and these are highlighted.

Transcriber's Changes:

Page 91: Added closing quote mark (soon to be moving; it will be bad going for the **horses.**")

Page 208: Was 'off' (the beautiful Yo-Semite Valley ceased, from that day, to be the stronghold **of** Shoshonee mountain-brigands.)

Page 249: Was 'rattle-snakes' (the alarming prevalence of **rattlesnakes**, the journey was not unpleasant.)

Page 332: Was 'fire-arms' ("I saw your gun and I was frightened. We do not like **fire arms**, Señor;)

Page 333: Was 'fire-arms' (and even so far overcame his fear of **fire arms** as to offer to carry the gun a little way;)

Page 339: Was 'deerskin' (while at his belt hung a knife and a **deer-skin** pouch, the latter containing flint and steel)

Variably hyphenated words:

fore-legs and forelegs

bow-strings and bowstrings

sun-rays and sunrays

women-folk and womenfolk

up-hill and uphill

well-nigh and wellnigh

bird-shot and birdshot

snow-shoes and snowshoes

hind-quarters and hindquarters

pen-knife and penknife

gun-shot and gunshot

skid-pan and skidpan

mid-stream and midstream

fire-light and firelight

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