UNDER WOLFE'S FLAG

Title: Under Wolfe's Flag

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Release Date: July 20, 2013 [eBook #43265]

Language: English

Produced by Al Haines.

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"'STOP! STOP! WE'RE COMING DOWN.'" (p. 34)

Under Wolfe's Flag

OR
THE FIGHT FOR THE CANADAS

BY
ROWLAND WALKER

AUTHOR OF
"THE OLD MANOR HOUSE," "THE TREASURE GALLEON," ETC.

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TO
THE MEMORY OF
MY GRANDFATHER,
A BRAVE AND CHIVALROUS FRONTIERSMAN,
WHOSE REMARKABLE EARLY ADVENTURES IN THE
BACKWOODS OF CANADA AND AMERICA
PROMPTED THE WRITING
OF THIS BOOK

R.W.

IN GREAT BRITAIN BY PURNELL AND SONS
PAULTON, SOMERSET, ENGLAND

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UNDER WOLFE'S FLAG

CHAPTER I
THE TROUT-STREAM

"Here's a beauty, Jack!"

"Hold him, Jamie, till I come!"

"Come quickly then, old fellow–he's slipping away from me! Quick! Hang it, the fellow's gone! I've missed him, and—-"

"Splash!" The sentence was never finished, for Jamie, stepping too excitedly

on a treacherous, moss-covered rock in mid-stream, slipped, and the next instant found himself sitting down, up to the armpits in the water which raced past him like a mill-stream.

"Never mind," said his companion, when the laughter which greeted this mishap had subsided. "There's a likely spot, up under the fall there, where I've landed many a big fish; let's go and try it."

This "likely spot," however, was a difficult one, and for any other soul in the tiny village of Burnside–these two young rascals excepted–an impossible one. There, right under the overhanging rocks, over which a cascade tumbled twenty feet, into a swirling pool which formed one of the deepest parts of the stream, was a narrow ledge, where the moss grew thick upon the wet, slippery rocks, but in the cracks and fissures beneath that ledge, many a lusty trout was hidden.

While the two chums are wending their way to this "likely spot," which lay at a bend in the stream, just at the bottom of Hawk Woods, leaping from boulder to boulder as they crossed the broken stream, I will briefly introduce the reader to a little of their previous history.

Jack Elliot and Jamie Stuart were aged respectively fifteen and fourteen years. Only a week ago these two sturdy lads had been soundly thrashed by Dr. Birch, for playing truant and indulging in the tempting but forbidden pastime of "tickling trout" in the laughing stream, which, descending from the blue moorlands above, sang its way down through the densely wooded slopes of Crow Hill.

Jack was the youngest son of Squire Elliot of Rushworth Hall, an old but somewhat dilapidated manor, standing on one of the ridges of the Pennine Chain. His eldest brother, who was now twenty-two, was an ensign in the celebrated "John Company," and at the present time was engaged in active service in India. His second brother was at Oxford. Jack was still a scholar (though a dull one) at the old Elizabethan Grammar School just above the village, where stern Dr. Birch drilled little else but Greek and Latin into unwilling pupils.

Jack's bosom chum and schoolfellow was Jamie Stuart. Now, Jamie was an orphan, at least so far as he knew, for his mother died on the day that he was born, and his father, a somewhat daring village character, who once transgressed the game laws, was considered by a bench of land-owning gentry as "too dangerous a character to remain in Burnside, lest he should lead other folk astray," and was ultimately transported to the new colonies in North America, and forbidden to set foot in England again "on peril of his life," for those were the days of the cruel game laws, when sheep-stealing was a hanging business, and to touch a pheasant meant transportation for life.

All this happened when Jamie was a little chap of but two years, and so he never remembered either his father or his mother. His father was said to be very fond of his little boy–for despite his transgression, he was a good father and a

brave man, and very much the type of man that Merry England needed at that time, to fight her enemies–and his only request when he was sentenced was, that before he left the country he might see again his little boy–a request which the selfish and hardened magistrates promptly refused.

Years passed away, and village rumours said that he had escaped from his captors directly he set foot on American soil, and had taken to the forest, amongst the Indians tribes that inhabited the backwoods of Pennsylvania, and that he had become a great chief amongst them; but this was perhaps only a rumour, for no one really knew whether he was dead or alive. So little Jamie grew up under the care of a maiden aunt, who kept a Dame School in the little village, and being a lady of some property, when the lad became ten years old, he was sent to the Old Grammar School.

The time of which I write was the middle of the eighteenth century, and England was just laying the foundations of her great future Empire, which was to be the wonder and envy of the world.

During the past twenty years, Anson and his brave sea-dogs, though always outnumbered in ships and men, had driven the French and Spaniards from the seas, and had made the name of England famous all over the world. On all the seven seas the old flag was supreme, and was proudly unfurled to every breeze that blew.

Across the burning plains of India, and under the very palace of the Old Mogul, was heard the boom of British guns, for against overwhelming odds Clive was winning brilliant victories, that would soon end in bringing the vast Indian Empire, with all its wealth and treasure, and its multitude of dark-skinned princes, to do homage at the feet of England's king. Nor was this all, for over the Atlantic, on the shores, the rivers, and the great lakes of the new world, the long campaign had already begun, which was to end in the capture of Quebec, and the wresting of the Canadas from our inveterate foes across the Channel.

So the Squire's son and the poacher's son became fast friends. All the Squire's efforts to separate them had failed. They were kindred spirits, and there was no mischief or devilry ever set afoot, either in the school or the village, in which they did not participate. All the rules and laws that were ever invented failed to keep them within bounds.

Their three great enemies were, Dr. Birch, Old Click, the keeper of Hawk Woods, and Beagle, the village constable. The first had thrashed them a score of times, the second had threatened to bring the penalties of the game laws upon them, if they did not desist from their depredations, whilst the third had once put them in the stocks, and threatened them with the lock-up for the next offence.

Thus it happened, on this glorious afternoon in the early summer of 1757, when the school bell was calling its unwilling pupils to their lessons, that these

two boys were robbing the nest of a humble-bee, in a meadow below the school, extracting the wild honey from the combs, when the bell suddenly ceased ringing.

"There goes!–that confounded bell has stopped ringing, Jamie."

"So it has. Now we're in for it again."

"The second time this week, too," and Jack sat down and began to whistle, "There's nae luck aboot the house," while a look of grim despair settled on the countenance of his friend.

"And my back's still sore with that last thrashing. What shall we do, Jack?"

"Let's go trouting in Hawk Woods."

"And what about Old Click? He said that the next time he caught us, he'd take us before the magistrates."

"Oh, hang the magistrates and Old Click too! Why shouldn't we fish there if we like? Shall we go?"

"Agreed!"

And the next moment they were scampering across the meadows in the direction of the woods, taking care to keep under the shelter of the hedges and walls as much as possible, till they had entered the friendly cover of the trees.

Hawk Woods was a lovely bit of primeval forest, that covered both sides of a deep valley. In places, the descent was almost precipitous, right down to the bottom of the gully, where the burn threaded its way amongst the rocks, boulders, and fallen tree-trunks. It was a bewitching spot. The shimmering of a thousand trees, on whose leaves flashed the sunlight, their brown, aged and distorted trunks, the huge scattered rocks, and above all, the music of the stream as it tumbled half a hundred little cascades, with the speckled trout leaping amid its whirls and eddies, made it a charming place. Who that has seen that spot can forget it?

This was the place that had wooed these two boys from their lessons, and here beside the big cascade we have found them again.

Jamie had tried twice to reach the ledge behind the falls, by climbing along the face of the rock, and clinging to the ivy roots, but there was no foothold.

"It's no use," said Jack, "there's only one way to get there, and that is by swimming. We can easily duck, when we come to the fall."

"Then we'll try it, for I'm already wet through, what with the spray from the falls, and sitting down in the stream."

They quickly divested themselves of their clothing, plunged in, swam across the pool, ducked under the cascade, and reached the narrow ledge, which was the object of their immediate ambition, and within a quarter of an hour they had succeeded in capturing half-a-dozen fine trout, by the process known as "tickling," and as they caught them, they flung them far out on the bank.

Then they swam back, and after drying themselves in the warm rays of the

sun, they dressed, and prepared to cook their afternoon meal.

An armful of twigs and broken branches, a bit of dry grass–these were quickly gathered. Then Jack struck a spark with his tinder-box, and there was a fire! Now the blue smoke was curling upwards, and hanging like a wreath over the tree-tops. Alas, that fatal smoke! This it was that betrayed them, and was the means of changing the whole course of their lives, for other eyes had seen it from afar, and were hastening to the spot.

In later days, amongst the backwoods of another continent, when their nearest neighbours were a scalping party of Algonquins or fierce Iroquois, they learnt to be more careful about that thin column of blue smoke which rose from their evening camp-fire.

But at present they were unconscious of any such danger. The feeling that they were most conscious of at this moment was one of hunger somewhere amidships, for their outdoor exercise, and above all, the cold dip, had given them healthy appetites. As soon, therefore, as the fire had burned sufficiently clear, they laid the spoils of the chase across a rude grid, made of a few wet sticks.

Then the savoury smell of roasted trout filled the wood, and when this delicate repast was ready, our two young heroes feasted sumptuously on the royal dish of red-spotted trout. When they had finished their repast, they washed it down with a copious draught of cold water from the stream.

"There goes the old magpie back to her nest. I wonder if the young ones are hatched yet. I'm going aloft to see," said Jamie, and he immediately began to climb the tall, straight fir-tree, which stood on the very edge of a steep slope, about twenty yards away.

When he had shinned some fifteen feet up the trunk he was able to clasp the lowest branch, and in another minute he had ascended to the very top of the tree, and was swaying dangerously amongst the slender twigs where the magpie had built her nest.

"How many young ones are there?" called Jack from the foot of the tree.

"Three and one egg left."

"Good! Bring the egg down. It's no good to the old bird now. It's sure to be addled. Bring it down–you know we promised to get one for Tiny Tim the lame boy, who can't climb."

"Why, what's the matter? Anything wrong?"

"Sh! Sh!"

Jamie was signalling desperately from the tree-top to his companion below, and pointing across the stream, beyond the camp-fire.

"Who is it?" asked Jack, in a hoarse whisper.

"Old Click, I do believe–and–Beagle!"

"Snakes alive! What now?"

"Better come up the tree. Quietly now."

Jack was just as expert at climbing as Jamie, and never sailor-boy shinned up the truck to the mast-head more quickly or more neatly than he did up that tall fir-tree. In another moment they were both perched aloft, and hidden amongst the branches.

The two men had seen the smoke from the distance, as it ascended above the trees, and suspecting either trespassers or poachers, they had crept quietly down to the place, and had reached the neighbourhood of the fire, soon after the boys had left the spot.

Imagine the feelings of the latter, as from their lofty perch they looked down upon their two bitterest enemies, only a stone's throw away, and effectually cutting off their retreat. Only a fortnight before, they had been hauled before the magistrates for this very same offence, and it had required all the influence of Jack's father to protect the youngsters from the penalty of the law.

"The young vagabonds—-" Old Click was saying, as he kicked aside the embers of the fire.

"Look! Here be the heads of six foine trout they have stolen," said Beagle.

"I don't know whether be the worst–Squire's son or the poacher's son; but this I know, they be both framing for Wakefield gaol, or else the gallows."

"How do ye know it be they, Mr. Click?" asked the constable. "There be noa evidence that I con see, as yet."

"How do I know? Why, there ain't another rascal in the village who dare come into the woods and touch either fish or game since Jem Mason was transported. Nobody dare do it, 'cept these two vagabonds, who are the plague o' my life."

"Aye, the place is wunn'erfully quiet sin' I copt Jem at his old tricks," said Beagle, straightening his shoulders, as he recalled that stirring incident, in which, however, he took a very small part.

"And I do think, constable, that you ain't done your duty lately, to let these two rascals play the pranks they ha' played."

"What's that you say, Mr. Click?" said Beagle, rather testily. "What have they done?"

"Why, 'twas only last Friday that Gaffer John had a dead cat dropped down his chimney, when he was just cooking his supper, too, and it was all spoiled. And who was it that fired Farmer Giles's hayrick, but these same 'gallows-birds'? The young varmint!"

"First catch your man, Mr. Click, and then you'll have evidence 'red-hot' that a bench of magistrates will look at."

"Do you hear that, Jamie?" whispered Jack. "They're on our scent for dropping that dead cat down 'Surly John's' chimney. He deserved it, too, the skulking

old miser, for turning poor old Betty Lamb out of her cottage. I'd do it again. But fancy blaming us for firing that hayrick! Surely he can't mean it!"

"I'll tell you what, Jack. This place is getting too warm for us. Let's run away and go to sea, as we always said we should."

"Chance is a fine thing. Wait till we're out of this hole. Wish we'd the chance to run now, but if we stir they'll see us."

At this point a shrill whistle rang through the woods and startled them, and before they had recovered from their surprise, the deep bay of a hound was heard approaching from the distance.

"Phew—-" The boys looked at each other, and for a moment their faces blanched, as in an undertone these words simultaneously escaped from their lips.

"Old Click's dog—-"

"We're up a tree now, Jack, in more than one sense." And they were, for they both knew the reputation of this wonderful hound. He could track a poacher for miles, and having once got the scent, he rarely let it go till he had run his victim down. Nearer and nearer came that deep bay, and soon the trampling of the shrubs and undergrowth gave notice of its arrival.

"Here, Charlie. Good dog.–Seek 'em.–Seek 'em," cried its master.

Instantly the hound began sniffing round about the embers of the fire, till picking up the newly-placed scent, it suddenly gave vent to a peculiar howl, and then dashed directly towards the stream. Here it paused abruptly, and began sniffing the air, then it ran back to the fire, picked up the scent again, and stopped once more at the edge of the stream.

"They've crossed the water, that's certain," said the keeper.

The boys had watched this with great consternation. They had given up all hope of escape, but when they saw this fine dog twice baffled by the stream, hope returned in an overflowing measure.

"There is just a chance," whispered Jack.

The two men crossed the burn, and brought the dog to the other bank, to see if it could pick up the trail. Fortunately, the boys had paddled a little way upstream, when they crossed, and this caused some further delay in recovering the scent. Still the keeper persevered, and in another quarter of an hour, the hound uttered a joyful little bark, and with tail erect and nose to the ground, it started away in the direction of the fir. Suddenly it stopped at the foot of the tree, where

the culprits were perched, and began clawing and scratching at the bark.

CHAPTER II
HOLDING THE FORT

Aghast–horrified–the boys looked at each other in silence. Most boys would have blubbered and given up the game. Not so these two lads. Their faces turned a shade paler, but a stern heroic light shone from their eyes, as they calmly awaited events.

A moment later the constable and the keeper came struggling through the brushwood.

"Here they are, Beagle! Caught at last. It's the two of them. The same old birds," cried Old Click joyfully, as he caught sight of the prisoners. "Good dog! Good old Charlie! There's a dog for you, Beagle! Not another like him for twenty miles around. See how he's run the vagabonds to earth!"

"He's a good dog, I admit, Mr. Click, but he hasn't quite run them to earth yet, seeing that they're a good forty feet above the ground; but we've got them tree'd and cornered this time, proper, eh?"

"Ho, there! Come down, ye young varmint. Come down this minute, or t'ull be worse for you," shouted the keeper.

"I shall come down when I please," said Jamie.

"All right, you son of a poacher. I'll sit down till you do as I tell you. I don't mind a rest and a smoke, but I won't move from this spot till you do come down."

"Won't you move, though? You old fox. You shan't stay there if you have tree'd us. Take that, and that," and as he spoke Jamie hurled with all his might a chunk of dead wood, which he had torn from a withered branch. "I'll teach you to call me names. My father was a better man than you, any day."

The missile hit the keeper on the knee, as he sat on the grass, and gave him a nasty shock. Up he jumped in a rage, and for a couple of minutes he fairly danced and limped around the tree, in spite of his determination a minute ago not to move. He clenched his fist and shook it at the youngsters.

"I'll have the law on ye–ye young jackanapes. What's that, Beagle, but 'battery and assault,' and what's the penalty for it?"

"Twenty strokes of the birch, Mr. Click, and ten years' imprisonment, or, more likely, transportation for life."

"Aye, that's it–transportation. Like your father got, you young gallows-bird."

This second taunt about his father made the blood rush to the lad's face, and he hurled another chunk of wood at the irate keeper, which narrowly missed his head, but hit the hound instead, which set up a frightful yell and bolted into the wood, and despite all the blandishments of its master refused to come anywhere near the zone of fire again.

The boys were as agile as monkeys aloft, and they quickly got several more pieces of dead timber ready for their captors. Things were turning out much better than they feared, and they were not having the worst of it, so far, at least. How it would all end it was impossible to say, but there was just this chance, that they might drive away the two men by their determined assault, until an opportunity occurred for them to slip down the tree; and once on the ground, with even a dozen yards start, they could easily leave their pursuers behind. As for the hound–well, another chunk of wood would about settle him.

Both the keeper and the constable were now very chary about showing themselves, after the narrow escape of the former, for the boys were so expert with the missiles, and so determined in their opposition that the two men kept behind the tree trunks, some twenty or thirty feet away. Both boys had their pea-shooters, with a plentiful supply of dry wicken-berries, and whenever their opponents showed so much as an inch of face they were mercilessly pelted.

"You young rascals. You shall pay dearly for this. Do ye know ye're insulting the law?" cried the constable, trying hard to dodge the pea-shooters as he spoke.

"Why don't you go home?" called out Jack. "If either of you come near the tree again, we'll break every bone in your body. We've plenty of wood here."

This game was continued for more than half-an-hour, at the end of which time the two men got behind a thick holly bush near by, and began to consult together.

The next moment the boys would have been free, for while the keepers were thus engaged, their prisoners were preparing to slide down the tree and make a dash for it, when, observing this, the men rushed towards the tree just in time to prevent them.

"Come back, Jamie! Come back—-" cried his companion, hurling at the same instant another piece of wood at Beagle, who made a desperate spring, and tried to catch hold of Jamie's legs, as he hung dangling from a branch. The missile took effect, and the constable quickly retreated, roaring like the "Bull of Bashan."

The next moment Old Click emerged from the wood with an armful of bracken, with which he quickly kindled a fire. Soon a thick column of smoke arose, and drifted towards the tree. More and more bracken and brushwood were

piled on, and the smoke became chokingly dense up there in the tree, for the fire had been lit with the express purpose of smoking them out.

The boys plied them valiantly with wood-chunks and wicken-berries, but their ammunition soon failed them. The smoke had become dreadful now. They were nearly choked with it, and were already half-blinded. What could they do? Still they held out. They mounted to the very top of the tree, and sat there with their faces buried in their hands to keep that suffocating smoke from their eyes and nostrils.

"Coming down now, sir?" asked the keeper, who had now begun to light another fire at the root of the tree, for he saw that there was no more ammunition aloft, but he had counted without his host.

"No, you villains! Take that!–and that!" shouted Jack, at the same time hurling down through the smoke first one boot and then another, as a last resort.

The second boot caught Old Click in the middle of the back as he was stooping down to tend the fire, and made him give vent to a yell which resounded through the woods. This incident evoked a bit of high-sounding English that I will not here repeat–suffice it to say that the yell brought Beagle, who had gone to fetch a woodman's axe, running to the spot to see what had happened.

The keeper sat down on the grass for a few moments, and the boys were afraid that they had killed him, but in a little while he sprang up again and cried out angrily–

"I'll give you two minutes to come down, gentlemen. At the end of that time I shall cut down the tree."

There was no answer, and at the end of the two minutes the keeper spoke again.

"Will you come down and go quietly to the lock-up?" Still no answer, and the next moment—-

"Chip!–chip!" went the axe, and at every stroke the tall tree shook. The trunk was more than half-way through now, and the whole stem trembled with the blows, when a voice called from aloft, through the smoke–

"Stop! Mr. Click, if you please."

Quite willing to take a brief rest and to enjoy the discomfort of the youngsters, the keeper stayed his axe for a moment.

"We'll come down, Mr. Click, if you won't take us to the lock-up. We've only had six of your beastly trout, and they were not worth two-pence each, but we're willing to pay you for them, and to come down, if you won't take us before the magistrates. We've done nothing to deserve it," said Jack, as he prepared to descend.

"Do you hear that, Beagle? That's what I call trying to bribe an honest man. What do you call it?"

"That's it–bribery and corruption," replied the constable.

"The terms of surrender are unconditional, you young jackanapes." And with that Click went to work with the axe again. The tree quivered, and gave signs that it was about to fall.

"Stop! Stop! We're coming down." And then, realising that the game was up, the two chums quietly slid down the trunk into the arms of their captors, and were triumphantly marched off to the lock-up.

It was getting dark when they reached this ugly little building, but they were unceremoniously thrust inside, and when the key grated in the lock and the two men had left them, with only the rats for their companions, they were just a little bit "skeered."

"Jamie! Where are you?" asked Jack, when they had been left alone in the silence and the darkness for some minutes.

"Here! Here!" cried his companion, and they crept along the wall until they were able to touch each other. Then they cowered down in a corner, against the wall.

"We'll get out of this before morning, else my name's not Jack Elliot, and then we'll do that which we've often spoken about. We'll run away–we'll go to sea–we'll tramp to Liverpool, and we'll find a ship going abroad, and we'll get taken aboard somehow–and–and we'll stick together, and make our fortunes. What say you, Jamie?"

"Jack, you're a brick. Give me your hand. I'll go with you, and we'll stick together. I've no father and no mother, and no friends–except you. All the world's against us. Old Click and Beagle have been trying to catch us for months, and now they've done it. They'll brag about it, and the whole village will laugh at us."

"Yes, they've threatened to turn us out of school, and now they'll perhaps send us to prison, just for taking a few trout, as though God didn't make the trout, and the streams, and the woods for all of us. And to-morrow they'll bring us before the magistrates—-"

"Will they, though? They won't have the chance. Just hold this, while I get a light, and then we'll examine the place," and Jamie pulled a piece of tar-band out of his pocket, unravelled the end, and handed it to his companion. Next, he took out his tinder-box, and quickly threw a shower of sparks on to the tow, which produced a little flame, about the size of a rushlight. Then they began to look around them.

It was a common type of village lock-up, built of rough, undressed stones from the neighbouring quarries. It had massive oaken doors, which had been securely locked, and there were no windows, for the only opening was a small aperture, eighteen inches square, and about seven feet from the ground, and it

was caged by several rusty iron bars. The floor was flagged with stones and covered with rushes.

The place was used merely as a temporary lock-up for poachers and other law-breakers before their transference to the county gaol, and was situated just outside the village. In a few minutes they had examined the doors, the walls and the floor, but they sought in vain for any spot that offered a chance of escape.

"The grating, Jack! Let's try the grating. I reckon that's our only chance. Here, give me a leg! Let me climb on to your shoulders and try the bars." This was no sooner said than done.

"Here's luck! The middle bar is filed through at one end, and here on the ledge is a rusty file, thick with cobwebs. How jolly! Some one's been at this game before, and it's never been discovered. Half the work's been done for us, but it must have been many years ago. I believe if we can file through the other end of this bar we can squirm through."

"I wonder who did it?"

"Blessings on his head, whoever or wherever he is. May he never want a friend!"

It was indeed a long time ago since the file had been used. It had lain there for twelve years hidden by cobwebs and dust, and the poacher who had used it had been transported.

For the next half-hour the two boys took turns filing away at that thick iron bar, standing or kneeling on each other's shoulders. Suddenly at the end of that time voices were heard, and then footsteps approaching.

"Sh! Sh! Put out the light, Jamie, quick! Some one is coming." The light was extinguished, and the prisoners sat down quietly on the rush-strewn floor.

Who could it be? Had the magistrates sent some one already to remove them to the county gaol? If so, their chances of escape were already cut off. They determined to wait quietly and see, for this was all they could do.

Nearer and nearer came the sounds they had previously heard. The footsteps halted outside the heavy doors. The rays of light from a lanthorn flashed through the interstices and the openings. Some one was examining the lock. Who could it be? The boys' hearts quaked with fear lest their efforts at escape should be foiled. Then they heard the voices of their captors.

"They ain't broke gaol yet, Beagle! The lock's safe and sound. We've got them safe–this time," said Old Click.

"Have you, though?" whispered Jack, under his breath.

"Hullo, there, ye young varmints! Who's master now? You won't do any more poaching in Hawk Woods, I'll warrant," said the keeper, who seemed to have come purposely to poke fun at them. Then Jamie pretended to sob piteously.

"Oh, it's crying ye are, is it? Ah, well, it's too late for repentance now. Ye

should ha' thought o' that before."

"Come away now, Mr. Click. They're safe till the morning, anyhow. Then we can bring them before the magistrates and have them whipped, and sent to prison, and perhaps transported. Come away," said Beagle.

"I'd like to see the man who would dare to whip me," cried out Jack, his voice ringing with anger and defiance.

"Tut, tut! my little man! When a boy begins training so early for the gallows, what can he expect? Howsoever, 'tis no use argefying, so I'll just bid ye good-night." After which they both went off chuckling and saying–

"'Twill be a lesson for them. T' squire and schoolmaster seemed mightily pleased over it."

To do the janitors justice, however, I must here say that it was not intended to punish the lads further than by letting them spend the night in the lock-up, in the hope that this might teach them a severe lesson. To this course Jack's father and the schoolmaster, who had been already informed, quite agreed.

The lads, however, took it more seriously, and felt convinced from precedents within their memory that the full severity of the law would be meted out to them, and they determined to prevent it by escaping and running away from Burnside and saving their families this terrible disgrace, for Jamie still looked upon his aunt as his guardian, and though Jack had no mother or sisters, he had a father and brothers. Besides, they were just at that age when romance begins; for all their heroes had commenced life by running away.

As soon, therefore, as their janitors were out of hearing, they set to work again with the rusty old file, which by this time had lost much of its rust and had begun to bite keenly. It was hard work, but their freedom and their future were at stake. They were hungry, too, for since dinner they had tasted nothing but those few trout which they had taken from the burn.

It was damp and chilly too, but they did not feel the cold, for they were aglow with the exercise and flushed with the promise of victory.

"Hurrah! It's through at last!" exclaimed Jamie, as the file slipped and the heavy bar fell upon the floor with a jangle and a jar.

"Bravo, old fellow! Well done."

Jamie put the file in his pocket, and swung himself up by the remaining bars. There was now an aperture about eleven inches square, and though it required a bit of a struggle to squeeze through that awkward gap, yet they had both done more difficult things than that in the past, and so within five minutes they

were both standing in the road outside the lock-up.

CHAPTER III
A LONG TRAMP TO THE SEA

The village clock in the old church tower was striking eleven. It was dreadfully dark, but the lads were not afraid, and they started off at a sharp trot, as soon as they had regained their liberty. For some distance they followed the tree-lined road that led away from the village. They kept on in silence till they reached the outskirts of Bogden Woods, then they took one of the narrow, winding paths that led down through the thicket, crossed the stream at the bottom of the dell, and ascended the opposite hill-side.

Still they kept on–now through the more open country, over hill and dale, until at the end of two hours, despite the darkness, they had put six good miles between themselves and the lock-up.

At last, fatigued beyond measure, they halted for a rest below Lin-Crag, one of the highest peaks in the Pennine Chain. Here, on the lower reaches of the moor, they made for themselves a bed of dried heather, where they could lie down.

"Here, let us rest awhile, Jack, for I'm dead beat," said Jamie.

"Right!" said his companion, "No one will discover us here."

After a short breathing space, they began to take stock of their possessions. Alas! Jamie had but a few pennies and half-pence, a piece of tar-band and a tinder-box, while Jack could only find a penknife, a pocket compass and a sixpence. This, then, was their stock-in-trade, and it did not promise them much luxury on their way to the sea.

"Now," said Jack, "I have an uncle who is captain of a ship that trades between the River Plate and Liverpool–Captain Elliot is his name, and the ship is called the *Ilawara*. If, when we get to Liverpool, he should happen to be in port, I am sure that he would give us both a berth aboard, for once, when father took me to see him, he advised me to become a sailor, when I had grown up."

"Capital! But let's see, how far away is Liverpool?"

"It must be about sixty miles away, and almost due west, right over the moors there, for I've often measured it roughly on the map. I think that's the west, though I can't quite see the needle of the compass in the dark."

"Yes, Jack, that's the west, right over the moors and over Lin-Crag too, and there are about twelve miles of moorland, with plenty of peat-bog, and soft ground, so that it will not be safe to go much further till daybreak."

"You're sure that's the west, Jamie?"

"Yes, certain. Why, look, you don't need a compass! There's the North Star, and the Cassiopean Guards, and right opposite is the south, and over there must be the east, as you'll soon see when the day breaks."

"Bravo, Jamie! You're as good as a compass."

"Then we'll sleep here, and at sunrise we'll get some food and start for Liverpool, and there'll be no going back for either of us. The die is cast, old fellow. What say you?"

"The die is cast! We will not go back."

They both laid themselves down on a couch of heather, there to spend the rest of the night, but they were too excited to sleep–the events of the past twenty-four hours chased each other through their brains. Jamie was nearly dozing off, however, when Jack suddenly leapt to his feet, and exclaimed—-

"Here's a piece of luck, Jamie!"

"Why, what's the matter? How you did startle me!" cried the other.

"Just look here!" said Jack, ripping open the lining of his jacket, and taking out something that gleamed bright, even in the starlight.

"Why–it's a guinea! Where did you get it?"

"I'd forgotten all about it myself. About a month ago, Aunt Emma drove over from Honley, to see father, and when she went away, she said something about my being a poor motherless bairn, and she slipped this into my hand as she left. She asked me to buy myself a present with it."

"But you didn't?"

"No! I had a presentiment that when we ran away, we should want it, so I just sewed it into the lining of my coat, and till this moment, I'd entirely forgotten it."

"We're rich men, Jack. We are indeed in luck."

They were doubly excited now and quite unable to sleep, so they talked on about the future that lay before them, full of golden promise, when once they reached Liverpool. Then two hours before the dawn they fell fast asleep, and they slept so soundly that when at length they awoke the sun was nearly half-way to the meridian. Even then they were wakened by a rough but kindly voice that sounded in their ears—-

"Here's a pretty sight, Jane! Come and see it. Here are two young gen'elmen, sleeping out o' doors." Then giving them both a hearty shake, he exclaimed, "What's the meaning o' this, young gen'elmen? Have you run away from school?"

Both boys sat up quickly, and rubbed their eyes. Then they looked around them, bewildered and astonished. Where were they? How came they here? Who was this big, burly-looking farmer before them?

It was a full half minute before they became fully conscious of all that had happened. At length they looked at each other, and then burst out laughing, for they were both relieved to find that the intruder was neither Old Click nor Beagle. Jane the milkmaid came over to the spot, leaving the cow that she had been milking, some twenty yards away.

The boys looked around them again to take their bearings before they replied to the farmer. A dozen cattle stood round about, chewing their cud lazily, and flicking off, with their long tails, the flies that had already begun to bother them, while beside the farmer stood his faithful sheep-dog, which had really first attracted his master's attention to the spot. The place where they had been sleeping was a sheltered little hollow, where the meadow joined the moor, while about two hundred yards away was a long, low farmhouse.

"I see you're running away from school, gen'elmen," repeated the farmer, good-humouredly, for there was a twinkle in his eye.

"Yes, sir," replied Jack, thinking it best to let it stop at that.

"An' where are you goin' to?"

"Liverpool–to the sea—-"

A burst of laughter, like a minor explosion, came from the farmer. "Ah, I see. But ye'll be glad to get home before to-morrow night. I once tried it myself, I did. Walked all the way to Liverpool, and when I got there–ha! ha! ha!–the sea was rough, and I was 'skeered' an' I didn't like the look of it, and I turned back home, an' I tell ye, that for four days and for four nights I had nothing to eat, 'cept a few raw turnips. My poor feet were that sore an' blistered that I sometimes lay down and cried, and when at last, after six days, I limped back into the farm-yard yonder, my faither said–

"'What! Home again so soon, Jock? I didn't expect ye for anither week, lad!'

"'Could I ha' a basin o' porridge, faither?' I said meekly.

"'Jock,' he said, 'afore ye touch ony porridge, ye mun' earn it. Do ye see that heap o' stones there? Well, ye mun' wheel 'em across the yard there afore ye touch ony porridge here.'

"It was the same heap of stones that I had refused to wheel, and which had been the cause o' my setting off to Liverpool. I were that tired and faint an' hungry that I were ready to drop, but I simply said–

"'All right, faither,' and I began the task; but when I had wheeled a dozen barrow-loads or so, the old man saw me stagger once or twice.

"'That'll do! Porridge is ready, Jock, lad.' An' to my dying day I shall never

taste anither meal half so foine as yon basin o' porridge, an' if ye lads 'll take my advice, ye'll just turn back, and go home again, for it'll come to that later, only then ye'll be footsore and tired and hungry. But please yersel's, I don't suppose ye'll listen to an old man," he added, as he saw a clouded and uneasy look come over their faces.

"We're not going back," said Jamie boldly. "Are we, Jack?"

"No! We'll die first."

"I thought so. Maybe you're hungry, and could do with a little breakfast, lads."

"Indeed, we could, sir, and we're willing to pay for it."

"Tut! tut! Come into the house, then." And the kindly old man led them to the farmhouse, where his wife simply said, "Puir lads," and soon provided for them a substantial meal.

A large steaming basin of oatmeal porridge was soon laid before each of them, made from rich milk, instead of water. They soon made short work of this. Then Jane brought in a plate of home-made cakes, well-buttered, but still their hunger did not abate one jot. The farmer was used to big appetites, and neither his wife nor Jane expressed any surprise. Then their host took out his huge clasp knife and cut several rashers from a flitch of bacon that hung suspended from the ceiling. These were fried along with a few eggs, and when they had cleared this third dish, the keen edge was taken from their appetites, and they declared that they were satisfied.

They thanked the farmer for his great kindness, and asked him how much they were indebted to him, but when they offered to pay, he held up both hands, and exclaimed–

"Not a penny! Keep your money. You'll want it all before long. It does me good to see lads with pluck like yours. Maybe you'll get further than I did. I think you're made of different stuff, and I ha' quite ta'en a fancy to you. While we've lads like you, we shall never want men to fight the Frenchers."

"I have a brother fighting under Clive now, in India!" exclaimed Jack, with a touch of family pride.

"Oh, maybe you're Squire Elliot's son, then!"

At this Jack's face fell, for he saw that he had well-nigh given away his identity.

"Ah well, never mind! Perhaps ye did not get on very well with the old squire. He was a harder man after your poor mother died."

The mention of his mother gave Jack a twinge of pain, and caused a lump to rise in his throat. His mother's early death had removed his guardian angel. Perhaps he would have been a better lad if she had lived; more tame and docile, like other boys.

"Puir lad!" exclaimed the farmer's wife; "and has he no mother then? He ma' weel run away."

Jack's tears were very near the surface, but he forced them back with an effort, for he considered it a great weakness to give way to his feelings.

As they left the old farmhouse, yet another kindness was shown to them, for Jane, secretly bidden by the farmer's wife, had made up a bundle of substantial oat-cakes, with a large piece of cheese, and as they passed out of the door she handed it to them.

This last act of kindness to these two poor motherless lads touched their hearts as perhaps nothing else could have done. They had not been used to such kindness, and they expressed their gratitude, not by words, for they couldn't speak, but by the great, big tears that welled up in their eyes, despite their every effort to keep them back now. Ah! nothing penetrates a boy's heart like kindness.

The old farmer pointed out the way, across the moors, and over Lin-Crag– the way he had trodden fifty years ago, and soon they were climbing the steep hill-side, knee-deep in heather, and following the winding sheep tracks. Again and again they turned round to wave their handkerchiefs at the trio standing by the farm-yard gate now far beneath them, until at last, as they stood on the summit of the crag, the house looked like a little speck in the distance and soon disappeared.

Then they footed it gaily across the lonely blue moorlands. Sometimes they started a covey of young grouse, hidden amongst the heather; then the peewits wheeled around them, uttering plaintive cries, as though bidding them good-bye. The scenes of their childhood, and the landscape on which their infant eyes had first gazed, were now left behind. The little lambs frisked about playfully, or cropped the short, green patches of tough grass near the water-courses, while overhead the larks sang joyously, continuously, and the sun shone brilliantly down from that wide expanse of azure dome.

The lads sang, too, blithely, lustily, for nothing could repress that feeling that was bubbling up within them; they trod the earth lightly, for they were in the "Land of Havilah," which is the "Golden Land of Youth," where the sun is always shining, where all the visions and ideals are golden, the enthusiasm and the energy boundless. So life with all its charm was opening out to them, but what was that life to be?

"Let us halt beside this spring, Jamie, for we have come twelve miles since morning," said Jack, about an hour after mid-day.

So they rested awhile, and ate some of the oat-cakes, and drank at the spring, where commenced a little stream of clear water, which sang its way down to the sea. Soon they left the wild moorlands behind them, and descending the western slopes of the Pennines, they entered the county of Lancaster, and passed

through several hamlets and villages, where the rude country people spoke a dialect which they could scarcely understand.

Towards evening their footsteps began to lag. They had long ago ceased to sing, or even to whistle. They were tired and footsore, and for the last hour they had trudged on in silence, for they were both very brave, and neither would confess fatigue.

That night they slept under a hayrick in the corner of a field. They slept soundly, too, but next morning they were up early, and after performing their ablutions, and cooling their blistered feet in a neighbouring pond, they finished the oat-cakes and cheese, and started again.

The first day they had covered nearly half the distance between their home and that rising little sea-port town of Liverpool, whose docks and wharves were now crowded with ships from every part of the globe. The second day, however, they were too footsore to travel half that distance, and they had to break into that golden guinea to buy food, but they still persisted and never spake one word about turning back, and in the afternoon of the fourth day their hearts beat with joy, as they reached the top of a little eminence, that is now part and parcel of the great city of Liverpool, but was then merely a country lane, and their eyes were gladdened by a first glimpse of the forest of masts and spars, that lay in the river beneath them, while out there–beyond the bar, where the breakers were rolling in by the lighthouse–was the sea.

"The sea! the sea!" they both exclaimed.

And in the transport of joy which followed, tired limbs and blistered feet were forgotten, for this was their first glimpse of the sea.

CHAPTER IV

THE WATCH IN THE FORE-TOP

Soon they were down by the Mersey's bank, at a spot where the famous landing-stage has since been erected. Then they passed along the wharves and docks, but recently constructed, where the big ships, with their towering masts and spars, came in to unload their valuable cargoes, for here were ships from the Levant and the Eastern Archipelagoes, from Spain and the West Indies, from the Canadas and the new colonies of America.

Never before had they seen such noble vessels, nor had they dreamt it pos-

sible that such leviathans could be built. Never before had they gazed upon such a vast concourse of people, rushing hither and thither, shouting, pushing, loading and unloading, as though every ship must catch the next tide that flowed.

Their hearts swelled with pride as they stood and watched a stately barque, fresh from the River Plate, being warped in to the bank and made fast. Some of her swarthy crew were aloft clewing up the sails, others were below, stowing away, making fast, or squaring the yards, singing snatches of songs, but all of them eager and longing to get ashore and to set foot in Old England again.

Oh, how they envied these men, who had sailed those far-away seas and seen those lands with strangely-sounding names, and islands that gleamed like gems set in the tropical seas. East, west, north and south met here with all their charm and romance, for then Liverpool was rapidly becoming an emporium for the sea-borne commerce of the world.

And so the lads forgot the toil and weariness of the past four days, for they were bewildered by the strange and wonderful scenes which were being enacted before them. They were both romantic and imaginative, and nothing of it was lost upon them, for it all was so new.

They forgot that they were hungry and tired, homeless and friendless, and almost at the end of their tether. It was as though the very ships were speaking to them of the places whence they came. They told them of far eastern seas, of dusky kings and princes, whose palaces, crowned with minarets and towers, lined the golden shores of those far-off lands. They spoke of coral islands which shone like gems in an emerald sea, of shining strands that were edged with fronded palms, of rich and spicy groves that were filled with new and luscious fruits, of the jungle, the prairie and the forest. All these things and more were out there–in the west, beyond the lighthouse and the sunset.

The big ship from the River Plate was alongside now. The merchants were going aboard to see the lading, but the sailors, with merry hearts and other thoughts, were coming ashore, dancing and singing like huge schoolboys set at liberty. One had a parrot that he carried in a cage, another had brought home a monkey, while some had strange curios worked by the natives, but each man seemed to have brought some present or keepsake for those at home. They all seemed so jolly, too, that the boys made up their minds, there and then, that they would take the first ship that offered, whether eastward or westward bound.

'Twas getting toward evening, and in another two hours it would be dark, but they still wandered spellbound about the ships. Several times they had spoken to sailors and officers, and each time Jack had asked after his uncle, Captain Elliot of the *Ilawara*, but no one seemed to know him. They had now begun to wonder where they would have to spend the night, if no one would take them aboard. They were beginning to feel a little bit uneasy.

In their wanderings they had several times passed and repassed a fine ship that was almost ready for sailing, and they now found themselves close by her again. The men were aboard, and several officers were on the afterdeck, and they had wished very much to hail them, but so far they had not had the temerity to do so.

"I wonder where she's going to, Jack?" said his chum, as they sat down upon a coil of rope just alongside.

"Out west, somewhere. To the Americas, I believe."

"She's going out on this tide. I heard one of the men aboard say so. I wish they'd take us."

"Clear that gangway, lads! Here comes the captain, and the pilot, too!" cried one of the officers.

The lads looked around and saw a smart-looking officer in uniform coming along the quay, accompanied by an older man–a veritable sea-dog, with his arm full of oilskins and a sou'wester on his head.

"How soon do you hope to reach America, Captain Forbes?" the pilot was asking.

"In five weeks, if this wind holds."

"Have you got a full crew aboard?"

"We're three hands short of a full complement, but I don't intend to wait, with this wind blowing."

"Did you hear that, Jack? Three hands short, and sailing to-night," whispered Jamie.

"Now is the time! Let's try our luck."

"Agreed!"

They boldly approached the captain, and Jack, acting as spokesman, began somewhat nervously thus–

"If you please, sir, we want to go to sea."

"What's that?" snapped the captain. "Who are you? What do you want?"

"I heard you say, sir, just now, that you were three hands short aboard your ship. If you will take us we will try hard to serve you in any capacity."

"But, my little man," said the captain, stooping down, for he was very tall, "I don't take babies aboard my ship. You see, we haven't got any nurses to look after them when they cry."

The lads drew themselves up to their full height, and told the captain that they were fifteen, and that they had walked sixty miles to reach Liverpool, and that they meant to go to sea, if not aboard his ship, then aboard some other vessel.

"Take an old sea-captain's advice, lads. Don't go to sea till you're twenty, and then you'll never go at all. The sea's not exactly the place for young gentlemen like you. Go home to your mothers."

"We've got no mothers, or perhaps we shouldn't have come here!" said Jack, flushing up a little at the captain's words.

"Oh, come now, my little bantams. If that's so it alters the case. For the boy who hasn't got a mother the sea's not a bad place. Just tell me who you are, and where you come from?"

So they told him all, for there was a glint of kindness in that stern face, and a twinkle in those clear, grey-blue eyes that gained their confidence. They even told the story of Old Click and Beagle, and the lock-up. When they described the manner in which they had held the keepers at bay with the wood-chunks, till they were burnt out, both the captain and the old pilot laughed heartily, and when they had described their long, wearisome tramp to find Captain Elliot's ship, the skipper clapped them on the shoulder and said–

"Bravo! You've got grit and pluck enough to become admirals. Captain Elliot, did you say?"

"Yes, sir, Captain Elliot."

"Of what ship?"

"The *Ilawara*. He is my uncle, and he promised I should go to sea with him when I was fifteen. Do you know him, sir?"

"Why, yes! We were boys together aboard the frigate *Monmouth*. We had many a fight with the French in those days, and many a close shave too. Fancy you being his nephew." Then turning to the old pilot, the captain said, "What say you, William? Shall I take the young gamecocks? I like them, but the sea's a rough place for young lads."

The pilot brought a pair of kindly eyes to bear upon the youngsters, as though he envied their youth and outlook upon life, and longed to be young again, and then said–

"Take 'em, Captain Forbes. A voyage will do them no harm. 'Tisn't as though they were taken crying from their mothers. It'll larn 'em a useful lesson. 'Tis just the way I went to sea meself. Take 'em."

"Get aboard, youngsters, and report yourself to Mr. Rogers, the first mate."

The youngsters did get aboard. Their hearts were thumping with pride and glee, for they had gained their hearts' desire, and before long they had cleared the Mersey bar and were standing out to sea, sailing out into the sunset. When the pilot went overboard, he nodded to them, and hoped that they'd come home some day "Admirals of the Blue."

As soon as his duties permitted, Captain Forbes himself took them in hand and assigned them their work. He supplied them each with a middy's outfit, enrolled their names on the ship's books, and gave them a small cabin near his own. Although the captain had taken a special fancy to them, they were not to find it all honey, however. They were to help the men to take in sail, to share in

the watches, to personally attend upon the captain, and to do much monotonous and arduous work, but they never shied at it and never disobeyed a superior officer. Each day, however, several hours were set aside for study, and the captain provided the books and set the lessons, which were in mathematics, navigation and seamanship.

Captain Forbes took a kind and fatherly interest in the lads, though he never relaxed for one moment that stern discipline which is so necessary for a headstrong youth. He taught them that the only way to learn how to command others was by first learning how to command themselves. Nevertheless, to set matters right at home he had sent a letter by the pilot, addressed to Jack's father, telling him where the lads were, and asking him not to be uneasy on their account, as one voyage would soon settle whether their future was to be upon the sea or not. Under these favourable conditions our heroes soon got their "sea-legs," and made rapid progress in their new studies, though they never forget the dreadful fright they received the first time they were sent aloft in bad weather.

One dark night, in a fierce gale off the Irish coast, they were ordered to assist the men in furling the main-top-gallant and main-royal sails. The vessel was creaking and straining beneath them; rolling uneasily in the trough of the sea. Long before they reached the crosstrees their hearts were thumping wildly and their teeth were chattering with fright, and for a moment Jack wished that he were safe ashore, even if in the old village lock-up again; but the worst was yet to come.

Far down beneath them the slippery decks seemed black as night, except when a huge green wave swept it from stem to stern. The captain was shouting orders to the men aloft, as though the lives of all aboard depended upon a ready compliance, and for a while the men in the rigging seemed helpless. The hoarse voice of the first mate was heard calling to the men who were struggling at the wheel, and all seemed confusion.

Still, the lads felt that the eyes of the captain were upon them, and they did not come down till their work was done, although when they reached the yards they thought their last moment had come, as the canvas filled like a huge bladder, and nearly hurled them off into the boiling surf and the destruction that threatened them below. They remained at their posts, assisting the men, hanging on sometimes by their teeth, until the sails were dragged in and furled, and the gaskets made fast and true.

After that experience they soon acquired more confidence and were easily at home, whether aloft or below, in fact, if anything, they preferred to be aloft. 'Tis possible, even, that they might have adopted the sea as a profession, and that their names might have come down to us with some of the illustrious admirals of that period, but for an incident which happened when they had been about four

weeks at sea, and which changed the course of their lives once more.

They were within two hundred leagues of Cape Cod on the New England coast, and they were congratulating themselves on having escaped the vigilance of the enemy's cruisers, for they had a valuable cargo aboard, destined for Boston, when the following incident happened. Seven bells had just sounded in the middle watch, and both Jamie and Jack were on duty, perched on the crosstrees in the foretop. It was very cold up there, and they were both longing for the end of the watch that they might descend and warm themselves at the galley fire and appease their ravenous hunger before turning in for a sleep. Day was just breaking away to the east, but ahead it was still dark and a little cloudy. Suddenly, through a rift in the clouds, over there in the north-west, towards the coast of the French Canadas, Jamie saw a tiny speck, low down on the horizon. He was about to hail the deck, but first pointed it out to Jack.

"What can it be?"

"Take the glass, Jamie. My hands are so numbed and cold I cannot keep it still."

Jamie took the telescope, and steadying himself for an instant, he leaned against the mast and held the glass to his eye. As he brought it to bear on that speck, the cry involuntarily burst from his lips–

"A sail! A sail!"

"Where away?" called the first mate from the deck.

"On the starboard bow, sir, north-west by west."

"What do you make of her?"

"Can't raise her hull yet, sir, but she must be a big ship, for she carries a good head of canvas."

Almost instantly the mate was up in the fore-top, carefully examining the stranger. As he did so a grave look crossed his face.

"Anything wrong, sir?" queried Jamie.

"I don't like the look of her. I fear she's no friend. We may have to run." Again he examined her. Then, shutting up the glass with a bang, he said–

"Go down, Elliot, and call the captain."

"Aye, aye, sir."

While the captain was being called, eight bells sounded the end of the watch, and though Jack had been eagerly longing for that blessed sound before, he would now willingly have remained aloft to watch that distant speck, which seemed fraught with such danger.

As he reached the deck he met the captain coming up the companion ladder. The latter immediately called out to the first mate, who had remained aloft–

"Is she showing any colours, Mr. Rogers?"

"Not yet, sir!"

"What do you think she is?"

"She's a cruiser, sir. Of that I'm pretty certain, but whether English or French I can't yet say."

At this alarming news, the captain himself went aloft and keenly examined the movements of the stranger for a few minutes, and then said–

"She's a French cruiser, Mr. Rogers, and a fast one too. We must either fight her or show her a clean pair of heels."

In a few minutes the *Duncan's* course was altered. Every stitch of canvas that she could carry was flung out. Royals and stuns'ls were set, and with the foam surging under her bows she fairly bounded through the water, leaving a wake astern that was a mile long.

CHAPTER V

THE FIGHT WITH THE FRIGATE

There was no little excitement aboard when it became known that the distant sail, "hull down" upon the horizon, was probably a French frigate.

"Look at her white canvas, and her large, square yards!" exclaimed Jamie. "She must be a man-of-war, and even if she's only a frigate she'll carry thirty guns against our ten, and treble the number of men."

"If she is a Frenchman she'll sink us, that's certain, though I hope Captain Forbes will make a fight of it," replied Jack, who could not entirely suppress a feeling akin to dread, as he watched the approaching ship.

"There's just a chance that she may be a friend, after all, for even the English cruisers do not always show their colours to the quarry until all chance of escape is cut off."

"It's just possible, of course, for there should be plenty of them hereabouts. Mr. Rogers tells me that last year they brought no less than three hundred French ships and their crews into English ports."

Breakfast was served as soon as the excitement aboard the *Duncan* had abated somewhat, and afterwards the captain assembled the crew and addressed them as follows–

"Lads, we're now within two hundred leagues of the New England coast, and we're carrying a valuable cargo. 'Tis our duty to save it if we can, but yonder is a fast and powerful frigate in our wake, who won't show any colours, though

mine have been flying at the mast-head this half-hour."

"Hurrah! hurrah!" burst from the men, as they saw the ensign they loved so well unfurled to the breeze.

"That's right, lads! I'm glad to see that you're not ashamed to fight for the old flag," exclaimed the captain.

"We'll die for it, captain, if need be!" shouted several of the men, and no wonder, for 'tis remarkable the courage that even a flag inspires in the presence of an enemy, especially when that enemy dares to insult it.

"The fact that he has not yet shown his colours," went on the captain, "means that we've an enemy in our wake. Still, if this breeze holds we may outsail him, but if we can't do that we've got to fight him."

"Aye! aye! sir! Let's fight him."

"No Frenchman shall ever take my ship while I live. I'll blow her up first. Mark my words, lads. I will!" This was spoken in such a fierce, but deliberate manner that the men all saw that Captain Forbes meant it, and they responded with a ringing cheer, which rent the air like a broadside, and filled each heart with courage and determination.

"So now, lads, let's clear the decks, and prepare for the worst."

"Aye! aye! sir!"

And the men went to work as only British tars can work. They cleared the decks of everything that was useless in an action. They cleaned and loaded the guns, but they did not as yet open the port-lids to run them out, lest the lower decks should be swamped, and the ship delayed. They ran out the boarding-nets, and brought up the powder, wads and shot. They got ready their cutlasses and boarding-pikes, and in every way possible prepared to meet a daring foe.

"Tell the men aloft to keep a sharp lookout. We may sight an English frigate at any moment, and then we shall see some fun, Mr. Rogers."

"Aye! aye! captain. That we shall," replied the mate.

Slowly the distant frigate gained upon the *Duncan*, and before noon it could be easily seen from the deck, though still some five leagues distant. Nearer and nearer she came, and every man aboard the *Duncan* had now made up his mind that a fight was the only possible ending, and the sooner it came, the better.

The second mate, Mr. Hudson, and Jamie were in the fore-top now, and just before dinner the captain hailed them, and said–

"Ho, there! Can you make out her armament yet?"

"Pretty well, sir."

"How many guns does she carry?"

"Twenty-six, I fancy, sir, for I can make out thirteen portholes on her starboard side."

The captain trod the deck impatiently, looking anxiously first at the ap-

proaching frigate, and then into the weather quarter, as though he anticipated a change.

"I fear the wind's dropping, Mr. Rogers," he said to the first mate, who paced the deck beside him. "We shall have a calm shortly," and within another half-hour the wind moderated, and shortly after that it blew spasmodically, and the frigate, now only two leagues away, was "laying on and off," trying to catch every breath of wind. The sails then flapped idly against the masts, and there followed a dead calm, when both ships lay helpless upon a mirrored sheet of glass.

A puff of blue smoke broke away from one of the starboard guns of the enemy, as she now lay broadside on towards the English ship, and then–

"Boom!" came a report, rumbling over the water.

At the same instant the French flag was broken at the mast-head.

"I thought as much, lads! Now we know who she is, and what she wants. That shot is a demand for surrender. What are those other flags he's hanging out, Mr. Hudson?"

"He's signalling, sir. Wants to know if we've struck. What shall I tell him, sir?"

"Tell him we haven't struck yet, but we'll do so as soon as he comes a little nearer, in the same way that Englishmen always strike."

At these words, which were heard all over the ship, a rousing cheer, which the Frenchman must have heard and wondered at, rang across the water, for it summed up the feelings of every man aboard. Shortly after this, the event which every one was expecting, from the captain down to the youngest cabin boy, happened.

"They're preparing to lower away the boats, sir. They mean to cut us out," came from the fore-top.

"Stand ready, my lads. Load every gun with grape-shot, lads, but don't fire till I give the order."

"Aye, aye, sir!"

One, two, three boats had been lowered, and filled with armed men. Each pulled ten oars, and there were at least thirty men in each boat, now pulling towards the *Duncan*.

Guns were run out; matches lit; cutlasses and pikes kept handy; but for the next half-hour a deep silence pervaded the ship's company. The men spoke not, for every order had been given, except that one for which they were all waiting; but the glow which was upon every cheek, and the sparkle which was in every eye, showed the tense feeling which animated the men. It was as though every man heard the words–

"In quietness and in confidence shall be your strength."

Jamie and Jack were both stationed at the same gun, one of the twelve-

pounders on the port-side, amidships. This was their first action, and they had a strange feeling at this moment. It was not fear, for who could fear with the eye of that brave commander upon them from the quarter-deck. It was rather a feeling of mingled awe and suspense. Oh, how slowly the moments crawled! Five–ten–twenty minutes passed.

They could now hear the swish of the enemy's oars as they fell in measured strokes upon the water. Nearer and nearer they came. The first boat was now scarcely a cable's length away, when–

"Fire!" came in a voice of thunder from the poop.

Every gun that had been brought to bear belched forth its contents of flame and iron. The deadly missiles sped on their way, carrying death and destruction.

As soon as the smoke had cleared away, the awful effect of this concentrated fire could be seen. The first boat was literally blown to pieces; nothing was left of it but broken fragments, and the sea seemed full of struggling creatures, whose cries were pitiful. The second and third boats, however, were untouched, and while one went to the assistance of the first, the other dashed alongside, and with a wild cry of vengeance, the men clambered up the side and attempted to board.

"Repel boarders! Give it 'em, lads!" cried the captain, and seizing their pikes and cutlasses the men left the guns and attacked the enemy, who came on cheering, led by their brave officers. The third boat had stopped but to pick up a few stragglers, and then joined their comrades. There were now sixty or seventy men attempting to board the merchantman, but very few of them reached the deck, for the nets impeded their progress, and the stalwart defenders hurled them back into the sea.

The carnage was frightful. No quarter was asked, and none was given. The guns were silent now. It was hand-to-hand. Once the enemy succeeded in cutting away the nets, and an intrepid officer, followed by a few men, gained the deck, but in a trice Captain Forbes was amongst them, hewing his way with his long cutlass. A dozen men sprang to his assistance, and in less time than it takes to tell it, the intruders were stretched dead or wounded upon the deck.

At another time the alarm was given that the Frenchmen had gained the poop. Alas, it was only too true; some of them had clambered up and in at the stern windows, and had thus gained the upper deck. There was not a moment to spare, for already they were attempting to turn one of the brass swivels on the poop upon the crew.

"Follow me, lads!" cried the captain, as he sprang aft and up the companion ladder, and every man who could leave his post followed him, including Jamie and his chum.

A dreadful hand-to-hand fight took place. The men fought like tigers. Only

two of the enemy escaped who had reached the poop, and these were glad to leap into the sea, to escape those avenging English, who fought like demons.

While this fierce scuffle was taking place, something happened that had passed unnoticed until it was too late. The wind, which had dropped to a dead calm, had sprung up and freshened rapidly from the nor'-east, and the frigate, receiving the first benefit of the breeze, had crept in nearer to the ship, and almost before Captain Forbes could get his vessel under way, the enemy poured in his first broadside of thirteen guns, with an awful, crashing effect. The ship staggered, and shook from stem to stern at this fearful impact. Down came the foremast, and went over the side, carrying with it a tangle of wreckage, torn sails and rigging, giving the vessel a heavy list to starboard, and killing several men on the spot. More than twenty men were killed or wounded within a few minutes, for broadside now followed broadside.

"Cut away that rigging, lads!" cried the captain.

They were almost his last words. As he seized a hatchet and sprang forward to cut away the wreckage, a cannon ball shattered his right arm, and even as he fell, a musket ball pierced his breast, and he fell upon the blood-stained deck. Jack rushed forward to support him, and tried to staunch his wounds, but the captain shook his head and lapsed into unconsciousness.

It was a most unequal fight, but the men still fought on stubbornly. Half the guns were dismantled, and there were not enough unwounded men to serve the rest, but every gun that could be manned was double-loaded and fired with such precision, that great havoc was worked upon the enemy's decks, which were much more crowded than those of the English ship.

For another hour the unequal contest continued, and the French were preparing to board again, when the *Duncan's* main-top-mast went over the side with a crash, bringing down with it the colours, which had till now floated proudly over the wreckage of the merchantman.

This crash awoke the captain to consciousness for a moment, and he noticed the colours, hanging over the side, as he half raised himself and endeavoured to assume command.

"The colours! the colours!" he cried. "Take the ensign aloft, some one!"

Jamie, who was bending over him, heard and understood. He seized the ensign, tattered and torn as it was, and tore it away. The next moment he sprang into the mizzen shrouds, for that was the only mast remaining. Amid a shower of bullets from the French sharpshooters, he reached the crosstrees. As he reached the top-gallant yard a shaft of pain seemed to grip his left shoulder; still, up he went, and in another moment he had made fast the colours above the mizzen-royal yard.

A moment only he stayed there–to wave his hat in defiance at the enemy,

whose bullets still whistled around him. This daring act was not lost upon a gallant foe. The French captain ordered his men to cease firing at *ce brave fils*, and a cheer even broke from the cruiser's deck as he began to descend.

It was with difficulty that he came down from that perilous post, for his left arm was useless owing to the bullet wound in his shoulder, from which the blood had been flowing freely. Everything about was now becoming blurred and indistinct.

When at last he reached the deck the captain, supported by Jack and the second mate, was breathing with great difficulty, but he beckoned Jamie to him. Smiling faintly, and holding out his hand, which the lad grasped, he was only able to whisper–

"Well done! We'll go down with colours flying!"

Then he raised his eyes, to look once more at that tattered ensign, floating bravely at the mizzen, and even while he gazed at it, still holding the lad's hand, his eyes became fixed in death, and that torn flag was the last thing that he saw on this side.

Thus died a brave sailor, and an English gentleman, whose courage and fidelity had perhaps passed unnoticed but for this brief record. And they laid him gently against the foot of the broken main-mast.

"Why, what's the matter, Jamie? You're wounded, too!" exclaimed Jack, one of the few still aboard who remained unwounded.

As Jamie looked at the dead captain the mists swam before his eyes, and he reeled and fell beside his leader, his idol and example, who had died at the post of duty for his ship, and the honour of his country.

"And how can man die better,
Than facing fearful odds,
For the ashes of his fathers,
And the temples of his gods."

"Wake up, Jamie! Wake up! Oh, comrades, he's dying. Speak, Jamie! Speak!"

he cried in an agony of bitterness, quite heedless of the shots that still flew around; but his comrade spoke not, for he had swooned away from weakness and loss of blood.

In Jamie's ears the roar of battle now seemed afar off, like the murmur of a distant stream. The smoke, the enemy and the battle faded from his vision, for it seemed to him that he still sat in the old school-house at Burnside, and Jack was beside him, while Dr. Birch, book in hand, was speaking of the heroic deeds of

ancient days–of Hector and Achilles, of Diomed and Ajax, of Æneas and Ulysses.

CHAPTER VI
PRISONERS OF WAR

"You've fought like Britons, lads! You've done all that brave men could do! It remains for us but to die like heroes," cried Mr. Rogers, the first mate, who, though seriously wounded himself, had led the fight since the captain fell.

The remnant of the crew cheered these words of the mate, who was already leaning on a dismantled gun for support.

And what a remnant it was! Out of a crew of fifty, only nineteen men remained alive, and most of these were wounded. The condition of the ship, which had sustained this unequal contest, was pitiable in the extreme. Both the fore-mast and the main-topmast were over the side, giving the *Duncan* a heavy list to starboard. In several places her hull was almost rent asunder, while her decks forward were partly awash. Each instant she threatened to founder.

The merchantman had fought for three hours with one of the best French frigates afloat, and several times she had repelled boarders. The enemy's broadsides had ripped open some of her seams, and there were already eight feet of water in the hold. The last gun was put out of action, owing to the angle of the decks.

"There's one more shot in the locker, lads, and by Davy Jones, if the Frenchmen attempt to board us again I'll send them aloft!" exclaimed Mr. Rogers, half raising himself from the gun to look at the frigate, whose fire had now considerably slackened.

Suddenly the "Cease fire!" was sounded aboard the French ship, and Jack, leaving Jamie to the care of a seaman for a moment, clambered up the steep deck to see what had happened.

"They're sending a boat, Mr. Rogers!" he cried. "She'll be alongside in a minute, sir. Shall I hail them?"

"Tell them that if they set a foot aboard my ship I'll fire the powder-magazine and blow the vessel up," cried the first officer fiercely.

The boat came quickly alongside, and an officer hailed them. "Do you strike, messieurs? Do you strike?" he called, in a queer accent, half French, half English. "If so, haul down that ensign, messieurs, if you pleeze!"

Jack leapt into the mizzen shrouds. "Stand off, messieurs!" he shouted. "Come aboard at your peril, and we will blow up the ship!" At these words a panic seized the boarders. Those who were climbing up the side hastily dropped back again into the boat, which quickly pulled off, lest the terrible threat should be carried out.

Then Captain Alexandre, seeing that nothing was to be gained, and that the *Duncan* was on the point of foundering, sent his chief officer with a second boat offering the highest honours of war. His respect for a gallant enemy was such that he did not even ask them to lower that tattered ensign, which still floated proudly at the mizzen-top, where Jamie had made it fast. The carnage had already been dreadful, and he knew that unless he offered honourable terms, men like these would infinitely prefer to go down with a sinking ship than lower their colours.

The terms offered to the Englishmen were as follows: They were to remain prisoners of war aboard the frigate until she reached Quebec, when the captain would mention their honourable and brave conduct to the Governor, and if he were willing, they should then receive their liberty.

"And what is the alternative?" asked Mr. Rogers.

"The alternative," replied the Frenchman, shrugging his shoulders and looking uneasily around the horizon, as though he half expected to see an English cruiser appear in the distance, "is, that you may take your luck aboard this derelict. But come, gentlemen, make up your minds quickly. The *Sapphire* must sail within half-an-hour."

The mate cast his eyes around and saw but a helpless wreck, with piles of dead and wounded upon her decks. At that instant the vessel gave a sudden lurch as though preparing to descend into the gulfs, and some one cried–

"Look out! She's going, lads!"

"M'sieur, for the sake of these brave men, who have wives and children, I accept your generous conditions, but, for myself, I will stay with the captain." And at these words a deathly pallor spread over the mate's face. He lifted his hands to his eyes, as though to shut out the sight of the dead. Then he reeled and fell. They picked him up, but he was dead. So they laid him beside his captain and carried the wounded aboard the frigate. Jamie and three others were still unconscious when they reached the frigate's deck. The rest stood by to see the last of their old ship. It was a sight never to be forgotten. They could distinctly see the body of Captain Forbes propped against the stump of the mast, with more than half of his crew lying dead beside him, as the derelict went down.

"Hist! She's going!" came a hollow cry, which was half a sob, as they clustered around the bulwarks of the foreigner.

"Stand by to fire a salute!" cried Captain Alexandre, who was a chivalrous

Frenchman.

And as the *Duncan* took her final plunge, and the tattered ensign went under, the *Sapphire* paid her last tribute of respect to a valiant foe by a salute of seventeen guns.

Scarcely had the smoke rolled away and the last reverberation ceased, when the frigate turned her head towards the Gulf of St. Lawrence, and left that lonely, watery grave behind.

Jamie's wound was not very severe, although at times it was exceedingly painful, and after the ball had been extracted from his shoulder, he soon recovered much of his usual health.

Jack was his constant attendant. Day and night he scarcely left him, but nursed him most assiduously with all the solicitude of a mother; and no wonder, for Jamie was a hero now, and with all the ship's company too. His bravery in carrying the colours aloft on a sinking ship, with the bullets flying all around him, and his body a mark for all the enemy's sharpshooters, his persistence in completing the task, after a bullet had shattered his shoulder–this had made him a conspicuous hero, not only amongst his comrades, but also amongst the officers and crew of the *Sapphire*.

Jamie, however, like all true heroes, bore his triumphs modestly and his wound patiently, though, to tell the truth, he was just a little proud of the latter, and especially was he proud of Captain Forbes' words to him when he regained the deck–

"Well done!" He would never forget those words, spoken as the captain breathed his last.

Jack, however, was just a little envious of Jamie's first wound, for, strange to say, although Jack had been in the thick of the fight, and the men had fallen around him in heaps, yet he had not received a scratch during the whole engagement.

What exciting adventures had already fallen to the lot of these two lads since they left the old school and village so precipitately! Yet even these adventures were but a foretaste, compared with those that yet awaited them out there, in the west.

Every day Jamie grew stronger, and as he and Jack paced the deck they talked of all these strange events which had happened to them since they left Burnside. What was the old Squire thinking of now, when his last and youngest son had left him to fight for the Empire? What did Old Click and Mr. Beagle say when they found the village lock-up empty and the birds flown? And old Dr. Birch, what did he think of the truants?

And they laughed over it all, with all the sang-froid and carelessness of youth, and yet they grieved when they remembered their friend, Captain Forbes,

in his ocean grave. They could ill-spare him, yet the memory of him would always be with them, to spur them on to brave and manly deeds, for he had died like an English gentleman, and a brave son of Empire, fighting to the last for the flag that he loved, as many a man still would do, before that great land out there, beyond the ship's bow–the Canadas–would pass from the hands of the French, to become, as the ages unfolded, the greatest jewel in the British Crown.

But what did the future contain for them? They often asked each other this question, as at evening they watched that great ball of fire descend into the azure main. And when they had watched that shaft of crimson fade into a duller glow, they retired to the cabin that had been allotted to them, and pledged each other that, come good or ill, they would be friends and comrades–to the Gates. And if God willed it–for at this time they were specially drawn to think of His mercies and His watchfulness over them–they would yield their lives a willing sacrifice, like Captain Forbes, at the shrine of duty. For while their country needed men to fight her battles, whether by land or sea, even at the farthest bounds of Empire they would faithfully serve and as willingly die.

That pledge was never forgotten, and through all the dangers and misadventures that befell them, amid the virgin, trackless forests and the rivers and great lakes of North America, it was never broken.

Thus the voyage continued, with calm seas and fair winds, for more than a week, but the journey to the Gulf was not destined to be entirely without excitement, for one afternoon, when the wind had freshened a bit from the south-east, they were all startled by a sudden cry from the watch aloft of–

"Sail ho!"

"Where away?" called the officer of the watch.

"To the south-west, low down, sir!"

After a careful examination the sail was made out to be nothing less than an English cruiser, on the watch-out for the enemy's ships, and Captain Alexandre, feeling that after his recent fight he was in no fit condition to meet such a foe, crowded on all sail and stood away N.N.W. with the cruiser in full chase.

All the afternoon the chase continued, and the cruiser was slowly but surely gaining, and had it not been that towards evening the frigate ran into a fog off the Banks of Newfoundland, there is little doubt but that she would soon have been overhauled and compelled to fight, and would in all probability have been captured.

All night the Frenchman kept on, changing his course several times to dodge his pursuer, and next morning, although the fog had lifted, the English cruiser was nowhere to be seen.

Two days afterwards they entered the Gulf; leaving Louisburg and the Ile Royale on their left they stretched across that vast inland sea, and in another four

days entered the St. Lawrence River.

The lads were charmed by the wonderful scenery which bordered the river. The bold cliffs and headlands, and the forest-lined banks, the same which Jacques Cartier and his brave little band of voyagers beheld for the first time in 1535, when through every inlet in this great continent they sought a way to the spicy groves of the East Indies, and the far-famed and wondrous, but distant, Cathay, which they fondly imagined lay beyond this new continent, as in truth it really did.

While the frigate was working her way up the St. Lawrence, an incident occurred that was destined to have important consequences on the after-life of our two heroes.

When the ship was anchored for the night off one of the small French settlements below Quebec, a fierce Iroquois chief was brought aboard as a prisoner. A great price had been set upon his scalp by the French Governor, for he was the greatest chief in all the "Five Nations," and his people had been the bitterest enemies of the Canadas, since the days of Champlain.

"What a fine warrior he is!" said Jack. "What a pity he is to be put to death when he reaches Quebec!"

"Fine, indeed!" said one of the soldiers who had brought him aboard. "He has taken more paleface scalps than any man of his race!"

He was a man of powerful stature, with a defiant look, and an eye as proud and piercing as that of the eagle had once been, whose long white feathers now adorned his hair. Erect and brave, with a sullen ferocity of demeanour, he looked scornfully upon his captors, whose petty tyrannies and insults could not drag from him an exclamation of anger or pain, for he seemed possessed of all the stoicism for which his race was famous.

The fierce and implacable Iroquois, who formed that wonderful confederation called the Five Nations, consisting of the Mohawks, Senecas, Onondagas, Oneidas, and the Cayugas, and later the Tuscaroras, were the most powerful of all the Indian tribes. They were the deadly enemies of the Canadas, and during the whole period of the French wars were the irreconcilable foes of the latter, and more or less the faithful allies of the English, though their paleface friends did not always show them that consideration which was their due.

They jealously guarded the passes and rapids that lay between Quebec and Mont Royale (Montreal) and right away to the "Thousand Islands" and the lakes, they took every occasion to harass the French, who had come to steal their lands, to rob them of their hunting-grounds, and drive them towards the setting sun.

They scalped all the outlying bands of soldiers who had the misfortune to fall into their hands; they waylaid the fur-traders and the *voyageurs*, destroyed the harvests and burned the villages of the settlers beyond the forts.

So tiresome did they become that at length a price was paid for every Iro-

quois scalp that was brought into Quebec. It was, therefore, considered a matter of no small importance when the renowned "White Eagle," the most powerful chief of the Iroquois, had been captured.

Parties of soldiers from the various forts had been repeatedly dispatched to trap him and to bring him in dead or alive, but this wily foe, retreating before his enemies, generally drew them into the forest and harassed them in the rear and the van, then cut off their supplies, and scalped the stragglers, eluding their vigilance at every turn.

This desperate chief was now chained to one of the guns on board the *Sapphire*, and for two days he was the object of cruelty and ill-treatment, chiefly from those who had brought him aboard. He was kept without food or water. He was taunted with the fact that a heavy price was set upon his head, and that he would soon be tortured or roasted alive.

Though hungry and parched with thirst, he was too proud to ask his captors for a drink of water. He remained sullen and obdurate, and refused to speak. Once a tormentor offered him a pannikin of salt water to drink, and then, because he refused it, threw it over him. But he remained as immovable as a statue. Once a marlin-spike was hurled at him. A white man would have dodged to avoid such an unwelcome missile, but this mighty chief was too proud. He never winced or moved a muscle, though the spike went perilously near his face.

Jack and Jamie both remonstrated, but were told to mind their own business, and as the Iroquois had been allied with the English, and spoke a smattering of their tongue, they were forbidden to converse with or even to approach him. To speak to him was what they both very much longed to do, for he was the first real Indian they had seen, and very different from the wretched specimens who hung about the settlements of the white men. They admired the haughty pride and fearlessness of this child of the forest.

"He must be parched with thirst," said Jamie, on the afternoon of the second day. "I will give him a drink of water, whatever the Frenchies say."

And he immediately took a pannikin of fresh water and held it to the chief's mouth, for his hands were bound. Before the water could touch his lips the pannikin was dashed to the ground, and the boys were ordered away, but the look of gratitude that came into the chief's eyes showed that he had understood that a kindness was intended.

Soon after this the chief was removed to a cabin for greater security, but next morning, when the officer in charge of him unlocked the door, the prisoner was gone and there was no trace of him. He had in some mysterious way slipped his bonds during the night, dropped through the open porthole into the river, and made his way to the shore without being observed.

Great was the consternation on board when it was found that White Eagle,

the terror of the settlements, had escaped, but though a search was made for him in every part of the ship, it was only too evident that he had obtained his freedom, and was at liberty to harass his enemies once more.

They had now reached the Ile d'Orleans, a huge island that lay in mid-stream, just below the great Falls of the Montmorency. Now piles of lofty cliffs fringed the northern bank of the river, rising sheer out of the water at high tide. Then they reached the mouth of the St. Charles River, while before them, crowning a lofty summit, with its churches and houses, ramparts and bastions, stood the city of Quebec.

The *Sapphire* fired a salute, which was replied to by one of the forts, and the next moment she anchored beneath the frowning guns of the citadel–the Gibraltar of North America.

CHAPTER VII
OLD QUEBEC

The old town of Quebec in 1757 was a picturesque and romantic spot. Clusters of pretty white Canadian cottages, many of them surrounded by gardens and orchards, filled with apples, pears and vines, transplanted from Old France, lined the margins of the St. Charles River, and even the lower town, about the banks of the St. Lawrence. Half-a-hundred churches and convents already raised their spires heavenward. The upper town contained the governor's house, and many palatial edifices of timber and stone, while high over all, the frowning citadel crowned the lofty eminence, looking down upon town and river.

For over two hundred years the children of the French king had dwelt here, and no white men had as yet seriously disputed their possession of this mighty fortress, which was the key to half a continent; but the sands were running low. In her late wars with the sea-dogs of Britain, France had lost the command of the seas; her navies, her maritime commerce had been well-nigh destroyed, and the sea-girt island, where dwelt the sons of the Saxon and the Viking, had become the "Mistress of the Seas."

The penalty to be paid by France for this was shortly to be the cession of all her North American colonies to the victors, for she that had failed to command the narrow seas at home, could not hope to retain her Empire abroad. Thus has it ever been with the citadel of Mansoul; the heart of the Empire. Make these

impregnable, and all is well. Weaken these, through slothfulness, carelessness or ease, and the borders of the Empire, like dead branches, are soon lopped away.

As our heroes were compelled to remain in Quebec for some nine months or more before they had an opportunity to leave, they did not grumble, but made the most of their time. For the first three months they were more or less the guests of Captain Alexandre, but after the *Sapphire* put to sea again with a convoy, they entered the service of a Major Ridout, a retired army officer, who had become a fur-trader, which at that time was a very lucrative business, and entailed an adventurous career.

Major Ridout saw that they were two likely youths, who would be of great service, out in the wilds, collecting furs from the Indians. These distant tribes dwelt hundreds of leagues in the forests, far away on the shores of the great lakes, which at this time were practically unknown, save by a few bold and reckless adventurers, who frequently paid dearly for their temerity.

He promised them that when the spring unlocked the rivers and lakes, they should accompany him on his travels into the unknown forests and wilds of the interior, and as this was the only method that had as yet offered them a chance of earning a living or making a fortune, they gladly accepted it. They were also anxious to leave Quebec, as measures were already being concerted to prepare for a siege; for ugly rumours had come to hand that Admiral Boscawen in command of a British squadron had annihilated a French fleet, and captured a convoy destined for Quebec.

Every preparation, therefore, was made by General Montcalm and his assistants, lest they should be besieged by *ces Anglais perfides.* The lads were, therefore, doubly anxious to leave the city, lest they should be treated as prisoners of war, for refusing to take up arms against their countrymen.

During their stay here they had much leisure, and made many excursions about Quebec. Sometimes they paddled down stream in one of the major's canoes and visited the Ile of Orleans, or the Falls of Montmorency, or up the rapid stream of the River Charles, to visit some of the friendly Indians. One day they were returning down-stream from a visit to Cape Rouge, some leagues above the city, on the St. Lawrence, where they had been camping some three days, fishing for salmon and hunting the red deer, when suddenly, and without the slightest warning, a fearful yell burst from a point of the southern bank, scarce a hundred yards away.

"Indians!" exclaimed Jack, striking his paddle into the water with all his might.

"Iroquois!" said Jamie coolly.

A shower of bullets and a flight of arrows flicked up the water about the canoe.

"Pull for your life, Jamie! They've been lying in wait for us. Lucky we didn't land there as we had intended."

"Lucky indeed! They would have had our scalps by now, and they may have them yet. Look there! One, two, three canoes! coming as fast as they can. It's all over unless we can beat them."

They were in a tight corner. They had been warned that the Iroquois were watching the river above Quebec, but they had never dreamt that they were so near.

The Indians were gaining upon them, although they were flying rapidly downstream. They had ceased to yell now, for the city was only two leagues away, and they were straining every nerve to overtake the lads before they could reach safety. An occasional bullet struck the canoe, but they did not look around, for they could hear the splash of the Iroquois' paddles, and the sound seemed to come nearer and nearer.

"I can do no more, Jack! My arm's still painful from the wound," and Jamie drew in his paddle.

"Hold on, Jamie! Don't give in. In another five minutes we shall be out of danger. There's the little cove where we've landed many a time, just there on the northern bank. If we can only reach that spot, we can quickly climb up to the heights, and the Indians will not dare to follow us there. Hold on for another few minutes!"

This was the only chance that offered an escape from the foe, and Jamie, despite his wound, which at times of great exertion still pained him, put in his paddle again. They were running rapidly down under the precipitous northern bank now, and with a skilful twist of his paddle Jack sent the nose of the canoe quickly ashore, right up on the narrow strand, in the cove, at the foot of the cliffs.

The Indians had perceived their intentions, and with a loud yell had changed their course to prevent them and cut them off. The first canoe was not a dozen yards away, and in another three seconds would have been beached alongside theirs, when Jack seized his rifle and, without taking any precise arm, fired point-blank into the canoe. It was loaded with heavy buck-shot, and the Iroquois at the steering paddle received half the contents of it.

Nothing could have been better done had the aim been more skilfully taken. The paddle dropped helplessly from his hand, and the rapid current carried the canoe past the landing-point. A savage yell burst from every Indian within sight. The lads responded with a shout of defiance, and then, abandoning canoe, outfit, rifles and everything they possessed, they leapt from the boat and swiftly climbed the steep and narrow ascent, pulling themselves up by the roots and branches of trees that grew on this precipitous bank.

This clever and successful shot had gained them but a few seconds of time,

but they reached the summit unharmed, and after a brief pursuit, the Indians, who were getting too near the settlements, retired and gave up the fruitless chase, and from the Heights of Abraham, as they looked down upon the river, they had the satisfaction of seeing their late enemies pursued in turn by a party of Algonquins, the active allies of the French.

Spring came at last, unlocking the rivers and the lakes, and the half-wild fur-traders, with their Indian guides, were already preparing to ascend the St. Lawrence, up past Mont Royale, and the Thousand Islands, across the great inland sea called Ontario, to the rude fort of Niagara.

Even here the fatiguing journey would not end, for after a brief respite, they must shoulder their packages, and carry their long birch-bark canoes over the rough portage that led past the mighty, thundering cataract of Niagara, near by the hunting-grounds of the fierce and warlike Senecas. Then they must place their canoes again on the upper reaches of the swift Niagara River, and from thence enter Lake Erie, pass the outposts of Presqu' Isle, Miami and Fort Detroit, to the rivers, the lakes and the forts beyond, where in the surrounding forests the red man in all his primeval simplicity hunted, fished, lived and died. Even to the far-off lands of the Kickapoos, the Ojibways and the Winnebagos these brave fur-traders often ventured, drawn partly by a desire for gain, and partly, no doubt, by the added spice of danger and adventure.

Such, then, was the adventure to which our heroes were committed, as soon as the rivers were clear of the dangerous ice-floes, and the Algonquin chief Wabeno arrived with a dozen of his braves to accompany them as guides and scouts. Here was a prospect of adventure which thrilled the lads, and they anxiously awaited the arrival of the chief, which was to be on the first day of the new moon. They were to have a share in the enterprise, as a reward of their services.

"Wake up, Jack! Here comes the chief, in all his warpaint, with moccasins and deer-skin hunting-shirt, and with a girdle of scalps hanging from his belt," cried Jamie one morning, rushing into the apartment that served them both for sleeping purposes.

"Hurrah!" cried his friend. "I'm coming. Are the canoes ready?"

"Yes, they're all loaded up and waiting in the river, by the lower town."

"Glad we're leaving Quebec at last, aren't you? By all the preparations that the Governor's pushing forward, there's going to be a dreadful fight here some day, and the side that wins will have Canada for a prize."

"So you want to be out of the fighting, do you, old boy? That isn't a bit like you."

"Ah, don't misunderstand me, old fellow. I mean that I don't want to be cooped up in here when the fighting takes place, because our fellows will be outside. I wouldn't mind a hand in the storming, fighting under the British flag,

for although the French have been pretty good to us–at least, some of them–they didn't treat the rest of the *Duncan's* crew too well, when they shipped them all back to England in that leaky old tub."

They had now reached the lower part of the town, and were approaching the river by one of the narrow steep streets of which Quebec has so many, when Jamie, casting up a look at the frowning, embattled citadel, said–

"That place will want some storming! A handful of brave men, well supplied with ammunition and provisions, might sit tight up there for years, and defy the armies of the world."

"You're right, Jamie, and yet, I confess, I'd like to see another flag up there, wouldn't you?"

Turning to his companion, Jamie looked him full in the face, and replied–

"I would, Jack! And who knows? We may help to plant it there, some day. And, then, what would they think of us in Burnside?"

"Ah, they'd forget that they once put us in the lock-up for taking a few trout, and they'd all turn out to welcome us home; or if we died they'd put a tablet to our memory in the old church. Ha! ha!" laughed Jack.

At this point their conversation, which had been partly serious and partly jocular, was interrupted by a sound somewhat unusual at this early hour, for it was only about five o'clock in the morning, and the sun had not long been risen. Sounds of laughter and much shouting greeted them, and the next moment they turned a corner and came upon the *voyageurs*, as these rough, half-wild fur-traders are called. A dozen or so of rough but sturdy Canadians were bidding good-bye to their wives and sweethearts, though there seemed to be more excitement and laughter than tears and sadness of farewell. These men, hard as nails, used to the terrors of the wilderness, and the hardships of the forests, were dressed nearly like their Indian allies, who stood by–Wabeno and his braves.

They wore fur caps, deer-skin hunting-shirts, moccasins and leggings, worked by the Indian squaws. They were all armed with rifles and long hunting-knives, and one or two of them, who were probably half-castes, carried tomahawks as well. Moored to the bank close beside them were three very long canoes, loaded with all the requirements for a six months' trading outfit, and ready to start.

"*Ah, mes camarades! Voici ils vient*," cried Major Ridout, the leader of the expedition, and then in loud, ringing tones, he shouted, "*Aux bateaux!*"–"To the boats!"

In a moment the canoes were filled, Wabeno and three of his men entering the first, and the others distributing themselves as arranged. There were twenty-three all told, and the youths along with the leader, who was a genial man, of great experience, born of a Canadian father and a Scotch mother, entered the last

boat, which was rather larger than the other two, and had several buffalo robes spread in the stern sheets.

The last good-bye was said, and to the stirring notes of a Canadian boat song, the rowers paddled away, and soon left their friends and their homes behind. Alas! how few of them were ever to see those homes or those friends again.

They were a merry party at present, however, and the Indians took turns with the hardy *voyageurs*, as they paddled quickly against the rapid stream. The canoes were very light, being made of birch bark, for they had to be carried over rough and sometimes long portages. Yet they were very strong and roomy, and at present were loaded so deeply that the water was only a few inches below the gunwales.

After two hours' hard work, pulling against the stream, the leader gave a quick, sharp command–

"*À terre! À terre!*"

This order to land for breakfast was obeyed with alacrity. Camp-fires were lit. The "billies" were soon boiling, and a hearty meal of pemmican and bread was washed down with a drink of water from the river. After an hour's rest, they continued their journey.

That night they camped on the northern bank, in a little clearing of the forest, about thirty miles above Quebec. They had hardly yet approached the danger zone, though small parties of the Iroquois did sometimes penetrate thus far. A watch was set, however, and campfires were permitted, and after supper the men chatted and laughed and smoked. Then a song was called for–a song with a chorus. And while the flames from the burning logs lit up the surrounding pines, one after another trolled forth a song, and the *voyageurs* took up the chorus, till the woods resounded with their voices, and the creatures of the forest must have wondered what strange beings these were that disturbed their haunts.

The Indians looked on at all this merriment with stoic countenances, as though they disapproved of such light-heartedness, but at last one of the men cried out–

"Wabeno! Give us a war-dance!"

Instantly the expression of every Indian changed. Wabeno readily acceded to the request. A post was driven into the ground, and a circle formed around it. A few minutes sufficed to arrange their fluttering feathers and scalp-locks, and to paint their faces with red ochre and white lead. Then, suddenly, Wabeno, their chief, with a loud, blood-curdling yell, leapt into the circle, brandishing his tomahawk, and began reciting, in a fierce tone, all the deeds of prowess accomplished by himself and his ancestors.

A second warrior imitated his example, and then another, until at length

the war-dance began in real earnest, and the whole pack of Indians were yelling and whooping, like so many demoniacs, hacking and tearing at the wooden post as though they were scalping an enemy. When they had thus worked themselves up into a frenzy, a final whoop from the chief ended the wild frolic, and instantly every warrior assumed a mask of boredom and indifference. A few minutes more, and all except the watch were fast asleep, wrapped in blankets or buffalo robes.

Thus passed the days and nights, until after they had passed the small fort of Mont Royale. Then the merriment ceased, for they were in an enemy's country. The watch was doubled every evening, and fires were left unlit, or extinguished as soon as possible. Once or twice, suspecting the near presence of an enemy, they slept in the canoes.

When they had passed the rapids of La Chine and Long Sault, several Indian scouts were thrown out in advance, along either bank, in order to prevent a sudden attack from an ambushed foe. All went well for some days, although the subdued manner of the *voyageurs*, and the keen alertness of the redskins, created an uneasy feeling in the minds of the youths. Towards sunset one afternoon Jack, who had been examining the river bank some distance ahead of the first canoe, suddenly exclaimed–

"Look! Wabeno is signalling! What has he seen?"

CHAPTER VIII
THE NIGHT-WATCH

Quickly the canoes were drawn to the bank and hidden amongst the overhanging bushes. A moment later a rustling was heard amongst the branches, and Wabeno stood before them.

"What has my red brother seen?" asked the major.

"Wabeno has seen the trail of a serpent!" replied the chief.

"Had the serpent moccasins?"

"Yes! The moccasins of the Iroquois."

"Humph! How many?"

The Algonquin held up seven fingers, to indicate how many footprints he had seen.

"'Tis only a small scalping party, then, which has passed this way. We'd better camp here for the night."

Wabeno insisted, however, that there was probably a larger party of Iroquois in the neighbourhood, and was for resting only until sunset, and then travelling rapidly through the night in order to reach the lakes as soon as possible. He seemed to think, also, that for several days past they had been watched by the scouts of the enemy.

As the chief spoke he looked keenly at the forest on the other side of the stream, as though he would like to read some fatal secret which that dense, virgin growth held inviolate; then, without further words, he turned and disappeared into the forest, as though to join his scouts.

"His words seem rather ominous, Jamie," said Jack, when he had gone, and they were busying themselves making fast the canoes and unloading a few things.

"Yes, I'm sorry that the major paid so little attention to his words. He seems to think that they are only a small band of marauding Indians who have recently crossed the river, and that if they do attack us we shall be more than a match for them. Well, let's hope he's right."

"There's something wrong, and I like not the redskin's uneasiness, old fellow. He scents danger, though he won't press his opinions upon the leader. He believes it's more than a scalping party, but he evidently thinks he's a match for Iroquois cunning."

"Did you notice the way he looked across the river? I wonder if that's the quarter he suspects? But come, we must lend the men a hand, for 'twill be dark in a few minutes," said Jamie.

Major Ridout took every precaution, however, against a surprise attack. All the Indians except two were sent into the forest to keep a strict watch. A few trees were felled and a rude abattis constructed, which instilled a certain amount of security into each mind.

Then darkness fell, and one by one the men stretched themselves on the ground and slept, with their rifles beside them. The two comrades, however, still talked in whispers as they lay rolled in their blankets.

"Just look at the men, Jack! How quiet they all are to-night? No noise, no singing or dancing this time. 'Tis my belief that we're in a tight corner, and if the Iroquois manage to get in past the scouts, there won't be a scalp left on any of us at daybreak."

"Never mind, we can only die once. The scouts are sure to give us warning, and then we'll sell our lives dearly. We've been in many a scrape before, old fellow, and we've always pulled through. There seems to be a Providence over us."

"Why, yes, it seems so. Do you remember the fight with the French cruiser?"

"Shall I ever forget it? I thought every moment would be my last when the

broadsides opened upon us."

"Hush! What was that?"

The hoot of an owl was distinctly heard twice, and a moment afterwards it was answered by the call of the night-raven. The first call seemed to come from the depth of the forest on the other side of the river.

Scarcely had the last sound died away when the two Indians who remained in the camp, though apparently fast asleep, sprang to their feet, seized their rifles and disappeared into the thicket. Several of the men half raised themselves, looked around, and then lay down once more.

For a moment the boys listened in silence, their faces turned first to the deep gloom of the forest shades, half expecting to hear from thence the deadly whoop of the fierce Iroquois, and to see the rush of savage warriors upon the sleeping camp, then they looked suspiciously across the stream that flowed at their feet.

Overhead the stars shone brightly, and the placid stream reflected their fiery points on its broad bosom. Now and again its mirrored surface was broken by the splash of the salmon and the large river-trout.

"'Twas only a bird after all, Jack. Let us go to sleep. See, the men are sleeping peacefully."

"If 'twas only a bird, then why did the Indians leave to join the scouts?"

"I can't say. Perhaps 'twas only a private call for extra scouts. You know the call to arms is the howl of the coyote, repeated twice. Besides, 'tisn't likely that the enemy will get through the scouts without being seen. An Indian is all eyes, even in the dark."

The boys laid down again, but though Jamie was soon asleep Jack remained awake, gazing up at those bright twinkling points, and listening acutely for any sound that might come. Once or twice he raised himself and looked around.

A ripple in mid-stream caught his attention. While in the starlight he gazed upon it, it seemed to come nearer. Then another ripple, and another, that spread themselves out wider and wider, and in the middle of the disturbed area there appeared a tiny speck, as though a swimmer were breasting the stream. But even as he watched it, it disappeared and was lost in the darkness.

Five minutes–ten minutes passed, but the speck, whatever it was, did not reappear. What could it be? It would be foolish to alarm the camp prematurely, so he would just creep down to the water's edge and make sure. He threw off his blanket and crawled along through the reeds and willows. He had nearly reached the water when a rustling amongst the reeds caused his heart to cease beating for an instant. What could it be?

Two glaring eyeballs, that glowed like fire, were fixed upon his, not six feet away. Jack instinctively felt for his pistol, when, horror of horrors, he had left it

beside the embers of the fire. He drew his hunting-knife from its sheath, keeping his eyes fixed the while upon those glaring eye-balls; when the wild creature, evidently a wolf, attracted to the river by thirst, suddenly uttered a snarl, turned tail and made off.

"Thank God!" he gasped. "Better a wolf than an Indian." For though naturally a brave lad this sudden apparition had given him a shock that made the perspiration stand out like beads on his forehead, but he quickly recovered himself and crept down to the edge of the stream.

He could just make out the dark, indistinct outline of the forest on the opposite bank, but no ripples or dark objects were visible. Then he looked downstream, but nothing could he see.

"I must have been deceived. What a good thing I didn't alarm the camp! How they would have laughed at me," he muttered.

Just then, however, he cast his eyes upstream. As he did so, he started again. A long, dark shadow, like a log or a canoe, half-way across, seemed to be drifting towards the northern shore on which they were camped. It was not more than two hundred yards away. It seemed to crawl along, then close behind it he saw a similar object, and still another.

What were the scouts doing? Had they been betrayed? What could they be, but canoes–Indians? Then the enemy must be crossing over, and he raised his voice for one mighty shout of–

"Iroquois."

But even as he uttered that startling cry the fierce howl of the coyote, repeated twice, the signal to alarm the camp, came from the woods, and the crack of a rifle awoke a hundred echoes and roused the men to a sense of their danger.

Even as for an instant he lingered beside the river-bank a blood-curdling yell, the war-whoop of the Iroquois, rang across the stream and echoed and reechoed through the forest. A dozen rifles spattered out their leaden hail, for the conflict had begun at last.

Jack rushed back into the camp and found Major Ridout and the men already in position behind the logs, prepared to receive the enemy as soon as they should burst through that thin line of Algonquin scouts.

"Hullo, Jack!" cried Jamie. "Where have you been? I feared that you were a prisoner. Have you been scouting too?"

"Why, yes! That is, I couldn't sleep, and I thought I saw a curious object in mid-stream and went down to see what it was."

"And what did you find?"

"Well, I could no longer see it when I got there, but just as I was coming away I happened to look up-stream, and I saw three canoes crossing over from the southern bank.

"I wonder why the chief did not discover them before. He seems to have been watching the forest instead of the river! Hullo! What's this?"

The sounds of a desperate struggle, a hand-to-hand fight in the bushes a few yards away, attracted their attention. It was too dark, however, to see anything as yet, although the dawn would be upon them shortly.

"Stand ready, lads!" cried their leader, and every man levelled his rifle in the direction whence the sounds came.

The next moment a wounded Algonquin rushed into the camp, leaping over the abattis, and then rolled over on the ground dead. He was fearfully gashed, and it was evident that an attempt had even been made to scalp him. How he had escaped was a marvel. The yells and war-whoops had ceased now, and for a brief space even the rifles had ceased to speak, and there was a dead silence. The men waited impatiently behind that rude barricade, reserving their fire.

Suddenly a sharp, short, piercing scream, broken short, fell upon their ears, as though a mortal wound had been given and received.

"Ah, Wabeno! That is the end of Wabeno!" exclaimed one of the men.

It was indeed Wabeno who uttered that scream, and it was both his war-cry and his death-cry, for at that instant he had met in single combat the Iroquois chief, and the tomahawk of the greatest warrior within a hundred leagues of the lakes, had sunk into his brain and stretched him lifeless.

"Now the Algonquins will scatter like the leaves of the forest, and we must fight it out alone, lads. Oh! that the dawn would come!" exclaimed the major, casting a brief look towards the east.

Even as he spoke the first flush of the sunrise was lighting up the edge of the forest and the river, but the dawn only revealed to them the utter hopelessness of their position. The enemy were in great numbers, and had almost completely surrounded them, for though the river was at their rear it was being eagerly watched from the opposite bank.

Still, for some reason, the enemy did not attempt to rush the camp as yet.

"I wonder why they're hanging back, Jamie," said his comrade, who lay behind the same log with his rifle at the "ready."

"Perhaps they've had enough scalps already, and are thinking of going back to their wigwams."

"Ah," replied one of the *voyageurs*, who was a regular frontiersman, "that might be true of any other tribe but the Iroquois; they'll not be satisfied until their girdles are full of reeking scalps. We must teach them a lesson they'll not forget. Here goes," and raising his rifle as he spoke he fired quickly at a dark figure that was approaching the camp, leaping quickly from tree to tree.

A yell of pain escaped the Indian as he rolled over in an agony, and paid with his life for his temerity. A wild cry of vengeance came from the dark aisles

of the forest, and a dozen Iroquois leapt forward to snatch away the dead body, lest it should fall into the hands of the palefaces.

This was the opportunity that had long been waited for, and the order came sharp and short–

"Fire!"

A dozen flashes of fire burst forth from behind the barricade, and a hail of bullets was poured out upon the Indians, and a confused heap of dead and wounded lay beside their fallen comrade, but ere the smoke had cleared away the piercing scream of an eagle rent the air. It was the signal for a general attack given by the Iroquois chief, and before the palefaces had time to reload their pieces, a hundred braves leapt from the cover of the trees, where they had been hidden on three sides of the camp.

The forest rang with their wild whoops, as, brandishing their hatchets and tomahawks, they leapt over the tree trunks and fell upon the *voyageurs*. A desperate hand-to-hand fight ensued. Frightful blows were given and received. Paleface and redskin fought like demons. Some of the former, seeing the hopelessness of prolonging the fight against such numbers of their fierce and crafty foe, rushed to the river bank, and launching one of the canoes pushed off and threw themselves in, followed by a storm of bullets and arrows.

From that moment the fight was lost, and even those who thus deserted their comrades gained nothing but dishonour and death, for they were quickly overtaken, and killed and scalped.

The rest of the small band still fought on bravely against desperate odds, for they were outnumbered by more than ten to one. Major Ridout seemed to have the strength of ten, for single-handed he encountered four Indians at once, and had stretched two of them on the ground, and wounded a third, when a fierce painted warrior, with a plume of eagle's feathers upon his head, uttered a wild cry and buried his knife in the brave man's heart.

Where were the lads all this time? As soon as the general attack was made, they placed their backs against a pine-tree that stood nearly in the middle of the clearing, and defended themselves against all-comers. They were the last survivors of that little band, and they still fought desperately with their clubbed muskets, which they wielded with a vigour and frenzy that had already sent half-a-dozen Iroquois to the ground.

The end was not far off, however. They had both received several nasty wounds, and Jack was both stunned and bleeding.

"Good-bye, Jamie!" he said, as he sank to the ground.

Jamie felt that he, too, must soon follow him, but when Jack fell he stepped across his body and swung his clubbed musket about so fiercely that the enemy fell back for a minute. An Indian hurled a hatchet, which just missed his head

and buried its keen, trembling blade in the tree behind him.

He looked down at Jack's pale, death-like face. He called him by name, but no answer came, and he feared that his comrade was dead. The blood was flowing freely from his own wounds, and he felt himself getting weaker and weaker.

He was reeling now from sheer weakness and loss of blood. He could hardly hold his musket. This, then, was to be the end of it all. Deserted by the French *voyageurs*, to be killed and scalped by the cruel Iroquois.

"Never mind! We will die together," he mumbled to himself, "fighting to the last."

The Indians were returning now from the capture of the canoe. He could see a dozen or more gesticulating forms, dancing in frenzy before him. He could do no more. He was falling–falling–such a long way it seemed to the ground. Then he felt the sharp steel of an Indian knife cutting into his flesh, as it was hurled at him from a distance.

He felt some one clutch his scalp-lock, but he was unable to resist. He had become unconscious and oblivious of all these things. He seemed to be in another land where, instead of the dark forest with its interminable tangle and endless dangers, he roamed with Jamie beside a broken stream, where the red-spotted trout leapt in a sunlit burn, the music of whose waters charmed and soothed his tired and weary spirit.

"Stay! He is the paleface brother of the White Eagle," said a voice that broke his sub-conscious reverie; and at these words Jack opened his eyes for an instant and looked into the face of a mighty warrior whose plumed eagle crest and haughty features seemed strangely familiar.

CHAPTER IX

THE WHITE EAGLE OF THE IROQUOIS

The Indian who had raised his scalping-knife drew back, and a plumed and painted chieftain stepped forward. It was none other than the renowned "White Eagle"–the greatest chief amongst the Six Nations. The same daring and unconquered spirit who had made his escape from the frigate, as she lay anchored in the river below Quebec.

"Stay! Let me see the young palefaces, who do not run like the hares," he commanded.

As he bent over the prostrate youths, he was unable to restrain a slight, involuntary start. A sudden gleam of remembrance flashed across his countenance, and chased away for an instant the ferocity of the savage. He recognised in them the young prisoners who, aboard the *Sapphire*, had dared to offer him a drink of water at the risk of losing their own promised liberty.

Then, in a loud voice which all could hear, he uttered those words, which caused Jack to open his eyes for an instant–

"Stay! He is the paleface brother of the White Eagle."

The braves quickly gathered around him, for they were all astounded at these words; but he continued–

"These are not the children of the Canadas. They are the friends of the red man, and the children of the Yengeese. They come from the land of the sun-rising. They were prisoners with White Eagle, in the big canoe with wings, in the river of Canada, and when the children of the French king treated the Eagle as the squaw of a Delaware, and even offered him the bitter salt water to drink, the hearts of these children of Miquon burned with pity for the red chief, and they offered him sweet water to quench his thirst, but even that was not permitted by these dogs of Canada."

"Ugh! The children of the French Father are snakes and cowards. They are singing-birds which speak a lie," cried one of the warriors.

"The Algonquins are crows, who fly to their rookeries when they hear the scream of the eagle," cried another.

"Listen!" continued the chief. "The French are women, like the Delawares, and should wear petticoats. They offered gold and fire-water for the scalp of an Iroquois chief, but the caged eagle despised their threats, and while his captors slept, his proud spirit burst the bars, and his strong wings bore him aloft, back to the hunting-grounds of his fathers."

Exclamations of pride and assent greeted these words, for the prowess and courage of their leader were recognised by all of them.

"When the White Eagle of his tribe gained his freedom once more, his heart went back to the Yengeese prisoners who had dared to show him a kindness, and he longed to see their faces again, for an Iroquois never forgets a kindness, though he quickly repays an insult, and now the Manitou has sent hither my paleface friends. They are brave, for they do not run even from my warriors. The white blood shall be washed from their veins, and when their wounds are healed they shall be adopted into my tribe, for the Great Spirit has said, that between the children of Miquon and the red man there shall be peace, and the hatchet shall be buried so deeply that none shall ever find it again."

These remarkable words, uttered by the red chief, contained both wisdom and prophecy, though expressed in that flowery and boastful language which has

always been a peculiarity of the North American savage.

Quickly, then, medicinal herbs were brought from far and near to heal the boys' wounds, and all the knowledge and skill of the tribe were used to restore them to life and health. Fortunately their wounds were not serious, and soon they were able to sit up and to walk, and then they learnt how fortunate they had been. They thanked God in that moment for all His preserving care, and especially that they were led to do that simple act of kindness to the great chief aboard the frigate.

In accordance with a peculiar Indian custom, water was then brought from the river, and the usual rites of adoption were performed. When the white blood had been washed away from their veins, the chief declared them to be his brothers and members of his tribe.

They were provided with deer-skin shirts and leggings, embroidered with quills and fine bead work. Indian moccasins were placed upon their feet, and belts of wampum around their waists, while the feathers of a newly-killed hawk served as crests or head-gear. Except that their faces were a little paler than those of their companions, they might easily have been taken for young Indian braves, just entering upon their first war-path.

Then it only remained to find Indian names for them, so they called Jamie "Red Feather," for when they found him his head and face were covered with blood, as he lay upon the ground, and so they dyed the hawk-feathers that served as his crest a deep crimson. And Jack they called the "Black Hawk," for they said, though his face was pale, his spirit was as fierce, and his eyes as keen, as the bird of prey whose plumes he bore. So they left his feathers black.

"So now we're both Iroquois braves, Black Hawk!" said Jamie, as soon as they were left together.

"Yes, and the brothers of White Eagle, too!" laughed his companion.

"Well, I suppose it's a great honour they've conferred upon us, so we must not grumble."

"The greatest honour that an Indian can confer. And for a time I shouldn't mind it, at any rate, until we can make our escape to the settlements of Pennsylvania or Virginia, if it were not for those horrible, reeking trophies that our comrades carry at their girdles."

"Ah! the scalps, you mean—-"

"Yes. Do you know that I've counted no less than fifteen fresh scalps amongst them, every one of which was this morning rooted where God had placed it."

"Horrible! What can we do?"

"Nothing!"

"Are we the only survivors?"

"Some of the Algonquins escaped, I think, and a few of the Frenchmen, who made for the forest, but none of those who entered the canoe, for there she is. She was captured and brought back again."

"And Major Ridout?" asked Jamie. "What has become of him? Is he dead, too?"

"I fear so, but all the bodies have been dragged into the forest and hidden. I suppose the chief did that to save us a little pain, for he probably knows that we are unaccustomed to such a sight."

"I'm glad to hear that, for it shows that he possesses a sense of decency and good feeling, although he's such a mighty redskin chief."

"And 'tis certain that he remembers a kindness, too, however small," said Jack. "And it's my opinion that he's not at all a bad fellow, but as generous as he is brave. He remembered us at once, and we owe him our lives, and I intend to thank him when I get the chance."

"We owe our lives also to the fact that we stood our ground, when the others ran away, for if we had taken either to the canoes or the forest the chief would probably not have come our way, and we should have been scalped by his braves."

"So once more the path of duty has been the path of safety, as old Dr. Birch was so fond of saying."

"The only pleasant feature, apart from our marvellous escape, that I can see, is that the Iroquois as a part of the Six Nations are allied with the English against the French in this war, and they speak of the English king as their Great Father across the water."

During this time the Indians, who had not followed the fugitives into the forest, had been overhauling the three big canoes which belonged to the fur-traders, and examining their contents.

They had made a great capture, for the canoes were deeply laden with provisions, arms, ammunition and trading goods. The first thing that White Eagle did was to pour out all the fire-water into the river, lest his men should drink it, for he knew what dire consequences would ensue to the whole band if that "devil in solution" were only permitted to pass their lips.

That night they camped on the same clearing where the battle had been fought, but next morning at sunrise they took the captured canoes along with their own, and paddled rapidly up-stream towards Lake Ontario. The youths were both invited into the chief's canoe, and as their wounds were still painful, they took no part in the paddling, but remained sitting in the bottom of the canoe, or lying upon the skins which had belonged to Major Ridout.

The chief and several of his men spoke a little broken English, and one spoke the Canadian patois, for he had been a prisoner amongst the Algonquin

tribes for some time, so that they were able to converse a little during the day.

Towards evening they reached the "Thousand Islands," where the St. Lawrence broadens out into a lake studded with a multitude of islets, just before it leaves Lake Ontario. Here the hand of the great Landscape Painter seems to have made the "beauty spot" of the world, and our heroes were charmed and even roused to a pitch of enthusiasm, as they passed one green, verdant, or pine-wooded island after another, while the setting sun, flinging its last ruddy beams upon the trees and the water, completed the enchanting picture.

"'Tis well to be a red man when the Great Manitou gives His children such hunting and fishing grounds as these," said Jamie to the chief, for he had been deeply stirred by the beauty that surrounded him.

"The Great Spirit loves His red children," said the chief solemnly. "He made for them the fish in the stream, and the deer in the forest; but He has forgotten them for a while, for they have displeased Him, and the children of the sun-rising have chased them from their hunting-grounds."

Jamie made no reply, for he saw that the chief's heart was not a little sad, for they were approaching Fort Frontenac at the entrance of the lake, where the presence of the French behind their wooden palisades was a constant reminder to the Indians that even the graves and the hunting-grounds of their fathers were defiled by the presence of the paleface children of the Canadas.

That night they camped on one of the islands, but long before daybreak they departed and stole swiftly but silently past the fort, and entered the broad waters of Lake Ontario. There was just a chance that some of the survivors had reached the fort and alarmed the soldiers, but all was quiet as they paddled quickly by. Count Frontenac, who established the fort, was a clever soldier, but even to this day his name is remembered with hatred by the Iroquois for his severity and cruelty.

And now they were entering their own country, for the Iroquois claimed as their homeland all that great tract of country that lies south of Lake Ontario, from the Hudson River and Lake Champlain on the east, away to the ridges of the Blue Mountains behind Virginia and westward some little way beyond the Falls of Niagara, and the eastern shores of Lake Erie; but by right of conquest they claimed much more, for they had conquered all the surrounding tribes, from the river of Canada on the east, to the southern shores of Lake Michigan on the west, far away southwards to the Ohio Valley.

At the present time, however, the wigwams and lodges of the White Eagle were pitched on the banks of a small stream that flowed through the forest to the south of the Great Falls.

Though they still thought much of their late comrades, the youths had now become more cheerful, and their wounds had nearly healed, thanks to the kind

attention of the Indians. They had even begun to admire these fierce Iroquois who had adopted them. They were not nearly so bad as they were described by the French. They were lords of nature, these children of the forest, and had desired nothing more than to be left alone in their happy hunting-grounds. It was the paleface who had been the intruder and the plunderer. At first the red men had welcomed the palefaces, and received them as brothers, but the baser types of the settlers, the outcasts and pariahs of the settlements, and especially the hated "Rum-carriers," had taken advantage of, and had traded upon, the childishness, the ignorance and the simplicity of the Indians, with the result that outrage, vengeance and border wars had been the result. The insults of Champlain were never forgotten by the Iroquois. On the other hand the compact made between Miquon (William Penn) and the Indians was never broken by the Delawares, till the white men broke it themselves.

Several times during their progress along the shores of the lake smoke had been perceived, rising above the tree-tops in the forest. The keen eyes of the chief, who was in the first canoe, never relaxed their vigilance for a moment, for though they were almost in their own country, yet at any hour they might be set upon by a marauding band of French Indians, who were out for scalps.

Each evening they would draw in to the bank, set a watch, by posting scouts some little way into the forest, then, lighting a fire, they would cook their evening meal. Oftentimes this would consist of a fine buck that had been killed during the day, as they coasted along by the edge of the forest-lined bank, or sometimes of the sturgeon and salmon taken from the lake.

The lads noticed that several times, when smoke had been observed, that the chief ordered the boats to make a wide detour, as though to avoid a possible enemy. At other times the boats would pass close in as though there were no danger. Jamie was determined to find out the reason of this, so the next time that he saw a faint column of blue smoke he remarked to the chief–

"Look, White Eagle! There's more smoke ahead!"

But the chief, who had seen it long before, merely remarked–

"Iroquois smoke!"

How he could tell the difference between one smoke and another the lads could never make out, for he seemed unable to explain it to them; but that he did know, and could often tell something of the people who fed the fire by the tell-tale column of smoke, they never doubted.

Once, as the White Eagle looked long and keenly at a very faint column of blue smoke, about half-a-mile inland, Jamie thought that for an instant he could trace a somewhat puzzled and anxious look clouding the face of the chief; but it passed as quickly as it came, and the faintest promise of a smile spread over his countenance, as though the smoke recalled pleasant memories.

”Is that Iroquois smoke, too, chief?” he asked.
”No Iroquois smoke this time,” he replied
”Can it be an enemy, then?”
”No enemy.”
”Then who can he be who has lit that fire?”
”Paleface!” ejaculated the chief.

CHAPTER X
A LONELY FRONTIERSMAN

”Paleface?” exclaimed the lads, standing up in the canoe, and straining their eyes as if to catch a glimpse of that mysterious stranger who was hidden in the depth of the forest.

”Aren’t you afraid that we may be attacked?”

”Ugh!” replied the warrior, without moving a muscle of his dark face, or showing the slightest trace of alarm. ”Him–great paleface hunter. Friend of the Iroquois. Smoke peace-pipe with the White Eagle.”

As they paddled quickly past the spot Jamie turned again and again to look at that faint column of receding smoke, now growing fainter and fainter.

”Who can this paleface hunter be, so far away from his home and friends, dwelling alone in these dark forests? Perhaps he is an exile from his country!” murmured the lad to himself. Then a strange yearning came over him. He longed to go ashore, that he might join this lonely frontiersman, and share his hardships and his perils, but he hesitated to suggest it to the chief, whose face now bore such a stolid, mask-like look. And soon the long, swift strokes of the paddles bore them past the spot.

There must be something in nature–though perfectly inexplicable to us, who know so little of the unseen verities–that transmits through the ether that surrounds us, feelings of sympathy and love to kindred souls, just as in these later days of our civilisation the wireless message is flung from ship to ship and coast to coast. For the fact remains, that just at this moment the sturdy paleface hunter, as he stooped to place more pine-wood on his blazing fire, felt at his very heart a twinge of pain, so that for an instant his eyes were blurred, and he saw no longer the blazing fire, the dark forest, or the pile of beaver skins that his skilful hands had taken, for another vision rose before his face.

'Twas the vision of an old-world village, in a sweet little island that rose out of the main, far-off; and to him 'twas "Home, sweet home" still, though his feet must never tread that land again, for he was an exile, a victim to the cruel game-laws, that had banished him from his country. Here, 'twas true, the whole forest was his, with all it contained. The beaver, the otter, the fish in the streams, and even the red-spotted deer were his for the taking; but still his heart stole back again to that forbidden land.

"Oh, that I might drop a tear and plant a flower on thy grave, Lisbeth! Thou wert all the world to me–a true wife and a friend. And the bairn? Oh, my God! the bairn! Where is he?"

And here this strong man, hardened by nature to all the toils and dangers of the forest, the rapids, the wild beasts, and the scalping parties of red foes, broke down in an agony of tears and wept, for he thought of his little blue-eyed laddie of two years; the poor motherless bairn, as he had last seen him, with his flaxen curls nestling in his arms.

How often he had longed to go home and find his boy, to find even if he were yet alive; but the thought came to him each time–

"How have they taught the lad to regard his father? Perhaps they have told him that I am dead! Well, maybe 'tis better so! Or perhaps they have said, 'He is an exile in a far-off land, and he will return no more, for in the eyes of the law he is a criminal.' Then so it must remain, lest the father's curse should blight the lad; but what would I not give to see my child again after all these years."

Then he flung himself down upon a pile of skins and wept again. That night sleep fled from his eyelids, as it had often done before when these longings for the homeland had come over him, but never, never before had his agony been so great. He prayed his God for something he had never dared to ask before. It was that he might be permitted, before he died, to look upon the face of his child again, even though the lad should not know him. And his prayer was answered, for an angel from the stars above came down and kissed him, as he lay beneath the silent pines, and whispered–

"It shall be!"

And he slept, for his cares had fled, and a deep peace had filled his soul.

Such were thy sons, oh, England! Their bold, proud spirits chafed and were cramped within thy narrow limits, and narrower laws, made by and for the selfish few, in days, happily, long past. And yet they loved their native land, though exiled from hearth and home; and when duty called, they lined thy distant frontiers; they held thy far-flung borders, and were content to leave their bones to bleach beside some lonely outpost of the Empire they helped to build. But let us for a while leave this lonely frontiersman, and return to our friends and their Iroquois companions.

Four days had been spent in navigating Lake Ontario, and they were now approaching Niagara, below whose thunderous rapids stood the French fort that guarded both the river and the lakes.

Towards evening on the fourth day a distant speck was seen approaching from the westward, and the White Eagle, standing in the bow of the foremost canoe, as he gazed into the face of the setting sun, permitted a sudden cry of surprise to escape from his lips–

"Algonquins!"

'Twas only too true, for there, rapidly approaching and hugging the southern shore of the lake, was a large party of their hated foes, in their big canoes of elm-bark.

The discovery appeared to be mutual, for both parties rent the air with their respective war-cries, and hastened ashore to make ready for the coming battle. Darkness soon settled over forest and lake, but all through the night the woods resounded with the dreadful war-whoops of the Indians, as they chanted their war-songs, and worked themselves into a frenzy of fury.

What a night that was for the two young paleface warriors! The war fever of the Iroquois had in a measure entered into their blood, for they saw in the Algonquins the allies of France and the enemies of England, so they prepared to defend themselves in the morning.

Day dawned at last, and White Eagle and his braves pressed forward to battle; not shoulder to shoulder, nor in unresisting phalanx, as the soldiers of the palefaces fought, but in true Indian fashion the dark-skinned warriors leapt from tree to tree, and cover to cover. Showers of arrows and bullets rattled amongst the trees and rocks, and the wild yells became every moment fiercer and fiercer. Several warriors had fallen on each side, and a dozen scalps had been taken, as the frequent yells of triumph announced.

Deeds of desperate valour were recklessly performed. Homeric contests, ending in frightful wounds or instant death were frequently engaged in, when suddenly, from behind the cover of a huge elm-tree, the Algonquin chief, his plume of black raven feathers nodding with his frenzied action, rushed into the open and challenged the Iroquois leader to single combat.

With a yell of delight White Eagle bounded into the clearing, and accepted the offer. Then, instantly, as if by instinct, every weapon was lowered, and the non-combatants ranged themselves on either side, in a rude semicircle, with a rising back-ground of tall pines and elms, to watch this gladiatorial contest, which threatened to be both brief and sanguinary.

Then followed a pause, during which the two chiefs addressed each other in the figurative but boastful braggadocia, in the use of which the red men excelled all the other nations of the world. The Algonquin chief, whose name was "Black

Raven," began as follows–

"Mingo dog! where are the scalps of the Iroquois warriors who came to the Canada River? Ten of them have not returned to their tribe, since the snows melted. My children went to the lodges of the Maquas and the Oneidas, but they found only squaws and children. The scalps of the Iroquois are in the wigwams of the Canadas, and the Canada Father has rewarded his children with many hatchets, and powder to burn in the face of their enemies, because they have cleared the snakes from the woods! The moccasins of the Iroquois cannot be found in the forest. They have been driven from the hunting-grounds of their fathers, never, never to return—-!"

"Skunk of the Algonquins!" retorted the Iroquois, "your tongue is forked, like the serpent that hides its head in the grass, and your arm is feeble as the squaw of the Delaware. The singing-birds have called your young men from their Canada lodges, so that my warriors may take their scalps, for before the sun is amongst the pines, your warriors will have followed him into the hunting-grounds of the Great Spirit."

"Iroquois muskrat! Your tongue is sharper than your knife!"

"Hark! What is that sound that I hear? 'Tis the wailing of the squaws in your Canada lodges, because their young men return no more."

"Iroquois snake! Skulking fox!" retorted the Algonquin. "'Tis to you that the singing-birds have spoken, but they have spoken falsely. Slaves of the Yengeese! Never more will your war-whoop be heard in the woods; never more will you fish the streams and hunt the deer, for before the sun shall rise the girdles of my young men will be heavy with your scalps. 'Tis the Mingoes who are women, like the Delawares. They killed my young men when the face of the Manitou was turned away from His children in anger, but now the Great Spirit has delivered you into our hands, and nevermore shall your squaws behold you."

"Dogs of the Canadas! The Iroquois are free and strong as the eagle that soars to the clouds, but the Algonquins are skunks and muskrats. They are slaves to the Canada palefaces. Go hunt the deer and the moose for your French Father, and when, for your portion, he throws you the offals–be grateful."

The tomahawk of the French Indian whirled in the air, as, stung by this biting insult to his tribe, he hurled it at his enemy, and so true was the aim that it only missed the scalp of the Iroquois by an inch, for it carried away half his plume of eagle feathers.

A loud cry of vengeance arose from his warriors as this deadly missile whizzed past their leader.

The next instant the wild scream of an eagle, which was the peculiar war-cry of this renowned chief, rang through the glades and across the lake as the leaders closed in deadly combat. Like the leap of the panther, when robbed of

its young, was the fierce onset of the Iroquois chief. Fifty gleaming knives were snatched from their sheaths, and held aloft; but before the warriors on either side could reach the spot, the tomahawk of the White Eagle had stretched his opponent upon the ground, and with keen knife he had already snatched away the trophy that honour demanded.

Then, amid war-whoops and wild yells of savage fury, the fierce passions of the warriors became undammed, and a short but sanguinary conflict occurred. The Algonquins, despite the loss of their leader, fought bravely for a while, but were at length overwhelmed by the relentless fury of the Iroquois. Then they quickly broke and scattered through the forest, pursued by their enemy.

Thus ended another of those fierce fights, so common amongst the Indians tribes in the middle of the eighteenth century, while all the time the armies of the two paleface nations from towards the sun-rising were preparing for that final death grapple, which was to settle for ever the destiny of the northern half of that mighty continent; and to drive the scattered tribes of the children of the Manitou ever westward towards the setting sun.

In this brief fight the youths had remained little more than passive spectators, for they soon saw how the conflict must end, and that without their help the Iroquois, although outnumbered, would secure the victory.

"I do wish, Jack, that our allies would desist from that barbarous practice of taking scalps. See there! a dozen scalps already hang at the girdles of our comrades, and even yet they are not satisfied, but must pursue their wretched victims into the woods. Bah! My heart sickens at the sight!"

"'Tis Indian nature, Jamie. Victory brings them no honour unless the victim's scalp be taken. Even the squaws look askance at the warrior who returns from the war-path without these hideous trophies hanging at his belt."

"There seems little honour to me in mangling the corpse of a fallen victim."

"Why, the youth is scarcely regarded as a man till he has brought home his first scalp. Their belief is, that the spirit and strength of the dead man enters into the victorious brave, and, horrible as it is, and God knows how I hate it all, 'tis not more horrible than the deeds of some of the paleface pirates in the Southern Seas, who sometimes treat their unfortunate victims in a cruel and barbarous manner."

They had been leaning on their rifles, on a little rising ground near the lake, watching the fight and the pursuit, when suddenly from out the dark aisles of the forest there came the piercing scream of the eagle once more.

"What can be the matter now? Surely the enemy are not returning, reinforced!" cried Red Feather, quickly bringing his rifle to the ready.

"No. 'Tis the signal for the return of the braves; evidently White Eagle scents a new danger, and is anxious to get away."

"What new danger can there be?"

"Why, don't you see that the Algonquins have taken the route that will lead them to the French fort at Niagara, where almost every soldier will turn out to their assistance, when they hear that the renowned White Eagle is within twenty miles of the fort? At least, I assume that is the cause; but look! Here comes the chief himself, and he is making for the canoes. Let us speak with him."

CHAPTER XI
THE SMOKE-SIGNAL

"What is the matter, chief?" asked Jack. "What new danger has my red brother discovered?"

"Look!" replied White Eagle, pointing in the direction of the fort and along the shore of the lake. "What does my paleface brother see yonder?"

Jack strained his eyes in the direction indicated, but for some seconds even his keen eyes did not notice anything unusual. At length, however, he perceived a thin column of smoke far away in the distance, rising above the forest and lake; then a second and a third column, but so faint as to be nearly indistinguishable.

"I see the smoke from the camp-fires of a party of hunters, perhaps Yengeese trappers, but nothing that threatens danger."

The sachem shook his head sagely, as he replied–

"No Yengeese! It is Algonquin smoke. A signal to the paleface warriors at the fort, who will hurry to burn their powder in the face of White Eagle. Too much price on Iroquois scalp!" And here the chief's face relaxed into the faintest of smiles, as though he appreciated the value that was placed upon his head by the French, and considered it a great honour and a tribute to his prowess and the impotence of his enemies.

Then for an instant his face became clouded and a momentary wave of irresolution passed over his countenance. To escape the net that was being drawn around him was comparatively easy, but to convey all the plunder of the expedition safely to the lodges of the Iroquois was another matter. His resolution, however, was quickly taken. They were now within ten miles of the mouth of a stream, called "Twelve Mile Creek," that entered the forest south of Lake Ontario, and only a dozen miles from the fort. To gain that creek, to take the loaded canoes up the stream against the rapids and rifts, and then to make a portage of four miles to gain the Niagara River above the fort, was the daring resolve of the

White Eagle.

It was a piece of daring that was worthy of an Iroquois chief, who had already secured a reputation for reckless daring that was second to that of no other chief amongst the Six Nations. The great danger lay in the fact that at one bend in the stream they would be within seven or eight miles of the fort, with all the possibilities of being ambushed by their hated foes and also by the Frenchers.

The whole party now took to the canoes, and proceeded as rapidly and as silently as possible along the shore in a westerly direction. Soon after mid-day they reached the mouth of the creek, and without a moment's delay, except to land a couple of scouts on either bank, they paddled as quickly as possible up the narrow stream, while the scouts went ahead to explore the forest-lined banks and to give the alarm as soon as they should discover the slightest sign of the enemy, who could not now be far away. To these eager warriors their progress seemed to be painfully slow. Fallen trees sometimes blocked their way. At other times the canoes had to be dragged through the shallows and lifted over rocks.

It was hard work, but the youths bore their share of all this arduous toil. It was exciting, too, for at any moment they might hear the crack of the Algonquin and French rifles. Sometimes they were up to their knees in the water, pushing and lifting the canoes forward.

As they advanced further and further up the watercourse, for it could hardly be called a river, the creek narrowed and the trees overhung and interlaced, shutting out the sun, so that, though it was little past mid-day, it was scarcely more than twilight. Not a word was spoken for a while, and except for the music of the stream the forest was as silent as death. Even the birds had ceased to sing, and the little squirrels watched them furtively from the branches overhead, wondering what strange creatures these were who were toiling so arduously at the canoes.

Not a signal had come as yet from the scouts, on whom they were implicitly relying. They were getting perilously near to that fatal bend in the river where if an ambush was in hiding, it was sure to be. The Indians exchanged suspicious glances. They fingered their knives and tomahawks uneasily and frequently looked to the priming of their rifles.

"What is that noise I can hear, rising and falling, very faintly, like the water of the Big Salt Lake in a storm, when the Manitou is angry?" asked Jack of one of the Iroquois braves, who was called the Panther.

"'Tis the Spirit of the Wacondah in the caverns under the Great Falls!" answered the Indian in low and reverent tones.

"Niagara!" whispered Jack to his comrade, "and only a few miles away."

"Yes. The Iroquois believe that the Great Spirit, the God of Thunder, dwells under the Falls, and they speak of him always in a whisper, even by their firesides

far away."

"Hist! What was that?"

The crackle of a twig was heard on the western bank, and the eye of every Indian was instantly turned in that direction, while many a hand instinctively grasped its weapon more tightly. The bushes parted, and an Iroquois scout came forth from the cover of the forest and sought the eye of his chief. Evidently he had something of importance to communicate.

White Eagle left the batteaux and approached him. Then a few guttural exclamations passed between them, and the scout disappeared once more as quietly as he had come.

"Did you hear what he said, Panther?"

"Yes. The Algonquins, with whom we fought early this morning, have fallen in with another party under Le Grand Loup, a renowned chief, who is White Eagle's greatest enemy, and they have laid an ambush for us two miles further up the stream. In addition, help is expected from the fort within an hour," replied the brave.

"Snakes alive! What will the chief do?"

"Ugh! White Eagle no afraid. The Wacondah fights for him."

The scouts had done their work bravely and well. They had soon discovered the prints of Algonquin moccasins in the woods. Some they found had led towards the bend in the river where the ambush had been laid. They had even penetrated to this spot, past the enemy's scouts, and had learnt of the juncture of the two parties. They had also discovered the trail of an Indian runner in the direction of the fort, and had heard the drums of the French calling the men to arms.

"What's to be done, Jack? We're scarcely out of one fix before we're in another."

"It seems so!" said that worthy. "I don't know what the Eagle will do, but something will have to be done, and quickly, if we're to retain our scalp-locks."

"Look! What is the chief about? The men are dragging the canoes ashore and piling the brushwood around them."

"Why, he's going to burn them to prevent them falling into the hands of the enemy. 'Tis certain that we shall never get them past the next bend; so, after all, our labour has been in vain."

Jack's surmise was correct. Without a moment's hesitation, as soon as the scout had departed, the sachem ordered the boats to be so placed that at a given signal they could be immediately fired by a small party who were to be left in charge. The rest were to follow him and take the enemy unawares in the rear before the French could arrive to their support.

This plan was put into operation without a moment's delay, and leaving

a small party of four in charge of the canoes, the rest entered the forest and moved quickly in the direction of the enemy. As they were likely to encounter the French, the lads decided to accompany the attacking party. They had not proceeded far when the scout met them who had reported the presence of the enemy.

"The paleface warriors are half-way from the fort. What will White Eagle do? They will be here before the sun is below the top-most branches of the pines," said the scout, addressing the chief.

"Ugh! Ugh!" merely remarked the Iroquois; then turning towards the two paleface warriors who accompanied him, he said–

"My brothers, Black Hawk and Red Feather, are great warriors from the land of Wabun. Can they delay the rifles of the French Father for one hour till they hear the scream of the Eagle, while my warriors take the scalps of the Algonquin dogs, who lie in wait like the serpent in the grass?"

"Give us but a dozen rifles, chief, and we'll hold them back for a day!" exclaimed Jack.

"Ugh! My brother will be a great chief before the snows have settled upon his head. Let him chose a dozen rifles from amongst my braves, and they shall accompany the paleface chiefs and follow their orders."

A dozen men were quickly chosen, including the scout and the Panther, and they at once started out, led by the scout through the forest in the direction whence the French must soon come.

Half-a-mile further on they selected a spot where they could await with advantage the arrival of the soldiers from the fort.

"Here! This spot will do! They will soon be here. Let us make ready," said Jamie. The Indians were soon under cover on either side of the rough track which led to the fort.

They could now hear plainly the drums of the advancing army. Soon they caught a glimpse of the white uniforms of the French through the vista of trees.

"There are over a hundred of them, Jamie! Can we hold them back for an hour?"

"We promised the chief that we would, and we must keep our promise," said Jamie, whose lips were compressed and whose brows were knit, as he narrowly watched the approaching French.

The drums were silent now as the foe, with shouldered rifles and martial equipment, marched boldly forward, threading their circuitous route through the forest glades. Careless of any ambush, they came forward singing and laughing, to show how much they despised the savage horde they were expecting shortly to encounter.

Suddenly the sound of distant firing burst upon them. Mingled with the

shots were savage yells and whoops, which showed that the Iroquois had attacked the party at the bend of the river. Louder and louder became the din.

"*Avancez, mes camarades! Allez vite donc! Il y a ces diables Iroquois!*"

At this command the French advanced more quickly, lest the fighting should be all over before they arrived, and the drums beat out again bravely. Their whole attention was engrossed by the distant firing, and they knew not that already the head of their column was entering an ambush, and that fourteen rifles were levelled at their leading files.

"Fire!" shouted Jack, and a deadly hail of bullets followed a blinding flash and a report that echoed through the forest. Taken thus suddenly by surprise, the head of the column staggered and wavered. Many a man fell to rise no more. A panic seized the whole party, and for a few moments it seemed doubtful whether their officers would succeed in rallying them, so susceptible even are the bravest troops to sudden fright when unexpectedly ambushed by an unseen foe.

A second volley was poured in upon the confused mass, and a scene of indescribable terror prevailed. Hoarse shouts of command were heard. The cries of the wounded and the wild yells of the Iroquois resounded through the woods.

The second fire revealed the position of the Iroquois as well as the paucity of their numbers, and the French commander shouted out–

"*A moi, camarades! Suivez-moi! Voilà l'ennemi!*" and waving his sword he dashed towards the revealed ambush followed by half his troops with fixed bayonets.

Like chaff before the wind the Indians scattered and sought cover in the deeper shades of the forest, leaping from tree to tree, and bush to bush, firing upon the foe, who were compelled to deploy and enter the thicket in single file. This was Indian warfare with a vengeance, for neither party came into the open. For an hour this was kept up, and the French, who could never come to grips with the wily foe, who always retreated like a phantom before their bayonets, were compelled to retire, for their leader had at length come to see that the whole aim of the enemy was merely to delay their approach to the Algonquins.

Suddenly, from a distance, the scream of the Eagle was heard twice in rapid succession.

"Our work is done now, Jamie! Let's give the French a final salute and depart."

A parting volley was let loose upon the enemy, and then the two pale-face chiefs led back their band quickly, and rejoined the victorious warriors of the Iroquois chief, who had driven the Algonquins across the river with great slaughter. Only two were wounded, and none were missing, as Jack looked at

his dusky warriors, but of the French quite twenty had been killed and wounded.

CHAPTER XII
THE WIGWAMS OF THE IROQUOIS

"The Algonquins are reeds that bend, but my paleface brothers are like the oak-tree!" exclaimed the Iroquois chief, as soon as he beheld the youths.

Thus briefly did the savage warrior pay a graceful tribute to the skill and courage of his friends who had held back the French, and at the same time refer modestly to his own victory.

"There is no time to lose!" exclaimed Jack. "The soldiers from the fort are close upon our heels, we did but delay their approach till we heard your signal. What is to be done? They are in a mood for vengeance."

"Ugh! Let the boats be burnt!"

The howl of the wolf, repeated twice, was given, and the next moment a column of smoke was observed in the direction of the canoes, followed by several loud explosions, as the kegs of gunpowder, which formed part of the lading, blew up.

The next instant the head of the French column appeared through the trees, and White Eagle, seeing the uselessness of continuing the fight against such overwhelming odds, withdrew across the stream with his warriors.

"The Wacondah calls us to our wigwams," he said; and now, lightened of their loads, and carrying only their rifles and scalps, the Iroquois struck across the forest in a south easterly direction, and soon put several leagues between themselves and the French, who arrived soon afterwards, only to find the ashes of the fire and the fragments of the canoes strewn around.

Chagrined and vexed beyond measure that they had once more been baulked of their prey, and that the "Iroquois devils" had got the best of them, they discontinued the useless pursuit, and returned to the fort.

The Indians travelled quickly, and soon reached the head waters of the Genesee River, and on the afternoon of the fifth day, from a lofty eminence they looked down upon the lodges and wigwams of their tribe in the peaceful valley below.

A triumphant yell broke from their lips as they beheld this welcome sight, for ever welcome to the soul of the returning warrior is the lodge that he calls

his home. The village was quickly deserted by its inhabitants, for every stripling and maiden, all the squaws and children came dancing and shouting to receive them.

With all the agility and suppleness of the deer, the Indian youths came bounding forth to caper about the braves, to finger those gruesome trophies that hung at their girdles, and to carry their rifles and tomahawks. Their faces were radiant with the lofty hero-worship that burned in their young hearts. How they longed to leave the comparative security of the village and join the war parties!

The maidens, too, well versed in all the art and coquetry of the forest, their long raven tresses decked with flowers, their dark eyes beaming with love, welcomed home their sweethearts with unfeigned joy. But there is always a fly in the honey, and the joy of victory was somewhat marred by the bitter lamenting of those squaws whose husbands and sons returned no more.

A hasty meal was then prepared and set before the Indians in wooden platters and gourds, and as soon as this was cleared away by the attendant squaws, a fire was lit and the braves seated themselves in a circle and waited solemnly for the passing round of the peace-pipe and the council that was to follow. A feeling of reverence and awe seemed to pervade the very atmosphere, and the paleface youths became not a little uneasy, wondering what important event was about to happen next.

The two strangers had caused no little curiosity by their presence, especially amongst the squaws and striplings, but so far no one had addressed them personally. Evidently they were all waiting for some explanation as to why these two palefaces returned home with the braves and were not treated as prisoners. Their curiosity was soon to be satisfied.

A low murmur of voices ran around the council fire, and as if by instinct the braves rose to their feet, and in one place the serried ranks opened to admit a very aged chief, who came from one of the lodges near the ”painted post” and slowly made his way to the assembly. He was accompanied by several other aged chiefs, but none amongst them looked so wise or even so old, by a generation at least, as the Sagamore, who now toiled painfully across the ground.

His form had once been straight like the fir-tree, but it was now bent, and he leaned heavily on his staff. His face was covered with wrinkles, and his white locks carried the snows of more than a hundred winters. Not till this aged chief had taken his seat at the post of honour amongst the chiefs that formed the front circle did the Indians deign to follow his example.

Then the sacred pipe, the calumet, was lit and solemnly passed from mouth to mouth, and amid a silence that could almost be felt, the blue smoke curled upwards around the fire and scented the still air of the early evening.

At last the White Eagle rose to speak, and as he did so every eye was in-

tently fixed upon him; even the squaws, who stood at a respectful distance from the charmed circle, stayed their gossip and strained their ears to listen to the weighty words of this renowned sachem.

"Father, you see that we come not back with empty hands. The wigwams of the Algonquins are empty. Their squaws and their children gaze no longer upon their braves, for the scalps of their warriors hang at the girdles of my children."

A hum of satisfaction arose from every part of the circle at these words.

"The Great Spirit has called ten of my braves to the happy hunting-fields out there beyond the sunset," continued the chief, raising his right hand as he spoke and pointing to where the sun had just set amongst the pines, leaving a train of red and gold. "But they had no wounds upon their backs, for their faces were never turned away from their enemies. Their squaws and their children shall be provided for. I have spoken, for the words of a chief are few!"

A low buzz of conversation went round the circle as White Eagle resumed his seat, and many an eye was turned towards the palefaces, as though some explanation of their presence was needed. At length the aged chief rose slowly, assisted by two other chiefs.

Every voice immediately lapsed into silence as the old Sagamore, with flowing locks that were white as the driven snow, began to speak. So aged was he that the oldest warrior in that grim circle could scarcely remember him otherwise than he now was. The children of his generation, and the generation that followed him, had passed away like leaves before the north wind.

"My children!" he began, and his voice at first was low and broken, but they listened to him with all the reverence that awe and superstition can give.

"Many suns have risen and set since 'Keneu,' the war-eagle of his tribe, led his people forth to battle. A hundred winters have whitened the forests and the plains since he first followed the trail of the deer. Then we were chiefs and sagamores from the shores of the Great Salt Lake, far back to the Gitche Gumee and the mountains beyond the plains where, amid the eternal snows, the Manitou dwells in the Silence. Then the forests were full of deer, the plains were full of herds, and the streams were filled with fish; and no paleface was to be found in all the land, for the Wacondah had placed his red children in a land of plenty, and the smoke from the council fire and the calumet, the peace-pipe, rose from every valley, and beside every stream were their lodges, for my people were happy."

"Ugh!" came the ready cry of assent from many a dark-skinned warrior, and many a furtive glance was cast in the direction of the two palefaces.

"Then from the land of the sun-rising," continued the Sagamore, "in his white-winged birch canoe, that brought the thunder and the lightning, came the paleface; and he laid the forest low before him, and he drove my people westward, for the face of the Manitou was turned in anger from his children. Then we turned

our faces westward, towards the land of the setting sun, and the regions of the Home-Wind, and we said–

"'Here we will hunt the red deer and the beaver, and from these clear streams we will take the sturgeon and the salmon, and here, when the Manitou calls us, we will die, where we see not the smoke of the paleface, nor hear the sound of his axe.' Was it well then, chief, to bring hither the children of the East Wind?"

The old man ceased speaking and sank down once more upon the rude log that served as a dais, and the silence became even yet more intense when the White Eagle rose again and said–

"Once a mighty paleface came to the lodge of Keneu. Hungry and weary, he came from the land of Wabun, driven here by the cruel laws of his people, and he brought to us the thunder and the lightning, and he taught my people knowledge and wisdom from the sacred writings in the shining land of Wabun. He became the brother and the friend of the red man, and we taught him to hunt the moose and the deer and the beaver, and the Great Sagamore loved him, and gave him a place at the council fire of my people."

"He is the friend of Keneu, and since many moons his lodge stands empty; but who are these? Are they the children of Miquon?" abruptly asked the aged chief, "or the children of the Canadas?"

"They are the children of the Yengeese, and they raised their hands to help the Eagle when his wings were pinioned by the French of the Canadas, and the red man forgets not his friends, when his fetters are freed, else would the Manitou be angry. They are my brothers, and the white blood has been washed from their veins. Will the great father turn them from his lodge?"

This speech produced a wonderful transformation in the faces of all who heard it, and when several other warriors had spoken of the prowess and courage of Red Feather and Black Hawk, a gentler look came over the Sagamore's face as he spoke.

"It is well!" he said. "The Wacondah has willed it. They shall dwell in the lodges of the Iroquois, and my young men shall teach them to hunt the swift deer and the beaver." Then the council broke up, and the men repaired to their wigwams.

This formal introduction over, the youths were shown to a lodge, next the one that awaited the return of the paleface hunter just referred to, and during the weeks and months of their sojourn amongst the tribe they were treated with all the respect and esteem that belonged to an Indian brave. The war hatchet had been buried for a while, so they joined the hunting-parties that often scoured the forests, and they soon became expert in the arts and crafts of these children of the forest, until each could handle a canoe, shoot the rapids and hunt the deer

like a true Indian.

"Come with me, my paleface brothers," said White Eagle one day, just before the first snow of winter. "Come with me and I will show you how the Manitou provides for his red children."

So they took their canoes and paddled all day, and then next day they carried their canoes over a portage until they reached the sweet waters of the Tioga River. As soon as the sun had gone down the chief took a pine torch and held it, lighted, over the stream. Almost immediately a dozen fine salmon, attracted by the torch, came to the very edge of the stream. Then a fire was kindled close to the bank, and immediately the river seemed full of living creatures of the finny tribe.

"Look! What a glorious sight!" exclaimed Jamie; "the water is alive with fish." And it was true, for, attracted by the huge blaze, they came tumbling over each other, leaping out of the water by dozens, until the whole surface glowed and shimmered, green and red and purple.

Then the Indians who had accompanied them in order to get a supply for the tribe, entered the water, and with long spears made of hard wood, something after the fashion of a trident, speared and hooked the salmon to their heart's content.

As the youths stood spellbound, gazing at this almost miraculous sight, the chief tapped them on the shoulder and said–

"Does the Manitou fill the rivers of the palefaces with fish and their forests with furs?"

"We have never seen such plenty, chief, in the land of the palefaces. Very often if a man takes a fish from a stream, or a deer from the forest, he is sent to prison and sometimes put to death."

"Humph!" said the chief in a tone of surprise. "Now I know why the paleface comes over the Salt Water to the hunting-grounds of his red brother."

The lads were so dumfounded by this unusual sight that their thoughts turned instinctively to that little burn that sang its way down through a wood-lined vale far away in another land, where to land a single fish was a heinous crime, and yet how they loved that little spot, now so far away; but the voice of the chief awoke them from their reverie, saying–

"Come, my brothers, and fill your canoe with the gifts of the Manitou."

They needed no second bidding, and the next minute they, too, were enjoying the magnificent sport. Very soon all the canoes were filled, and then after a hearty supper of fresh salmon, the fish were sorted, dressed and prepared for

drying, after which they were carried home for the winter's supply.

CHAPTER XIII
THE MOCCASIN PRINT IN THE FOREST

During their stay amongst the Iroquois, which had now extended over rather more than a year, the two English youths had gained the esteem and friendship of two young Indians, both the sons of the White Eagle. Their names were respectively "Young Eagle" and "Swift Arrow."

The former was a strong and supple youth of seventeen, sturdy as an oak, but as straight as a cedar. His brother, who was a year younger, had gained his title of "Swift Arrow" because he was so fleet of foot that he could overtake the swiftest deer of the forest with comparative ease. Both inherited much of the courage and fearlessness of their sire.

These four companions spent much of their time, now that the summer had come again, in hunting and fishing, often staying for weeks together in the fastnesses of the forest. They became well-nigh inseparable. Many were the adventures and escapades, and many the dangers, too, that they braved in each other's company.

Once, in descending the rapids of a neighbouring stream, their canoe had struck a rock which capsized her and hurled all the occupants into the boiling surf. This was nothing unusual, but they were expert swimmers, and immediately struck out for the bank. Arrived there, the Young Eagle missed one of his paleface friends. It was Jack, who had struck the rock in falling and was rendered unconscious, and carried away down the stream. The other two, exhausted with their desperate struggle in the rapids, were hardly able to reach the shore; but Young Eagle, arriving there first, and seeing the unfortunate youth being carried away, immediately leapt into the boiling surf, and succeeded, after a desperate struggle, in saving Jack from drowning.

This brave, unselfish act Jack was able to repay the week afterwards, for in pursuing a wounded bear too keenly Young Eagle had the misfortune to lose his footing, and when he attempted to rise the bear was just in the act of tearing him to pieces in its mad wounded frenzy; when Jack, heedless of the danger which he himself ran, rushed into the very "hug" of the wounded bear, and plunged his long hunting-knife into its heart. The bear rolled over upon them both, but the

last wound proved fatal, and the huge monster lay still in death.

A dozen incidents of this nature had only cemented the ties which bound these friends together, and the English youths could scarcely bear to think of that near future when they must part from their red brothers, for much as they loved the forest, they felt somehow that their life was not to end here, and their desire to help their country, either on land or sea, during the present war with the French, which, though it had commenced on the continent of Europe, and had been continued on the high seas, had yet had its echo in the forests and backwoods of the North American Colonies, and, indeed, was destined to have its end there.

Once, during the latter part of the summer of the year 1759, they had been absent from their lodges for several weeks, hunting the shaggy brown bear, the jaguar, the fox, and the wolf, for their skins, in that part of the forest which stretched far away from the head waters of their own streams to the Mohawk River, when one afternoon they suddenly struck a fresh trail, which showed the prints of moccasined feet.

"Ugh!" exclaimed the Young Eagle, who was the first to discover them.

"What is the matter? Is it the trail of an enemy or a friend?" demanded Jack. "By your demeanour I should say that you've struck the trail of a serpent."

"I like it not," merely remarked the Indian youth.

All four of them now got down to the work of examining the trail. Every bit of turf, every leaf or broken twig was carefully examined. Then they cautiously followed the trail, with bent figures and cocked rifles. At any moment they might be ambushed, if it should prove to be an enemy that had passed that way.

"Why do you suspect that it is an enemy, when we are so near the hunting-grounds of the Oneidas and the Mohicans?" asked Red Feather.

"Look! This no Iroquois moccasin," said the Young Eagle, stooping to pick up a worn-out, discarded moccasin, worked with beads after the pattern of the French Indians.

They clustered round this piece of evidence, which seemed incontestable, for a rude attempt had been made to work even the Lilies of France on the discarded footgear.

When they had finished their scrutiny of this moccasin, one word broke from all their lips–

"Algonquins!"

But what were the fiends doing here, so far from the River of Canada? And how many of them had come from across the lakes?

These were the questions they set themselves to settle next, as they continued their keen search for any little trifle which might help to explain these things, for to the Indian the forest is an open book, and every twig and leaf may

be a written page.

They followed the trail cautiously for another quarter of an hour, until they came to a spot where the footprints showed more deeply in the soft black earth, and after another careful examination, Swift Arrow declared that there were at least fifteen or twenty of the enemy, and that they must be a war party, out for scalps, and to harass the enemies of the Canadas.

"Look! This is not an Algonquin moccasin that has left this mark," said Red Feather, who for some minutes had been examining a footprint that was both broader and longer than the rest, and also of a different pattern. "Here, get down to it, Eagle, and examine it for yourself."

The young chief did as he was requested, and measured the print with the palm of his hand, and compared it with the others.

"You see, the heel mark is deeper than any of the other prints, as though the man had walked like this—-" and here Jamie imitated the carriage of a man who plants his heels firmly on the ground when he walks.

"Ugh!" exclaimed the Eagle, rising from the ground. "My paleface brother is right. 'Tis not the moccasin of an Indian at all."

"Not an Indian?"

"No!"

"Who, then, can it be?"

"'Tis the moccasin of a paleface that has left that mark!"

"A paleface?" exclaimed the English youths, raising their voices above a whisper, for the first time since the trail had been discovered.

"Then it must be a French officer who is in command of the party!" and this seemed to all of them the solution of the problem.

The trail was a fresh one, too, and the enemy could not be far away, so they immediately held a council of war, to decide what had best be done. But the sun had set and it was almost dark, and they were compelled to camp in a little bower near by, where the overhanging trees afforded them a secluded spot, not easy for an enemy to find.

They did not light a fire, lest it should discover their position to the enemy. In silence they ate their evening meal, which consisted of a little dried venison. Then they resolved to wait till morning before they followed the trail further.

"Let my paleface brothers sleep, and Young Eagle and Swift Arrow will watch," said the young chief.

"That's not quite fair," said Jamie, "for you'll never wake us till sunrise, and you must be just as much fatigued as we are, for you did more than your share in carrying the canoes at the portage."

"Young Eagle all ears and eyes when an enemy is near. He feels not fatigue. Let my brothers sleep."

The English youths had to give way, for they had to confess that though they had learnt many things during their sojourn amongst the Iroquois, yet their sense of alertness and keenness of perception could in no wise be matched against these children of the forest. Soon, therefore, the young palefaces were fast asleep upon a bed of leaves and spruce branches, unconscious of the dangers that surrounded them.

They had been asleep perhaps for an hour, when the cry of a night-hawk, followed by the howl of a coyote, was heard in the distance. On hearing these the Young Eagle gave a significant look at Swift Arrow, and without speaking a word, the latter arose, quietly pushed aside the branches, and disappeared into the forest in the direction of the sounds.

It was quite dark now, for there was no moon, and the stars showed but faintly through the thick foliage of the trees overhead.

An hour passed–two hours–but the Indian youth returned not. Had he scented danger? Was the enemy lurking near? Then why did he not return? Surely nothing had happened to him. The young chief noticed that Jamie's sleep began to be troubled. Once or twice he had murmured something in his sleep, and Young Eagle had touched his lips, as if to close them, lest the sounds might betray them.

"The Wacondah is speaking to my paleface brother," said the young chief inwardly, "for his sleep is still troubled."

The lad's slumbers were indeed troubled, and yet 'twas only a dream, that he had often dreamt before. His brain had often been puzzled as to why this particular dream should recur to him so often. He dreamt that he was a little bairn again, far away across the Big Salt Lake, in the Homeland; and that a rough but kindly man took him on his knee, and spoke to him in tones of melting tenderness. "Poor motherless bairn!" he said, and the tears rained down his rough face. But the little child, with sunshine in his bonny face, and laughter in his bright blue eyes, crowed and chuckled, and pulled the rough man's beard.

It was at this point that Young Eagle had placed his hand on the lips of his sleeping companion, causing him to start, and to open his eyes for an instant, but he quickly closed them again.

Then his dream continued, but it changed suddenly. Side by side with Jack, and his two dusky companions, he ranged the forest, hunting the bear, and trapping the beaver in his lodges of bark and logs, when suddenly they came upon an Indian camp in a little clearing of the forest, and there with his back to an elm-tree, tied hand and foot, was an old paleface hunter, undergoing torture at the hands of a band of cruel red men.

Bravely he suffered it all, like a hero, and not a cry of pain escaped his lips. A dozen arrows, knives and hatchets pierced the tree about his head and face,

and although the *coup de grâce* had not been given, yet the blood flowed freely from several wounds. His lips were compressed, and not a groan escaped them, but inwardly he prayed to God that death might bring him release from this slow and cruel torture.

A fierce-looking chief taunted him with being a paleface snake, and a Yengeese, and urged his warriors to prolong the torture.

"Let us see if a cursed Yengeese has red blood in his veins, or whether he has the heart of a Delaware," he cried.

"Your tongue is forked, Muskrat, and your warriors tremble at the sight of a paleface, so that their knives cannot find his heart!" cried the hunter, in the hope of urging his enemies to end his torture by a fatal blow.

"My young men wish to know if a Yengeese can bear pain like a red warrior."

"Your young men are squaws! Go tell your Canada Father to find them petticoats!"

This stinging insult brought a shower of tomahawks and knives about his head. One of them pierced his arm, and pinioned it to the tree, but he bore the pain bravely, and smiling grimly back upon his captors, said–

"Let your young men come nearer, chief, so that a paleface may show them where lies his heart, for they are weak and unsteady with the fire-water of the Canadas, and they miss their mark."

The chief lifted up his hand, and said–

"The Great Spirit has given the paleface the heart of a red man, so that he fears not the hatchet and the tomahawk. Let us see if he fears the spirit of the flames."

A shout of hellish delight greeted this suggestion of their leader, and the Indians scattered into the forest to collect brushwood and dead timber, for an Indian delights in prolonging the torture of his prisoner.

Quickly the faggots were piled at the feet of the hunter, and the match was about to be applied, when the intense agony and suspense of the moment burst open the gates of slumber, and Jamie opened his eyes, and awoke suddenly.

The first faint tinge of dawn was lighting up the eastern horizon. He sprang to his feet, immensely relieved, and murmuring to himself–

"Thank God! 'Twas only a dream, then! And yet it was the same face that I have seen so often in my dreams. What can it mean?"

Then he turned and beheld the Young Eagle and the sleeping form of Black Hawk, but Swift Arrow was missing. He forgot his troubled sleep in an instant when he remembered that Young Eagle had watched with sleepless vigilance throughout the whole night, and said–

"My red brother is too kind. He should have called me, and let me watch, while he slept."

”Hist!” remarked the other, rising suddenly, and holding up a finger to indicate silence, as a slight rustle was heard amongst the bushes a few yards away. Both instinctively grasped their rifles, and stood ready for whatever foe might suddenly appear.

The branches parted, and Swift Arrow stepped quietly into the opening. This brave youth had spent the night in the forest, sometimes lying still as a log, at other times crawling and wriggling like a snake, or crouching like a panther. He had discovered the scouts of a cruel enemy, within ten arrow-flights of their present abode. He had done more.

He had succeeded in passing the scouts unobserved, and in penetrating to the very edge of the hostile camp. His unsleeping vigilance had saved the lives of his comrades, and he had even covered up his own tracks in returning to the camp, by taking a circuitous route and wading for some distance in the bed of a little stream, and had so well timed his efforts that he reached the camping-ground just as dawn was breaking.

Beyond the customary ”Ugh!” he remained silent; though even Jack, who had now awakened, could see that he had something of importance to communicate, but he seemed already possessed of all the restraint of his tribe, and quietly sat down with the rest to a breakfast, which consisted of a little pemmican and hominy, which was soon finished.

”My brother has seen an enemy?” said Young Eagle, when the meal was over.

”Ugh!” replied Swift Arrow, as though he considered the news of little importance and scarcely worth the telling.

”Swift Arrow will tell us what he has seen?” said Jack, and then the young warrior spoke briefly and as follows–

”Ten arrow-flights towards the sun-rising is an Algonquin camp, of twenty-four braves–and one prisoner....”

”And the prisoner? Who–what is he?” asked Jamie, remembering his dream.

”It is the great paleface hunter, the friend of White Eagle.”

CHAPTER XIV
SWIFT ARROW DISAPPEARS

”The paleface hunter, did my brother say? Is he the prisoner?” exclaimed Jamie, leaping to his feet, trembling with suppressed excitement.

”Hist! my brother forgets that an enemy is near!” said Young Eagle, raising his finger to request caution.

At this moment, after several cabalistic signs, Swift Arrow left the camp and quietly disappeared in the forest, and Jamie, expressing regret at permitting his feelings to gain the mastery over him at such a moment, resumed his seat on the ground.

”Whither away, Swift Arrow?” called Jack softly, as the Indian youth glided past him, but he either did not hear him, or heeded not his question.

”Swift Arrow has gone to the wigwams of the White Eagle, to say that his friend is in the hands of the Algonquins,” said the Young Eagle, who had now assumed all the gravity and demeanour of an Iroquois chief.

”Phew! That means a journey of sixty miles at least. Rather a long step for a lad, who hunted all day yesterday and scouted all last night. When will he get there?”

”When the sun touches the tree-tops to-morrow White Eagle will know!” replied the young chief.

”Then he will come with all the warriors who are not away hunting, and fight the Algonquins?” asked Jamie.

”Ugh!” said the Indian, signifying yes.

”Perhaps that may be too late to save the paleface. I fear they will have put him to death,” said Jamie gloomily. ”Cannot we go and save him now?”

”Why, what’s the matter, old chap? You seem very despondent,” said Jack, as his comrade heaved a sigh deep enough to break his heart. ”Do you despair of your life, that you want to throw it away so cheaply? If we are discovered by yonder crew, our lives are not worth a toss, and our scalps will be carried to the Canada lodges.”

”The Wacondah has spoken to my brother, and his heart is heavy,” said the Indian, looking straight at Red Feather with his piercing eyes.

”What is it, Jamie? Out with it. We agreed that there should be no secrets between us,” said Jack, half in jest and half in earnest.

”Jack,” said his friend solemnly, ”I dreamt last night that I saw this paleface hunter in the clutches of the Algonquins. He was bound to a tree, and they were practising upon him every conceivable torture that even a red devil can invent. I saw him pierced and wounded, and the blood flowing freely from his head and face. Then, having tormented him to the utmost bounds, and finding that his brave heart quailed not beneath it all, they brought faggots and brushwood and kindled them at his feet. They were going to burn him to death, yes, roast him alive, while they danced around him in mad delight. But just as they kindled the

fire, and my heart was bursting with grief and agony, because I was unable to help, I awoke, for I could bear it no longer. Then Swift Arrow returned and told what he himself had seen, but I believe that I saw even more than he did, for he saw not the tortures–and–and–I fear that we shall be too late when the chief arrives with his braves. That is why I wished to go straight to the camp now, and what is more, the face of that hunter is as familiar to me as your own, that is by night, for I have often dreamt of him before, but by daylight his features become indistinct, and I cannot recall his face. So now that is why my heart is so heavy! Cannot we do anything to save him?"

This last question was addressed to the young chief, who had been a serious listener to all that Jamie had just said, for the Indians take dreams very seriously, and treat them as messages from the Manitou.

"The Grey Badger is a great hunter, and his rifle has often left its mark upon the Algonquins, as well as the bear and the panther. Red men no kill him quickly. He is too great a prize. They will keep him till the new moon, and then kill him," replied the Indian.

"When is the new moon?" asked Red Feather hastily.

"Two days!"

"And when will our friends arrive?"

The young chief made the circle of the sun's course twice, and then pointed to the zenith.

"Then there is just a chance that we may be able to save him after all."

"Yes. For why should the Wacondah speak a lie?" said the Indian earnestly.

"What do you mean? I don't understand you!"

"Why, Jamie, it's as clear as noon-day what he means. He says, 'Why should the Wacondah speak a lie?' That is, if the Great Spirit has put it into your heart to save this paleface hunter, why should he withhold the means to do it, when He is all-powerful? The lad's faith in his God is greater than your own. So cheer up, and we'll save him yet, or we'll know the reason why."

"Young Eagle, I thank you. You have lifted a load from my heart, and your faith is greater than mine, though I have been bred in a Christian country," said Jamie.

"Ugh! My paleface brother has often told me of the sacred writings in the land of the sun-rising, and how the Great Spirit has spoken to his white children; why, then, should he disbelieve the words of the Wacondah?"

This conversation was suddenly interrupted by an Indian whoop, which seemed to come from the distant camp.

"What can that mean? Listen! There it comes again," said Jack. This time it was repeated from several quarters.

"It simply means that they have been joined by another party of their

friends," said the Indian.

"What can they be doing so far away from their own hunting-grounds?"

"Depend upon it, they are here for no good. They're out for scalps, and to harass their inveterate foes, the Iroquois, and any Yengeese woodsmen they can lay hands upon."

"Must we remain here, like rats in a hole, Young Eagle? Is there nothing that we can do?" said Jack.

"Yes! We must watch all their movements, and if they move, follow them, leaving a broad trail that White Eagle can follow in the dark."

"Lead the way, then, Eagle, and we'll follow your trail."

Then they crept stealthily from their lair, and cautiously advanced through the tangled forest, in the direction of the camp, for now that the enemy were excited by the arrival of their allies perhaps they would be a little off their guard.

Soon they struck the trail that they had seen on the previous evening, and followed it carefully; sometimes creeping on their hands and knees, crawling through the brushwood, watching furtively the while for any signs of the outlying scouts who were sure to be guarding the camp.

Suddenly the hiss of a serpent caused them to start. It came from the direction of the young Indian, who was but a few paces in advance, and was the signal for them to halt and lie still. Immediately they became as dead logs, hugging the ground.

Had the Eagle seen the first scout?

Yes, surely! What was that dark object creeping through the forest, not fifty yards away? Was it not the skulking form of a redskin prowling about like a wolf, and all the while coming nearer and nearer. He had evidently not seen them as yet, for he still continued to approach, but he seemed so wary and so alert that if he continued he must discover them within another minute. Jamie covered him with his rifle, but he was too wise to shoot, unless all other measures failed, as the crack of a rifle so near the camp would alarm the whole party and bring the Algonquins upon them in a moment.

Slowly, slowly the seconds passed, and each one seemed in itself an age. They scarcely dared to breathe, lest the slightest sound or movement should attract the attention of the scout.

He was only ten paces from the young chief when he halted, as though his suspicions had been aroused. He was looking full in the direction of his enemies, when some fluttering object in a bush, near the Iroquois lad, caught his attention. He would examine that particular bush before giving the alarm, so he advanced cautiously, looking warily around him.

He was a young warrior, perhaps out for his first scalp. How kingly it would be to return to the camp with a scalp at his girdle, and without boasting,

quietly to take his place at the council fire, while all eyes were fixed upon that trophy which he had won, unaided and alone.

The dark-eyed Indian maidens, too–how they would glance at him with love-lit eyes and point out the trophy, and sing of his courage when he returned home. Perhaps these thoughts were in his mind as he approached the bush. One thing, however, he must avoid, that was, creating a false alarm and thereby making himself a laughing-stock amongst his comrades by mistaking a tree or a log for an enemy.

This temerity cost him dear. To reach the bush which had aroused his suspicions, he had to pass within a few feet of Young Eagle. As he did so, the latter made a sudden bound, like a panther springing upon his prey, and cleft his skull with his keen hatchet.

Without a groan even, the Algonquin sank to the ground, and his spirit passed to the hunting-grounds of his people. The youths turned their faces away, whilst the young chief secured his first scalp. Having obtained this trophy, he next dragged the lifeless form of the scout into the forest and hid it away amongst the bushes, lest its discovery should bring down upon them a swarm of hornets, in the shape of the inmates of the neighbouring camp. Then he proudly retraced his steps in the direction of his companions, who were eagerly awaiting his return.

"Was it well done, Young Eagle, to risk all our lives and our chances of saving the hunter for a single scalp?" asked Jamie, who felt somehow that his redskin friend might have left the scalp alone, for the present, at any rate, forgetting in his anxiety to save the paleface that an Indian will go without food willingly for a whole week in order to obtain one scalp.

"Young Eagle is a warrior! He saw only an Algonquin dog!"

"But prudence is a virtue, even in a great warrior!"

"Let him alone, Jamie. For an Indian to leave an enemy's scalp behind is a disgrace, and just as dishonourable as for a paleface to leave his ensign in the hands of the enemy," said Jack.

Their present position was one of great danger, though for the moment the death of the scout had reduced the chances of their being discovered. Nevertheless, their only chance to avoid the enemy was to find a spot where they could lie hidden till dark, for the scout would be sure to be missed shortly, and then a search would be made for him.

A spot was found not twenty yards away, on the edge of a little rivulet that ran through the forest. They, therefore, took a circuitous route to this stream, and then walked cautiously down the bed of the rivulet, so that the water would wash away their footprints in the sandy bottom. Having gained this secluded spot, they were hidden from sight of an approaching enemy, owing to the branches of the willows and alders drooping to the ground and meeting the tangled undergrowth,

and they could yet watch the surrounding forest through the interstices of the branches.

Here they lay hidden during the rest of that day. As the afternoon wore on they several times heard the whoops and yells of the Algonquins, and once they heard the report of a rifle, and Jamie feared that it denoted the end of the paleface prisoner, but the young chief said that that was very unlikely.

This close confinement at length became very irksome, and the youths were so wearied and impatient that it needed all the influence and sagacity of the Indian to urge them to remain till sunset. How wise this counsel was will shortly be seen.

"Hist! What does that mean, Young Eagle?" said Jamie, when rather late in the afternoon a sound very much like the "cawing" of a rook was heard to proceed from a spot scarce a hundred yards away. No answer was given, and the sound was repeated twice; each time it sounded a little nearer.

The Indian did not speak, for he was keenly scrutinising the forest in the direction of the sound, and at the same time unconsciously fingering his tomahawk, while his every sense seemed alert.

"'Tis another scout who seems to expect a reply from his fallen comrade, I fear, Jamie," said Jack, "and he can't understand why he gets no answer."

"Ah! He is becoming suspicious. He is searching for him, and–and–he's coming this way," whispered Jamie.

"Look! I can see him now through the trees. What if he finds his dead comrade? Hist! He's looking this way."

Nearer and nearer came the Algonquin. He was within forty yards now, and within twenty feet of where his companion had been slain. Suddenly he started and a half-smothered exclamation escaped his lips. He was looking at the ground, examining it carefully. He knelt down and carefully removed the turf and leaves, raising his head every few seconds, as though expecting to see his comrade.

Had he discovered a trail, or something worse? He was only thirty feet away from the mangled corpse of the first scout. He was only ten feet away from the spot where the death-blow had been given. It was the trail of his lost comrade that he had discovered, but what next?

It was a moment fraught with intense excitement for the watchers. The issues to these three adventurers were life or death. Once he discovered the truth that was hidden in those bushes, a single call for assistance would fill the forest with blood-thirsty hornets, and all would be lost.

What could be done? He was too far away to be dispatched like his comrade, and a rifle-shot would alarm the camp. Step by step he advanced. Then his eager eyes caught sight of the fresh blood-marks and evidences of the recent

scuffle.

The Indian gazed at the red spots, and followed their trail to the bushes. Then, as his eyes caught sight of the mangled corpse, he uttered a blood-curdling yell that made the dark aisles of the forest resound. At the same instant Jamie's rifle spoke out, and the Indian fell to the ground.

Five seconds had scarcely passed when from the camp there came the answering yell. It was a wild, fierce cry of revenge that brought the whole pack upon their trail.

CHAPTER XV
THE TRAGIC CIRCLE

There was not a moment to lose. The two youths seized their rifles and plunged into the forest.

"This way, Jack. Come!"

"Lead on, quickly!"

Young Eagle remained but a few seconds to take the victim's scalp and to give the defiant war-whoop of the Iroquois, and then he, too, followed in their trail.

On they went. Their only chance of saving their lives now lay in putting as great a distance as possible between themselves and their pursuers, and in keeping up the race till dusk. 'Twas getting dark already, but they stumbled on through the tangled undergrowth, over fallen trunks lying prostrate across their pathway.

Several times they heard the yells of the Algonquins, and once they heard the crack of a rifle, followed by an Iroquois yell.

"Listen! That's Young Eagle's rifle, I'll swear. He's either missed our trail, or he's purposely misled them to give us a chance of getting away."

"Then I fear it's all up with him," cried Jamie, who was a little way in advance. "That second scalp has cost him too dear."

'Twas getting quite dark now, and they were compelled to slacken their pace, partly from sheer exhaustion, and partly because they were constantly being tripped up by ground vines, trailers and fallen trunks.

Once they got separated, and Jamie thought that he heard Jack call him. He halted and listened, but hearing the swish of branches close behind him he

thought that his comrade was following, and continued for another ten minutes, when, coming to a little clearing, he glanced back, but saw no one following.

"Jack!" he called softly. "Where are you?" but no answer came back from the gloom.

Again he called–louder still, but only the cry of the night-raven and the screech of an owl gave reply. Then he retraced his footsteps across the clearing, but he failed even to discover the spot where he had left the forest. Five–ten minutes he remained there, searching for his own trail, but in the darkness he had lost his bearings, and not only Jack, but he himself was lost!–lost!

Endless leagues of trackless forest, of brown tree-trunks, and dark, dank undergrowth, closing in upon him like a thick screen, separated him from the nearest habitation, and even the nearest fort. What was to become of him?

In his despair he threw himself down upon a rough, raised bank that ran part way round the clearing; then he remembered that fancied cry, back there by the swamp, when he had thought for an instant that Jack had called him by name.

"'Twas not fancy, after all!" he murmured. "It was Jack calling for help; it must have been. Perhaps he sank in the swamp, or perhaps the Indians attacked him from the rear suddenly and quietly and he died calling my name."

Then the agony of his soul knew no bounds, for he felt that he had wilfully deserted his comrade, and in his despair he longed to die.

"Ah–to die! That would be easy, if only Jack were here. We have too often faced death together to be afraid, but this wild loneliness unmans me," and here the lad broke down and sobbed in his bitterness.

This weakness, if such it can be called, was of short duration, however, for certain sounds fell upon his ear in the stillness, that told him something or somebody was approaching. A rustling amongst the branches, a heavy but stealthy tread amongst the tangled undergrowth. All this came from the forest not fifty feet away.

There was just enough light to see half-way across the small clearing. His every faculty became alert, and he instinctively raised his rifle, examined its priming, and fixed his eyes at that spot where the object must leave the forest to enter the clearing.

Perhaps it was Jack–at last. Should he call? Better wait and see. Perhaps it was an Indian, though the footfall seemed too heavy. What could it be?

The next instant a shaggy head was thrust out from amongst the bushes, scarce twenty feet away from where he sat, and then a huge brown bear shambled into the clearing, stopping every few yards to raise his snout, and to sniff the air, as though it scented danger.

Jamie's left hand slid down, almost unconsciously, to feel if his hunting-

knife were there, lest his rifle should fail him. The bear caught the movement, quick as it was, and looked suspiciously in the direction of the youth.

Having reached the middle of the clearing, the huge monster reared itself up on its hind legs, and beating the air with its fore-paws, began to advance in the direction of Jamie.

Jamie forgot every other danger in the face of this new one that now threatened. He forgot also all his fears, in his desire to overcome the bear. 'Twas to be a fair fight and no favour, and unless he killed "Bruin," then the beast would kill him.

With steady eye and steady nerve Jamie levelled his rifle, as the bear shambled towards him, uttering a low growl, and preparing to hug his victim in a fatal embrace. The youth knew the vulnerable spot in that thick, shaggy hide, and if he could only place his bullet there it would end the combat, but on a dark night like this could he do it?

He was about to pull the trigger when a strange diversion, entirely unexpected, occurred.

A plumed and painted warrior, from the Algonquin camp, hot upon the trail of the young paleface, quickly entered the clearing and almost rushed into the embrace of the huge monster. Discovering his mistake, and uttering a sudden exclamation of horror, the warrior fell back in dismay, and dashed into the forest, followed by Bruin, who left his erstwhile enemy and suffered him to escape. The branches closed upon the bear and the Indian, and they were hidden from sight.

"Thank God I didn't fire!" exclaimed Jamie, as he slipped quietly into the forest in another direction, thanking Heaven for this double escape, and taking hope, for he felt that God had not deserted him, and would somehow deliver him from his still terrible plight.

On he stumbled in the darkness, till he came to a little stream. Here he stooped to quench his burning thirst and to bathe his face, for he was fevered with excitement, after the quick transitions of feeling he had undergone since they alarmed the camp.

Then he followed the path of the brook some little way, hiding the trail of his moccasins in the bed of the stream, for unlike the soft, oozy mould of the forest the water yields no secret. Then, after a while, he struck into the forest again. Forward he went, lest the murdering Algonquins should discover his trail once more, and a tomahawk end his career. Once or twice he thought he heard the stealthy tread of an Indian behind him, but he stayed not in his fierce flight.

The moon was rising now, and it was becoming much lighter, and Jamie was able to make more rapid progress; but he was becoming exhausted, and felt that he must stop soon, when suddenly he noticed that the giant pines and firs were becoming fewer and fewer, and the undergrowth less tangled.

A tiny red glow–the glow of a camp-fire, appeared through the trees, and the next moment he halted breathlessly on the outskirts of a deserted camp.

Now at length help is at hand, he thought, and he prepared to enter the place.

Horror of horrors! It was the same camp from which he had so blindly fled two hours before. Some malevolent deity had led his bewildered footsteps in a tragic circle, a mistake not uncommon, even for experienced travellers, who crossed the forest hastily, and without due precaution.

Where was now the Providence that had guided his footsteps? He almost cursed his ill-luck and his bad fortune, and yet, as kindly fate would have it, this was the best thing that could have happened to him.

He had indeed been guided by Providence, for while both Jack and Young Eagle had been made prisoners, Jamie, by walking up the watercourse, and unconsciously doubling back upon the deserted camp, had thrown even the quick-witted Algonquins off the scent, who never suspected such cunning in a paleface.

I have said that the camp was deserted, although the fire still burned, and the evening meal remained untouched, for at the first sound of that fatal cry from the woods every inmate of the camp, except the paleface prisoner, started in pursuit of the daring enemy who had scalped their warrior. In this sudden call to arms the prisoner was for a while forgotten, as we shall shortly see.

Jamie's heart sank with dismay as he beheld the fatal error he had made. Wearied and exhausted, he was ready to sink and perish, but even thus a new feeling of terror seized him, the terror of the returning Algonquins. What if they discovered him here?

Once more he plunged into the thicket, for a strange new strength had come to him, but it was the strength of despair, occasioned by fear.

Torn, lacerated and bleeding, his hair dishevelled, and his clothes in tatters, he rushed madly away from the spot. Whither he went he cared not. Anywhere–away from that terrible camp. He rushed blindly on, until at the end of half-an-hour he sank down, utterly exhausted, beneath the friendly shelter of an elm-tree, and careless now whether the wild beasts or the Algonquins tracked him to his doom.

His brain reeled; his heart beat wildly, and he swooned away rather than sank into sleep; but soon his breathing became more regular, and his slumber more peaceful.

The moon rose above the topmost branches, climbed to the meridian, and sank once more amongst the pines. Then the golden orb of day unbarred his eastern shutters, tinged the far horizon with saffron and yellow, and flooded the landscape of forest, and river, and lake, with gold, but still the youth slept on. Would he never awake?

At length, when the sun was high above the tree-tops, Jamie stretched himself, then opened his eyes. As he did so his first gaze fell upon a man, somewhat past middle-age, but still strong and sturdy. He was in the garb of a hunter, for he wore a hair-fringed hunting-shirt, moccasins, and Indian leggings, while on his head was a beaver cap.

Jamie started, but felt relieved when he saw it was no redskin that bent over him.

This man sat upon a fallen tree-trunk, against which leaned his rifle also. His arms were folded across his broad chest, and while he vigorously puffed wreaths of smoke from his pipe, he was complacently looking at the lad, as though he had been keeping watch.

"The same face—-" murmured Jamie. "It is–it must be–the great paleface hunter!"

CHAPTER XVI
THE PALEFACE HUNTER

Jamie half rose from the ground, rubbed his eyes, and appeared surprised and mystified at this unexpected turn of events.

"Am I still dreaming?" he wondered. "I have seen this man many a time in my dreams, but never, to my knowledge, have I seen him before in the flesh. Who can he be, that he thus haunts me, asleep and awake?"

"So you've woke up at last, youngster! I was beginning to fear that you might never wake again," said the stranger, in a kindly and not unfamiliar voice that awoke the echoes of memory.

"Then you've been watching over me? Guarding me, perhaps, whilst I slept?"

The stranger nodded assent.

"Who are you? Tell me your name, that I may thank you, for friends are not too numerous hereabouts, and I have already lost two comrades since I came on this trail. Tell me who you are, if you please?" for the lad saw by the stranger's kindly manner, his honest, sunburnt face, and his clear but piercing eyes, that he was no enemy.

"My real name doesn't matter, my lad, though I am well known in these parts, for the Indians on this side the lakes know me for a trapper, and they call

me the 'Paleface Hunter,' and sometimes the 'Grey Badger.'

"But how came you here?"

"This is my home–this forest! I have lived here for fifteen years," said the trapper, indicating the wide stretch of forest land with a broad sweep of his hand.

"And how did you happen to find me, just when I needed a friend, too? When I sank down last night I never expected to see the light of another sun."

"I stumbled across you here at dawn. You were fast asleep, and I saw by your torn clothes and the scratches and flesh wounds on your hands and face that the Indians had been hot on your trail. I half feared to find your scalp-lock missing, but when I examined you I found that you were living, but so exhausted and dead-beat that to wake you up might finish you, so I just carried you in here, covered up your trail, and waited for you to awake."

"And for four hours," replied Jamie softly, and with tears in his voice–"for four hours, since dawn, you have watched over me like a child in a cradle, though any moment the Algonquins might have discovered your trail."

"Tut! tut! my lad! That's nothing—-"

"Paleface–if I may so call you–you have saved my life, and I thank you with all my heart, though last night, when I lost my best friend, I cursed my fate and wished to die."

"'Tis more likely you who have saved my life."

"How so?"

"Was it you who fired that shot last evening just before sunset?"

"Which shot?"

"The one that alarmed the camp!";

"You mean when the scout was—-"

"Scalped."

"Yes, I fired it."

"Who took the scalp? I reckon that is not your gift, my lad."

Jamie shuddered at the remembrance, and said, "No. I should hope not."

"Then you were not alone? Who was the redskin that was with you?"

"An Iroquois youth, named 'Young Eagle.'"

"The son of White Eagle, the great chief?"

"The same. There was another also–a young paleface friend of mine. We lost each other in the forest, after dark, when the redskins were hot on our trail. After that I missed my way, and wandered back to the camp in mistake. Then, filled with terror and despair, I plunged madly back into the forest, until I sank exhausted, where you found me; but tell me, trapper, how did I save your life? for 'tis all a mystery to me."

"When you fired that shot at sunset, I was in a tight corner, for I was a prisoner in the Algonquin camp. Red Wolf, the Algonquin chief, is a great enemy

of mine. Long he has tried to trap me, but I have always been able to circumvent him. This time he took me unawares. He and six of his braves pounced upon me suddenly in the forest three days ago, when I was splitting a few logs for my fire, and before I had a chance to defend myself I was tied up."

"And they tortured you, did they not?" asked Jamie.

"See here what the fiends did!" and the hunter showed a dozen scars and open wounds that had not yet healed.

"The monsters! How did you escape?"

"You know their custom of torturing their prisoners from sunset till dawn."

"Yes."

"Well, after all this they made a fire, and after a few more tortures I believe the varmint would have burnt me to death, for one fiend had made an iron red-hot, with which to sear and brand me, when suddenly the half-uttered yell of their scout, followed by the crack of your rifle, burst upon their ears."

"Yes! yes! What happened then?" asked Jamie impatiently.

"Why, every man Jack of them seized their rifles and tomahawks, and bolted out of the camp to the help of the scout, leaving me alone, bound hand and foot to a tree."

"And how did you free yourself?"

"Why, the scamp who had been threatening to brand me, when he bolted with the rest, dropped the hot iron at my feet, so that it burnt this hole in my moccasin. See here. The opportunity was too good to be lost, so I wriggled and shuffled my feet till the iron came in contact with the lowest thong. It was burnt through in less than a minute, and in another five minutes I was free."

"That was worthy of a trapper and a frontiersman. The implement of torture was a blessing in disguise."

"I didn't remain long in the camp, I can tell you, for at any moment the redskins might have returned, and there is no doubt that they would have scalped me on the spot, in revenge for what the Young Eagle had done. I was unable to walk for a few minutes, so tightly had they bound me; but I rubbed and chafed my limbs till the circulation was restored, and then I seized my rifle and knife and walked off. At dawn I stumbled across you, and–here we are; a match for a dozen Indians yet, let them come when they will," and the trapper laughed silently.

"Paleface, I'm glad to have met you," said Jamie, rising from the ground and extending his hand to his new friend. "I have had so many unhappy experiences during the past twenty-four hours, that I had begun to doubt the Providence which has delivered me so often, but I shall never doubt again, for God has never failed me yet."

There was something very much like a tear that trickled down the rough face of the trapper as he grasped the extended hand and said, in quiet but earnest

tones–

"He never will fail you–if you trust Him."

"If only my two comrades were alive I should be the happiest creature in all this wide forest."

"They are both alive."

"What!" exclaimed the lad. "Both alive? How do you know that?"

"Before dawn I heard the Indians return to camp, and their yells of triumph told me that they had either brought in prisoners or scalps. Being anxious to know whether their prisoners were Indians or Yengeese, I crept back again to the edge of the camp."

"Indeed!" interposed Jamie, interrupting the narrative. "Weren't you afraid of being captured again?"

"Tut! tut! He'll be a smart Indian who can catch an old trapper twice."

"Well, what did you discover?"

"Before I reached the spot I heard a fierce yell of anger. That I knew to be caused by the discovery that I had escaped. When at last I reached a little rising ground overlooking the camp, where the shrub was very thick, I saw two prisoners tied to the self-same tree to which I had been tied but a few hours before."

"What were they like?"

"One was an Indian youth. I knew him at once. He was the eldest son of White Eagle, and the other was a stranger to me. He was a paleface in the garb of an Indian hunter, and he must have been your companion. This only I discovered, for my stay was a brief one, and the reason why I have remained in the vicinity of the Algonquins is because I have been hopeful that an opportunity will occur to save them, else they will either be tortured to death, or carried to the Canada lodges."

"You fill me with joy and with hope, trapper. We must and will save them! Nothing shall prevent us!" exclaimed Jamie, who was overjoyed at this good news.

"If only we had White Eagle and twenty of his Iroquois braves here we might do something, before it is too late."

"White Eagle will be here with some of his warriors by noon to-morrow," replied the lad.

"What's that you say? Who has gone for him?"

"Swift Arrow. We dispatched him at dawn yesterday, as soon as we found that you were a prisoner." And then Jamie told the old man all he knew–how they had struck the trail of the Algonquins, how the Indian lad had scouted all night, and had crept up to the enemy's camp, and reported that they held as a prisoner a great paleface hunter, who was the friend of White Eagle, and how Swift Arrow

had departed for assistance. He told all, except his dream.

The hunter was bewildered when he heard all this, but merely remarked–

"Swift Arrow. I know the lad. He has the swiftest foot in all the Six Nations, and he will bring the warriors back, but whether they will arrive in time is another matter. And now there is something for us to do."

"What can we do, trapper? Speak, for I am ready. Inaction alone is inglorious, while my comrades are in the hands of those fiends. What can we do?"

"We must hold the trail till the chief comes up. The Algonquins are pretty sure to clear off quickly, for they are in the hunting-grounds of the Iroquois, and my escape will have hurried their departure. Probably they are already preparing to move. Let us go. But stay, you are famished, and cannot stand a long journey. We must have breakfast, and then we will hasten, lest the game should slip through our hands."

They made a hasty breakfast of some dried venison and half-cooked hominy, which the trapper bad snatched from a cooking-pot when he hurried away from the deserted camp; then feeling much refreshed by this rude but welcome meal, they shouldered their rifles and departed in the direction of the camp.

They cautiously continued their way through the forest, sometimes wading in narrow streams in order to hide their trail; sometimes crawling on all fours through the dense undergrowth, till they reached the outskirts of the camp.

Not a word was spoken during this tedious journey, which took upwards of an hour, lest a solitary sentinel should discover their approach. Once, indeed, they passed within a hundred feet of a scout, without even raising his suspicions. At length they paused for a moment to rest at the bottom of a little densely-wooded hillock, scarce an arrow-flight from the camp. They were entirely hidden in the thick shrub, and were so close to the enemy that they could hear the voices of the Indians, and see the blue smoke curling up from their fire, though the fire itself they could not see, because of the little brow or hillock that intervened.

Then they crawled from their hiding-place, through the brush to the top of the brow, and looked down upon the encampment. They doffed their beaver caps, and only permitted their eyes to peep for an instant at the scene below, lest the sharp glance of a warrior should chance to see them, but what a thrill came to Jamie's heart!

Thirty or forty braves were standing or lying about, some of them in little groups occasionally pointing to the forest. Others were examining their rifles and knives, as though expecting to be attacked. A few were hanging over the remains of a feast, the remnants of a deer. But what remained longest in Jamie's memory, during that brief glance, and excited his feelings most, was the sight of his two comrades bound to a huge tree near the middle of the camp. Whether they had already suffered torture or not, or were merely waiting helplessly until

such time as pleased their captors to commence their vile and fiendish practices, he knew not; but his own feelings were roused to such a pitch of fury by the sight that it needed all his strength of will to command his feelings, and to restrain his desire to rush forward and liberate the prisoners.

Just at that moment a hand was placed upon his shoulder, and a voice whispered–

"Come!"

He turned and followed the trapper quietly until they were once more ensconced in their late hiding-place.

They were not a moment too soon, for scarcely had they hidden themselves when a scout came along, peering amongst the trees and bushes, as though expecting to find an enemy behind every cover. Suddenly he stopped almost opposite to them, and looked suspiciously at the ground.

Something unusual had evidently attracted his attention. What was it? He was within a few feet of their trail. Had he discovered it? It was a critical moment for the two palefaces. A single movement, however slight, would betray them. It was dangerous to breathe even, or to stir an inch, for the crackling of a twig would have been fatal. Their very lives hung on a slender thread.

CHAPTER XVII
A BROKEN SCALPING-KNIFE

It was a period of awful suspense, and the two palefaces held their breath for a moment as they watched the scout keenly.

What was it that had attracted the attention of the Algonquin?

He stooped down and picked up something that lay upon the ground. It was a broken scalping-knife that had evidently been dropped or lost in some scuffle long, long ago, for it was thick with rust. He gazed at it for some seconds, turning it round, then flung it away into the forest. The next instant he ascended the hillock and disappeared, entering the camp.

Fortune had once more favoured Jamie and his friend, for the discovery of the scalping-knife had both arrested and deflected the course of the scout, when he was only a few feet away from the fresh trail of the two palefaces. Had he continued on his original course, he could scarcely have failed to discover the prints of their moccasins, and a very awkward situation would have arisen. The

alarm once given, fifty braves would have been upon them within a minute.

The sound of voices now reached them more frequently, and it was evident from the commotion that was going on that some movement was imminent. Once the piercing cry of the hawk was heard to come from over the hillock.

"They're moving the camp, and that's the signal for the scouts to draw in. They'll be gone in half-an-hour," whispered the hunter.

"Hadn't we better prepare to follow?" said Jamie.

"No. We shall gain nothing by being too eager. Besides, we have still got several incoming scouts in our rear. We must keep closely to cover till they have passed."

This precaution was a very necessary one, for within half-an-hour no less than three scouts passed within a hundred yards of them, each going in the direction of the camp.

Another hour passed away, and the sounds they had previously heard became fainter and then died away. At length the trapper rose from his crouching position in the brushwood and said–

"Let us go!"

They now crept carefully through the long grass that partially clothed the hillock, until they could peer over the brow and obtain a view of the camp.

The place was deserted, for the Indians had gone and taken their prisoners with them. The fire was still burning, and several half-cooked pieces of venison and bear's flesh lay about, also several broken utensils and a pair of cast-off moccasins.

"Whither have they gone, think you?" asked Jamie.

"Back to the Canadas, and we must follow them."

"They cannot have killed their prisoners, then, or we should have heard them, and there would have been traces of blood."

"See. Here is the tree to which they were tied. The thongs have been so tight that they have cut into the bark."

"Yes. That means that they will have to travel slowly, unless they kill their prisoners, for they will scarcely be able to walk fast yet awhile."

The trapper looked anxiously up at the sun, which was now declining, and had reached the topmost branches of the trees on the western side of the forest; then he proceeded to examine the prints of the Algonquin moccasins, following them a little way into the forest for the purpose, while Jamie still examined the ground about the root of the giant elm-tree to see if he could find traces of blood.

There were several spots of blood about the tree and several splashes of it on the bark. There were also many deep cuts and gashes, and an arrow still remained fast in the wood about six feet from the ground, as though they had practised the same cruelties upon the lads that they had essayed upon the hunter.

"Only to think," muttered Jamie between his teeth, "that an hour ago both Jack and Young Eagle were tied up here, expecting a cruel and lingering death from their captors. What were their thoughts? Oh, if they could only have known that help was so near! Hullo! Where is the trapper? He has disappeared!" and the lad was suddenly awakened from his reverie by becoming conscious that the hunter was nowhere to be seen.

After a few minutes' search he found the old man some little way in the forest, examining very keenly the trail of the Algonquins.

"Well, what do you make of it?" he asked.

The trapper still continued for another minute to examine the prints of the departing redskins, and then he said, speaking very slowly as though he had come to his conclusion only after much thought–

"They are making tracks for one of the streams that flows into Lake Seneca, where they have probably left their canoes hidden in the forest; then they will pass down the lake to the Seneca River, and from thence into Lake Ontario and thus to the Canadas."

"Then what chance shall we have of recovering the prisoners? Where can we overtake them?"

"Not till we reach the Seneca Falls, I fear," replied the trapper. "Some distance below the outlet of the lake there is a portage past the Falls where they must land to carry their canoes to the river below. That is the spot where we must surprise them. By that time the Eagle will be with us and some of his braves."

"That sounds all right, but what about the prisoners? I had hoped that something might have been done to rescue them before then," said Jamie.

"The lads are safe for another three days, at any rate, unless they attempt to escape, for it now seems more than likely that they are to be carried off to the Canadas."

"What is that picture that you are drawing, trapper?" for the old hunter had stripped a large piece of bark from a birch-tree, and on the inner side had begun to draw a few rough pictures. It contained a cryptic message in the Indian style of "picture-writing," by which these children of the forest spoke to each other at a distance.

It depicted the whole length of Lake Seneca, and the Falls in the river below, then a badger and a feather, representing the Grey Badger and Red Feather following up a trail, while a few wigwams ahead represented the departing Algonquins. Next a White Eagle making a swift curve towards the Falls completed the picture, and the message was complete.

"It is a message to the White Eagle, to ask him to make direct for the Falls and there to prepare an ambush for the foes," replied the trapper.

"Capital! He'll understand that, easily enough, when he reaches here at

noon to-morrow."

"Yes. The meaning will be as plain as a pikestaff when he sees it. He'll probably be at the Falls long before us, for he'll travel day and night when he scents the game he's after. And now let us start, while the trail is warm."

The piece of bark was fastened to a tree, and they departed quickly. Night soon overtook them, and they camped for a brief while in the forest. A drink of water and a piece of bear's flesh, which they had brought from the Algonquin camp, sufficed for supper, and then they lay down to sleep, but Jamie thought that he had only just closed his eyelids when a hand was laid on his shoulder and the hunter said–

"Come! The dawn is breaking, and there is the promise of a fine day."

All that day they followed the trail; not without difficulty, for although in the soft soil of the forest the moccasins had left a deep print, yet at times, where the earth was dry and barren from lack of moisture, or where the redskins had followed the beds of the streams, wading in the water, the trail became difficult and the progress slower. There was also another danger that made them proceed with care. The Algonquins might have placed scouts in their rear, and at any moment an ambush might be sprung upon them.

"If only we could reach the canoes first and set them adrift, we could then delay and harass them," said Jamie.

"No! no! That would never do," replied his companion. "Our business is to locate them and then to make a detour, joining our companions at the Falls, without letting them discover our presence. Once they find that they are being tracked, the prisoners' lives are endangered, for to facilitate their progress they will kill the prisoners."

"See, here is a broken twig, and the leaves have scarcely withered, showing that it cannot be more than a few hours since they passed this way," said the lad, who was now keenly alert for every little sign that would guide them.

"Yes, and here is a deeper print in the soft earth, as though one of the prisoners had gone slightly out of his way to leave it for our assistance."

"You are right, trapper! That is the mark of the Young Eagle's moccasin, for here is the little patch on the left heel that he repaired but two days ago, when he had burned a hole in his moccasin by standing too near the fire. But look here! What does this mean?"

And a few feet further on they both stood still and gazed at several splashes of blood which had dyed the ground.

"The villains! One of them has inflicted a wound on Young Eagle, probably for snapping the twig, or leaving a footprint in the soft mould, which shows that they will be watched in future, and that we shall have no more signs."

"The wretches!"

"I hope White Eagle will not miss our trail, should he decide to follow us, rather than go direct to the falls," said Jamie, when the day had worn on into the afternoon.

"There is no fear of that. White Eagle is the greatest chief in all the Six Nations, and he could follow the trail of a humming-bird. Besides, look there. I have left him a trail that he could follow in the dark," and for about the twentieth time the trapper barked a tree with his knife in a peculiar manner, which evidently had a significant meaning for one who was versed in the secret code of the forest.

The ground hardened again now, and the trail almost disappeared, and sometimes failed altogether, so that a full hour was spent hunting for some hidden clue. At length Jamie exclaimed–

"Here is something, trapper! A broken file that Jack has purposely dropped to guide us."

"A broken file?" queried the other.

"Yes. Rather a strange thing to carry in the forest, but–but–he used it to sharpen his knife, and such things," said Jamie, reddening a little as he remembered the history of that little file in the old country. It was the one which had secured their escape from the lock-up two years ago, and Jack had kept it as a memento, saying–

"It has brought us luck once; it may do so again. At any rate, it is sure to be useful, and I will keep it."

The hunter carefully examined the file, and then passed it over to his friend. He, too, remembered to have seen a file exactly like that once–long ago–in a little land across the sea, but all the secrets and memories that it recalled were painful ones.

"Well, here's the trail, let us follow it," exclaimed Jamie. "It's as good as following a paper-chase through the woods at Burnside, I do declare."

"Where did you say?"

"Burnside! In the old country."

The old man looked long and keenly at the youth, whose features were now so brown and tanned that he was more like a redskin than a paleface. Then he was about to speak further, but he checked himself, for at that instant, when they had only followed the newly-discovered trail for a hundred yards or so–

"Whisht!" went an arrow so close to them that it pierced Jamie's beaver hat and pinned it to the bark of a tree.

In a second they had gained the shelter of a friendly elm, whose huge trunk offered cover for them both. Scarcely had they done so when–

"Whisht!" went a second arrow, and a third, both perilously near.

"I can see him, trapper," whispered Jamie, as he caught sight of a dark

shadow behind a tree fifty yards away, just as the third winged messenger whizzed by.

The trapper had seen that dark form too, and had covered it with his rifle, but he hesitated to fire, and looked behind him uneasily once or twice, as though conscious that some one was advancing from the rear. Were they trapped? Had the stalkers themselves been stalked?

He was not mistaken, for a dark figure was flitting from tree to tree behind them, and each instant coming nearer.

Who could it be?

"Keep your gun levelled at that red devil in front, lad. There's some one approaching from behind! Whether friend or foe, I know not, but I'll soon find out," said the hunter.

Jamie did as he was bid, and before long the opportunity he sought was offered to him. He caught sight of the Algonquin again. As he stood fitting another arrow to his string, his right arm was exposed.

"Bang!" a flash of flame spurted from Jamie's rifle. The leaden messenger found its mark, and the Indian's arm fell helpless at his side, even as he prepared to shoot. With a yell of pain the scout plunged into the thicket and disappeared.

The next moment a dark figure bounded from the cover of a tree in the rear and quickly advanced. The trapper had him covered with his rifle, but the instant he caught sight of his face he dropped the piece and said–

"Welcome, Swift Arrow!"

CHAPTER XVIII
A LOST TRAIL

"Swift Arrow?" exclaimed Jamie, lowering his smoking rifle, as he almost rushed forward to greet his companion, in a truly English fashion, for he was heartily glad to see him again.

The Indian, however, remained cold and reserved, and his only response to the warm greeting of his paleface friend was the customary "Ugh!" which seems at times to be the only stock-in-trade of the Red Indians. The fact was, the youth was on his first war-path, and at such a time the practice of his tribe demanded deeds, not words.

"My red brother has the speed of a deer and the heart of a lion. He has seen

the White Eagle, and has brought us tidings. Let him speak, and the palefaces will listen to his words," said the trapper.

After the usual pause demanded by Indian convention, the youth replied–

"White Eagle, with thirty braves, will reach the Seneca Falls at sunset. Will the palefaces continue to follow the Algonquin trail?"

"Yes," the scouts replied.

And then, without another word, Swift Arrow turned away and disappeared into the forest, almost in the direction in which he had come.

Though Jamie was now fairly acquainted with Indian manners and customs, he was rather taken aback with this abrupt departure, and would have called him back again, but the trapper said–

"Leave him alone, lad. He is only following the traditions of his race. He has followed our trail, and delivered the chief's message, and is now probably going to rejoin White Eagle. He has discharged his duty with a fidelity that many a white man might envy."

"He must be tired!"

"Yes, during the last fifty hours he must have traversed near a hundred and fifty miles of forest and streams, and I doubt very much whether he has tasted food during the whole journey."

"Hunter, I have lived amongst the red men a little while now, and I have often discovered amongst them a sense of honour and an unselfish spirit that I have never seen surpassed by the members of more civilised races."

"I'm glad to hear you say it, lad. During the last fifteen years my truest friend has been a red man."

"You mean the White Eagle?"

"I do!"

"He is a great chief. I owe him my life. But for him my scalp would now be hanging at the girdle of one of his braves. I knew he would come to your rescue, too, if he only knew of your danger."

"Come to my rescue? He would have crossed the lakes and the plains to the mountains beyond, even to the utmost bounds of the Oregon River, if he had but known that my life was in danger, and he would not have expected the slightest reward; but come, let us break our fast that we may follow the trail."

"Look, trapper. There is our dinner, and a right royal one, too," said Jamie, pointing to several wild turkeys that were feeding in the half-dried bed of a little stream near by.

The hunter raised his rifle to his shoulder quickly, and fired, and one of the birds fell over, struggled for a few seconds, and then lay still with its claws in the air. Jamie rushed off to secure it, and quickly dressed it while the trapper lighted a fire, and in a few minutes this fine fat bird was roasting on a spit, scenting the

forest with the smell of roast turkey, and promising to allay every pang of hunger.

They made a hearty repast, and then washed it down with a drink at the little stream, before they continued their march. They had a trail now that a child could have followed, for at very frequent intervals there were splashes of blood, which marked the ground and showed the track of the wounded Algonquin, so that they were able to move rapidly and without any loss of time for several miles.

"We must keep a sharp look-out for scouts now, trapper, for the varlets know that we are on their track."

"That will only make them hurry forward, and I don't think that they will place many scouts in their rear. The only thing that I fear is that they will not camp to-night, but press on in order to get to the Canadas as quickly as possible. In that case, should the chief be detained, they may pass the Falls before he gets there, and reach Ontario. So we must follow close. We cannot be far from Lake Seneca now."

"Cannot we follow them there?"

"No. They will be safe behind the guns of the Frenchers."

"Is it true then, hunter, that all the Canada Indians look up to Louis as their king, and call him their 'Great French Father' across the water, and that they are in league with him to drive all the English from the Americas, and to make it a great French Empire?"

"'Tis even so, my lad! And 'tis my firm belief that the Canada war-parties, like the one whose trail we are now following, are sent to stir up strife, to tomahawk and scalp the English settlers, to destroy their harvests and burn their houses, by the Frenchers at Quebec and the frontier forts; but they defeat their own objects, for they have lately stirred up all the tribes of the Iroquois as well as the Delawares to become the active allies of the English."

"And what will be the end of it all, trapper?"

"The end of it will be, that the Frenchers themselves before long will be driven out of Canada, just as they have lately been driven out of India, by a few determined Englishmen, under that brilliant merchant-soldier, Clive."

"Indeed! Do you think it possible to drive the French out of Quebec? They have made the place impregnable. When I left there they ridiculed the idea that the English would ever attempt to take it."

"Time will show," said the trapper. "Do you know that even now a British fleet is holding the river, and an English army is encamped about Quebec?"

"Is it possible? How I should like to be there and to serve under Wolfe's flag; but how did you learn all this in the forest?"

"Even the forest can speak to those who have ears to listen. Why did the Algonquins depart so rapidly, and make no attempt to recapture me, when the price of fifty beaver-skins has been set upon my scalp by the Canadas during the

past five years? They could not know then that the Iroquois were upon their trail."

"Why, indeed; unless they were summoned hastily back to their own country, or was it that they feared the wrath of the Senecas and the Cayugas, whose hunting-grounds they had invaded?"

"Partly that, perhaps, for the Senecas, like all the other tribes of the Six Nations, are a fierce and warlike race; but there was another reason."

"What was it?"

"Listen! The night before I escaped, a messenger, with a war-hatchet all covered with blood, entered the Algonquin camp. He also carried a broad belt of wampum, and the skin of a rattlesnake filled with arrows; while his tomahawk was stained a deep red, in token of war. He was received with great deference, and when he had handed the war-belt to the Algonquin chief, he declared that a fierce and bloody war had broken out between the French Father and the children of Miquon, and that the former needed all his red children to come and assist him. He promised them 'a great plenty' of paleface scalps if they would come; but if they refused, then, if the English won, they would take from the children of the Manitou all their hunting-grounds, and burn their wigwams and lodges to the ground, until the prints of their moccasins should no longer be found in the forests.

"When the messenger had finished speaking he showered the arrows upon the earth, and then flung the blood-red hatchet upon the ground, saying–

"'Even now the River of Canada is full of big canoes that carry the thunder and the lightning, and the paleface warriors from over the great Salt Lake, led by a mighty chieftain named Le Loup [Wolfe], have settled around the fortress of Canada, like a swarm of locusts. Come, my brothers! Who will take up the hatchet to fight for the Great Canada Father?'

"After a long pause, as if to give due weight and consideration to this important message, the Algonquin chief arose from his seat by the council fire, and made a brief but solemn speech, which, after extolling the prowess of his ancestors and himself, ended in a promise to return and assist the French, as soon as the scattered members of the party returned, and the scouts were called in. He then proceeded slowly to the spot where the hatchet was half buried, and solemnly took it up.

"A wild burst of savage yells greeted this action, and the evening was given up to a war-dance. Next day, while the parties were coming in, one of the scouts was scalped, as you know, by Young Eagle, and the departure was delayed another day.

"Thus it was," continued the trapper, "that I learnt of the arrival of Wolfe, and that the plight of the French was so bad that all their Indian allies had been

called in to assist them, with a promise of a 'great plenty' of paleface scalps. A promise which never fails to attract a red man."

This was news that fired Jamie's soul. What would he not give to join his countrymen, and to help in wresting the Canadas from the French? At that moment he envied the smallest drummer-boy in Wolfe's army the part he was to play in the siege.

"If only Jack were free," he said to himself, "we would start for Quebec to-morrow, and offer our services; and Jack shall be free, if brave men can save him!" Then overtaking the trapper, who was a few yards in advance, for during this conversation they had been following the trail in single file, he said–

"In another two hours the sun will be entering the pines. I shall be glad when we reach one of the streams that flows into the lake. Surely we cannot be far away now!"

The hunter at that instant halted suddenly, and exclaimed, "The varmint!"

"What's the matter?" inquired Jamie, noting the anxious look on the face of his companion.

"They have misled us. This is a false trail. Several of the Algonquins have come this way in order to mislead us, and then doubled back, walking backwards. It must be so, for look–the trail ends here."

It was only too true. For nearly a mile, through tangled forest, across streams and open glades, they had followed a false trail.

"That comes of talking too much. Your Indian, when he is on the warpath, doesn't spill a word, except his blessed 'Ugh!', for he keeps his nose down to the trail. However, there is no help for it. We must go back till we strike the main trail again." This all took valuable time, but at last they discovered the spot where the tracks diverged, and they got the scent once more. The real trail had been so neatly covered up, for fifty yards or more, and the false one left open, that it was no wonder that the mistake was made.

Even here their difficulties did not end, for within another quarter of an hour they came to a spot where several small streams met, and here also the trail ended abruptly, and although they examined each bank for some distance they were unable to discover any clue as to the route taken by the Algonquins.

Time was precious, and a full half-hour had already been wasted here, when the trapper, who had carefully examined each of the bigger streams, turned his attention to the third, which was a mere rivulet. Proceeding twenty yards up the bank of the stream, he dammed up the rivulet with a few stones, backed by earth-sods, and turned it temporarily out of its course, so that almost immediately it ran dry. Then, following the dried-up bed of the stream, he soon perceived the print of a moccasin, that had only been half-washed away by the water.

"Look!" he said, "even the water sometimes gives up its secrets. Here is the

trail–let us follow it."

Half-a-mile further on they came to a place where the whole band had left the stream, and struck into the forest again, and just as the sun was getting low amongst the trees they struck a larger stream that was capable of bearing a canoe.

"They have taken to the water! See, here are the marks made by the bows of the canoes, as they pushed off," said the trapper.

"And here is the spot where the boats were hidden amongst the bushes!" exclaimed Jamie.

"Yes. Let us look around and see if by any chance they have left us a spare canoe, for if I am not mistaken they have left nearly a dozen of their warriors in the Iroquois forests."

A diligent search was made, but no trace of a canoe could be found anywhere. The only thing they could find was a spare paddle, which the trapper took along with him, saying–

"A paddle without a canoe is not worth much, but if we discover a canoe and haven't got a paddle, we shall not be much better off."

They had not proceeded far down the bank of the stream when the keen eyes of the hunter, despite the failing light, perceived a stranded canoe on the other side of the river.

"I thought so!" he exclaimed. "The rascals had one canoe too many, but to prevent us using it they set it adrift, and the current has landed it across there. I will fetch it."

"No, no!" said Jamie. "I'll fetch it," and, throwing off his hunting shirt, he plunged into the stream, and swam across to where the canoe had gone ashore, jammed between two rocks. He had taken the paddle with him, and he quickly returned in the canoe, which was none the worse for its little adventure, except that there was a small hole in the bow, which the trapper soon repaired.

"There is no time to lose. We must hasten; for unless the Algonquins camp somewhere along the lake, we shall be too late," said the hunter.

The sun had set half-an-hour ago, as they paddled swiftly down stream; but there was still a crimson glow from amongst the pines on the western side of the river. Sometimes they skimmed along with the current without putting in the paddle, the next moment they danced and twisted amongst the rapids; but the trapper piloted the canoe safely amongst the rocks, the eddies and the swirls, ever seeking the most sheltered spots.

Suddenly, a bend in the river revealed to them the opening of the lake, and in another moment they were skimming along its glassy surface, close in-shore. This narrow lake is thirty-five miles long, and from one to three miles broad, and long before they had covered half its length darkness fell, but they slackened not their efforts. They paddled in turn, quietly but swiftly, ever keeping a careful

watch lest they should discover the camp-fire of the enemy.

They were approaching a headland that jutted out some little way into the lake, and were scarce a dozen yards from the thick bushes which overhung the bank, when the screech of an owl reached their ears from the shore.

Jamie, who held the paddle, stayed his hand for a moment, and peered into the darkness. A dark shadowy form was standing on a rock at the very edge of the water, with an uplifted hand that indicated danger.

He knew that form and that call too well to hesitate. "It is Swift Arrow," he whispered; and drove the canoe in gently towards the shore.

CHAPTER XIX
THE AMBUSH AT SENECA FALLS

What new danger threatened them now? As they drew ashore at a spot where the bushes parted to allow the rock to jut into the water, Jamie was about to inquire from the Indian youth what was the matter, and how he had managed to strike their trail again, at a moment when perhaps they most needed his presence, but a low "Hist!" which came from the dark figure upon the rock, silenced him. Evidently the lad had feared for their safety, and at great peril had come to save them, or at any rate to make them conscious of the approaching danger.

Silently, they landed on the margin of the forest, and crept ashore. The rustle of a leaf, the snapping of a twig might betray their presence to a lurking scout, though as yet they knew not what danger threatened.

"The Wacondah has made Swift Arrow his messenger, in order to save our scalps. Swift Arrow will now speak," whispered the hunter.

Then in a low, soft, musical voice, untouched by excitement at the nearness of danger, or emotion at seeing his friends again, the Indian pointed to the dark headland, scarce a hundred yards further along the lake, and said–

"Swift Arrow has kept watch for his friends. There is the Algonquin camp, and their scouts are close to us; watching both the lake and the forest. A singing-bird has spoken to them, and they think White Eagle is behind them. Before daybreak, they will enter the Seneca River, at the outlet of the lake, on their way back to the Canadas."

"But must we remain here till they are gone?" asked Jamie.

"No," smiled the youth. "Swift Arrow will now lead his paleface friends out

of danger, and pilot them safely to the spot where the White Eagle awaits the Algonquins, at the portage by the Seneca Falls."

Saying this, he stepped into the canoe and took the paddle, motioning the others to lie down in the bottom of the craft, and then noiselessly pushed off from the bank. The Indian did not attempt to continue the former direction, but paddled cautiously back a little way, hugging the shore; then he struck directly across the lake, which is here about two miles broad, and having approached the opposite bank, he turned the head of the canoe once more towards the outlet of the lake, and paddled swiftly.

This manoeuvre succeeded perfectly, and they got away unobserved. Taking turns at the solitary paddle, they soon reached the outlet, and entered the swift stream which takes its name from the lake. Now they were piloted swiftly and safely past the rapids, aided only by the light of the stars, and the daring skill of the Indian.

Two hours before dawn, a dull roar fell upon their ears. It was the cataract, where the whole river tumbles in a frenzy of froth and foam down a chasm of fifty feet, forming the far-famed Seneca Falls.

The canoes were drawn to the bank at the portage, and as they stepped ashore, the dark, shadowy forms of several painted warriors emerged from the cover of the trees. They were the Iroquois scouts, who were keenly watching for the approach of the enemy. Then a powerful and haughty chief confronted them. It was the White Eagle himself, but the stern stoicism of his countenance relaxed for a moment as he greeted his two paleface friends.

"The paleface hunter is welcome to the camp of the Iroquois. Many moons have passed since White Eagle and his friend hunted the red deer, and struck the trail of the moose together," said the chief.

"The home of the Grey Badger is in the wigwams of the Iroquois, and when he has struck his Canada enemies, he will return to his seat at the council fire of the White Eagle," replied the hunter.

"Ugh! It is well! I feared that the Canada snakes had charmed away my friend, but then I remembered that the Grey Badger is too great a warrior to permit his scalp to hang upon the poles of their lodges."

"It was a mighty close shave this time, chief. I didn't expect to see my red friends again."

"Bah! The river is now netted for the Canada salmon. My braves will take 'plenty' scalp before another sunset. Come! My warriors will watch."

A couple of Indians took up the canoe and carried it to the other end of the portage, while several others eliminated from the soft bank the marks made by the bow of the boat and the prints of the moccasins. This precaution was adopted to prevent an alarm being given to the Algonquins, who were shortly

expected. Then the party retired within the precincts of the forest, there to await the coming of the dawn.

Dawn came at last–towards the sun-rising a faint yellow streak lit up the horizon. Next, a saffron tint flushed the sky, and then the stars faded and disappeared, as the gates of the morning were unbarred, and a hundred streamers of flashing, roseate hues flooded the blue vault of heaven. Myriads of songsters awoke the stillness of the forest, for the day had come, and the dark curtain of night rolled westward.

Another two hours passed, and then the hawk-eyed vigilance of the watchers was rewarded by a first glimpse of the enemy. The dull, constant roar of the cataract in their ears prevented their hearing the sound of the approaching paddles, or the crunching of their birch-bark canoes upon the beach, but long ere this, the Iroquois scouts had reported the enemy in sight, and every one was ready for the approaching fight.

The portage was a short one, and the chief had spread his warriors over the whole length in order to prevent the escape of any of the Algonquins. A few scouts headed the party, then came the Indians carrying the five canoes, and after them, the two prisoners, their arms bound with thongs, walking between a couple of braves with tomahawks in their hands.

Every one now eagerly awaited the signal for the combat. The advance party had reached a point about half-way over the ground, when the shrill scream of an eagle rose in the air. At the same instant, the clatter of a dozen rifles, and the fierce war-cry of the thirty Iroquois, burst upon the ear. The very trees about the unfortunate Algonquins seemed to turn into frenzied warriors, who, brandishing their tomahawks, rushed upon their foe. The canoes were thrown to the ground, and in the confusion which followed, brave deeds were done. A fierce hand-to-hand fight ensued, but the Algonquins, mowed down by that first fire, and hopelessly outclassed, were driven nearer and nearer to that perilous brink, where leapt the mighty cataract into the foaming rapids and whirlpools below.

A few bold spirits, rather than leave their scalps in the hands of their enemies, leapt into the chasm beneath, and were never seen again. Except these, not a soul escaped the vengeance of the Iroquois.

The two braves in charge of the prisoners were the first to fall, for from their first landing they had been covered by the rifles of the hunter and Jamie. The latter then drew his hunting-knife from its sheath, and rushing forward, cut the thongs that bound the two prisoners, and quickly drew them out of the *mêlée* into a place of safety, and left the contest to the Iroquois, for he had no doubt whatever of what the result would be, and taking scalps was not exactly to his liking.

Meanwhile, the White Eagle wielded his tomahawk with all the strength and fury of an Iroquois chief. He fought his way to where Red Wolf was heading and encouraging his braves, and hewed him down. It was quickly over, and in less than a quarter of an hour the Iroquois were masters of the field.

"Thanks, Jamie! You have saved my life, and I can never repay you. I had given up all hope of escape. So rigidly were we watched that there was not the slightest opportunity for us to gain our freedom. We were to have been tortured and put to death at sunset, at soon as we had reached the shambles of Fort Oswego, for you know the French have taken the place, after a dreadful slaughter, and now claim to be masters of both shores of the lake. Still, all that is past now, and I am thankful to be with my friends once more. Jamie, old fellow, how can I thank you for all this?"

"You've had a narrow squeak, Jack, but you must thank the hunter here, and Swift Arrow, who I believe has not taken food since you were made a prisoner. Come!" and Jamie led his old comrade towards the others.

"Let me introduce you to the 'Great Paleface Hunter' who held your trail till the White Eagle could arrive with his braves."

"What! the Grey Badger, the friend of the chief?"

"The same. He is a mighty paleface, and I have learnt to love him already. He is the most renowned hunter in all the forests south of the lakes."

So, while the Indians harvested the spoils of the enemy, the three palefaces lit a fire, and cooked a breakfast from a large salmon, speared in the river below, satisfied the pangs of hunger at a spot a little apart from the braves, near by the lower end of the portage, and then talked for an hour about all the news that had filtered through the forest relative to the great conflict, which was already raging so fiercely on both banks of the St. Lawrence.

The youths listened with pent-up feelings, while the hunter told all he had heard from passing *voyageurs* and Indian runners of the disasters that had befallen the English arms of late. He described the disaster of Ticonderoga, the fall of Fort Oswego, and the partial success of Dieskau, but when he spoke of the capture of Fort William Henry and the frightful massacre which followed, the lads sprang to their feet, and declared in one breath–

"We will go and offer our services to General Wolfe, for our country needs us!"

The light of battle was in their eyes, the courage of manhood mounted to their brows, as they clasped each other's hand across the fire, and repeated their promise to join the English lines; then, turning to the trapper, who remained seated by the fire, smoking calmly and puffing the blue smoke from an Indian calumet, Jamie said–

"Say, hunter! Will you join us on yet another trail, where the game shall be,

not redskins, but the recreants of Montcalm, and the reward, not Indian scalps, but the honour of the old flag, or–a soldier's grave?"

"Lads," he replied, "my country has not been over kind to me. I am an exile from my native land, and yet I have never committed a crime. My conscience is clear; but I, too, feel my country's call, and I know her need, and it shall never be said of me that I shirked the call of duty, when already so many exiles have left their bones to bleach in the forest, for the land that has denied to them a hearth and a home. I will go! Let us bid good-bye to the chief and his braves."

The parting scenes between the White Eagle and the hunter, the paleface youths and their Indian friends, was affecting in the extreme, when it became known that they were now about to part, and perhaps for ever. All the rich memories of their forest life were brought back to them, and to the palefaces especially the fidelity of their red brothers, their lofty characters, despite their many failings, their simple faith in the Great Spirit, the Wacondah of their race; their comradeship in hunting the red deer and the shaggy brown bear amid all the savage scenery of mountain and forest, and taking from the streams and lakes the salmon and the sturgeon, or descending wild rapids and torrents in their frail birch-bark canoes, with these children of the Manitou–all this they recalled, and forsook it with a pang of regret; but another voice was calling to them, and their beating hearts were but responding to the call of Duty.

At last, they stood by their canoe ready to depart, at the lower end of the portage, below the Falls; and the Indians were standing around them, sad and melancholy, for their grief had for once broken down their manly reserve, and the stoic mask, which had enabled some amongst them to endure torture without flinching, could not now keep back the moisture from many an eye.

Listen! the great chief, in prophetic strain, is speaking his last solemn words of farewell–

"The face of the Manitou is hid behind a cloud, and the hearts of his red children are sad. Nevermore will the Great Paleface Hunter, the friend of the White Eagle, hunt the deer in the hills of the Iroquois. Nevermore will he sit at the council fire of my people, and smoke the calumet, while his red brothers listen to the wisdom that falls from his lips like the dew from heaven. Nevermore will he speak to us of the sacred writings that the Wacondah has given to the children of the Sun-rising!

"When his canoe has sailed into the regions of the East-wind, then shall my people be scattered like the leaves in autumn, and the few that remain, to fish the streams and hunt the moose and the elk, will be but as blasted pines, where the fires of the forest have raged."

"Nay, chief! The sun will shine again, and I shall return if the Manitou wills it," urged the hunter, as he flicked the water impatiently with his paddle.

"The Wacondah has said it! My paleface brother shall nevermore look upon the face of the White Eagle."

"Then I shall look for my red friend in the happy hunting-grounds of the Manitou. Good-bye!"

The next moment the canoe shot into the stream, and began to descend rapidly towards the great lake. A last long look was cast behind, a last adieu waved to their friends, who stood watching till they passed from view, then the low murmur of the Falls ceased as they sped on their way.

Soon, they passed the ruins of Fort Oswego, and entered Lake Ontario. Then they stretched across the lake to the Thousand Islands, and entered the St. Lawrence and stole quietly past the French post at Fort Frontenac. Then for hundreds of miles they were carried by the swift current of the Canada River, down past Mont Royale, and the mouth of the Ottawa River, past Trois Rivières, until one day they heard the sounds of heavy firing, as though a battle were in progress.

'Twas early in September 1759, and the guns of Quebec were firing at the English ships and batteaux, as they passed the citadel, to gain the upper reaches of the river. As they passed the next bend in the river, they saw the French warships which had retreated up the stream, away from those terrible English. They also perceived on the heights to the left, in the vicinity of Cape Rouge, the sentries of Bougainville's detachment, and here they ran a narrow escape of capture, being taken by the French for spies.

Before sunset on the eleventh of September, they espied with great joy, on the southern bank, the white tents and the red coats of Wolfe's army.

CHAPTER XX

THE PLAINS OF ABRAHAM

"Halt! Who goes there?"

It was a burly Highlander, an outpost sentry of the British army, that challenged the three paleface scouts.

"Friends!" cried Jamie.

"Then ye'll just gi'e me the password," replied the soldier, levelling his musket at the youth who had acted as spokesman.

"I do not know the password," said Jamie, boldly confronting the levelled

firearm. "We have just come in from the frontier to offer our services to General Wolfe."

"Then ye'll just ground your arms, and bide a wee, till I call the sergeant!"

The sergeant in charge of the party came up in response to the sentry's call, and while he was engaged in conversing with the strangers, an aide-de-camp to General Wolfe, who was a field officer in the Royal Americans, galloped by. Seeing three men in the garb of the forest, and knowing the value of such hardy, trained frontiersmen, having seen a good deal of such service himself, he reined in his charger, received the salute of the sergeant, who, on being requested, reported the business of the strangers.

"Look here! Do you fellows know anything of Quebec, or the river and the forts?" asked the field officer.

"Yes, sir!" replied Jamie. "Two of us lived there for nearly twelve months as nominal prisoners of the French."

"Indeed? When did you leave there?"

"Last spring, sir."

"Do you know the river this side of the city?"

"Every creek and cove, sir, between Cape Rouge and the narrows."

"That will do! Shoulder your rifles and come with me."

Then, putting as much dignity into their carriage as their rough appearance would permit, the three scouts followed the officer. They passed through several lines of sentries, but they were not challenged further, as the aide-de-camp gave the password at each barrier.

They soon entered the inner camp and passed between rows of white tents. Groups of Highlanders, Anstruthers, and Grenadiers in their scarlet uniforms were sitting about the camp-fires, seeing to their equipment, cooking rations, etc. Others were just landing from the transports and batteaux which lay in the river opposite the camp.

Despite their deer-skin shirts, Indian moccasins and beaver caps, there was a deep bronze upon the faces of the strangers, and a keen alertness about their movements, and especially their eyes, that bespoke them real scouts of the backwoods and pioneers of the Empire, with an experience that few could boast, even amongst those five thousand red-coats that were the flower of the British army; and many a soldier lifted his eyes to gaze after them as they passed by.

Having reached the vicinity of the General's tent, the field officer handed them over to an orderly of Monckton's Grenadiers, with orders to find them quarters and rations until the General expressed his pleasure concerning their offer of service.

All that day they remained in the camp, but no message came from the commander. Evidently he was busy with more important duties, and could not

be bothered about the services of a few rude frontiersmen; but next morning, towards noon, the field officer returned in person and said–

"General Wolfe desires to speak with you. Come with me!"

Jamie's heart beat wildly at the thought of speaking with this great soldier, the darling and the genius of the whole army. They arrived at the large tent which served as the head-quarters of the staff. A sentry barred the way till the password was repeated, and then, following the officer, they entered, Jamie first, then Jack, and last of all the hunter.

All three quickly brought their hands to the salute as they stood before a large table, at which sat three officers of high rank. They were Generals Murray, Monckton and Townshend, and although unknown to the youths, who wondered which of the three was Wolfe, they have each left an honoured name on the scroll of Empire.

But who was that pale, ascetic-looking invalid, reclining on a couch beside General Murray? Surely he was no soldier! He was weak and sickly, and appeared to be suffering from some painful malady. What was he doing here? wondered Jamie, giving him a passing glance, and then directing his attention to the three officers, who were conversing amongst themselves, and examining charts and maps with such intensity that they scarcely seemed as yet to have noticed the newcomers.

Suddenly the invalid on the couch said something, and instantly the three soldiers ceased their conversation, dropped the charts and maps, and listened to his every word with marked reverence and respect.

"Murray," he said, "which are the two scouts who were prisoners in Quebec till last spring? Let them come to me."

The aide-de-camp indicated Jamie and Jack, and then General Murray approached them and said–

"Step forward! General Wolfe desires to speak with you," at the same time making a respectful gesture in the direction of the couch.

"General Wolfe! Could that feeble person be the great soldier on whom England relied to win the Canadas from the French?" thought Jamie, as he stepped forward and saluted the invalid. He was amazed and dumfounded. It was well for him at that moment that he had learnt something of the Indian virtue of hiding his feelings, or his face might have shown something of his disappointment.

"Why, you are quite a lad! Come, let me look at you! There, that will do! I like your face, and yours, too."

"Thank you, General!"

"Now tell me what you know of Quebec, and when you landed there, and when you left, and how."

Then Jamie, acting as spokesman for the two, told him briefly but clearly his history, commencing with the sea-fight, his capture, and how he spent his time at Quebec, his adventure with the Iroquois on the St. Lawrence, and his escape by the steep pathway that led up on to the Plains of Abraham, and how that Jack had accompanied him in that and all the other adventures he had met with on the frontiers.

"Good!" exclaimed the General, into whose eyes the fire had leapt as the lad described his adventures, especially the fight with the French frigate.

"Pass me that chart of the river and the Plains, Monckton. There, that will do! Just show me, lad, the spot where you landed that day and climbed to the Plains. Here, take hold of this chart!"

Jamie took the chart, spread it out on the ground, and knelt down by the couch.

"There," he said, pointing to a tiny dent in the northern shore, "is the spot where we made our escape. It is a league or so above the city."

"And if I sent you down there with a boat in the dark, could you find it again?" said the General in a soft voice.

"Yes, sir, I could!"

"And if I ordered you to land a boat-load of soldiers on the top of the cliffs there before dawn to-morrow morning, how would you set about it?"

Jamie flushed with pride at the thought of such a commission, but he answered quietly and firmly–

"General, if you trusted that boat to me I would wait till the second ebb tide to-night, then, under cover of darkness, I would drop down with the current, keeping in mid-stream till nearly opposite the cove, then, edging in to the northern bank, I would run the boat ashore at the inlet, and lead the men up on to the Plains two hours before dawn."

"By George, Townshend, he'll do! Let him have a seat in the first boat, and his companions too. But see that they are kept in charge of the orderly, and not permitted outside the lines till I send for them."

"Yes, sir."

"By the way, Monckton, is there a guard at that point above the cove?"

"Vergois' guard is stationed there, sir. It is part of Bougainville's command."

"My lad," said the General, half rising from the couch and putting his hand on Jamie's shoulder, "it is a very important duty that I am entrusting to you to-night. I am going to put you in the first boat, along with the other guides, as your knowledge of the spot may be useful, and it is of the first importance that we should not pass that cove in the darkness. The safety of the British army, to a great extent, will be entrusted to you, and perhaps–who knows?–the destiny of Canada. You will be kept under the charge of the orderly till nightfall, as there

are plenty of spies about the camp. If you do your duty this night, your King and your country will be grateful to you. Good-bye!"

Darkness came at length on that famous 12th of September, 1759, and as soon as the northern bank disappeared in the gloom of evening, the English camp was astir with quiet and concealed movements. Only to a few was the plan of campaign known, for in the rapidity and secrecy of the movement lay the only chance of success–for against the English the odds were desperate. Wolfe, however, was so far recovered from his sickness that he was able to command in person, and the inspiration that this knowledge gave to the men was equivalent to the addition of an army corps.

An officer who took part in the events of that night has left it on record that despite the reverse at the Montmorency six weeks before, "the men were uncommonly eager and difficult to restrain, and yet," he added, speaking to a comrade a few hours before the event, "if we succeed in scaling and capturing that rock-crowned citadel, I shall think little in future of Hannibal leading his army over the Alps."

At nine o'clock thirty boats collected from the warships and transports, rendezvoused in a line in front of Admiral Holmes' flagship. Then the last "general order" issued by Wolfe was read to the troops by the generals in command. It contained these striking words–

"Now is the time to strike a stroke which will determine the fate of Canada."

Then fifteen hundred men, the forlorn hope of the expedition, selected chiefly from the Highlanders, the Anstruthers and the Light Infantry, were crowded into the boats, and now nothing remained but the final issue, as the troops calmly waited for the second ebb tide, which was to carry them downstream.

At one o'clock the tide ebbed, and the order was given to cast off. Not a soldier or a sailor remained behind who was not cursing his ill-luck that he had not been chosen to go ahead in the boats. The order had been given for silence, and nothing could be heard but the gurgling of the water as it washed the sides of the boats; but the excitement, though suppressed, must have been intense as the men grasped their muskets and lay close together, looking at the stars above or those rugged heights, which ever and anon loomed darkly from the northern shore.

Jamie, with his two companions, was in the first boat eagerly scanning that dark outline and noting every headland, watching for that little indentation just between St. Nichol and Le Foulton, where he and Jack had so often landed their little fishing canoe during their enforced stay in Quebec.

Suddenly a low voice broke upon their ears from the stern sheets of the next boat, which was only a dozen feet away. It was the voice of Wolfe reciting to his

officers and to a young midshipman, named Robinson, who has left the incident on record. He was quoting from memory the stanzas from "Gray's Elegy"–

"The paths of glory lead but to the grave."

"Gentlemen," Jamie heard him say, "I would rather have written those lines than take Quebec to-morrow." And every English schoolboy now knows how strangely prophetic and appropriate were those lines.

They were now rapidly approaching the little cove, and Jamie signalled to the steersman of his boat to edge in a little closer to the northern shore, which now towered above them like a great barrier. As he did so the voice of a sentry came through the gloom from the heights above–

"*Qui vive?*"

"*La France!*" replied a captain of the Highlanders from Jamie's boat.

"*A quel régiment?*" came back from the heights.

"*De la Reine!*" answered the Highlander.

The sentry appeared satisfied, as the Queen's regiment formed part of Bougainville's command, which had been sent further up the bank in order to watch Wolfe's movements.

Shortly afterwards they were challenged again, but a few more adroit answers saved the situation.

"This is the spot," whispered Jamie, and the boat was run upon the bank in the little sandy cove beneath the cliffs, and a hundred men were quickly clustered upon the little beach. Wolfe was amongst the first to land, and as he looked up at the rugged heights he shook his head and coolly remarked–

"You can try it, but I don't think you'll get up."

The next moment Jamie and his companions, closely followed by twenty volunteers, were climbing the precipitous front, dragging themselves up by the roots and branches of the shrubs and trees which overhung the steep ascent. For another moment those below waited with breathless suspense. Then quick, ringing shots were heard, as those few determined men overpowered the small French guard at the top. This was followed by a thin British cheer, and immediately the Highlanders below, with the Light Infantry and the others, clambered up the apparently impossible heights and gained the plains above.

At dawn fifteen hundred men stood upon the Plains of Abraham, and then the ships, which had dropped down the river behind the boats, landed the rest of the army. When the sun rose on the 13th of September, the watch on the citadel beheld with amazement the red coats of the British army forming up into lines–and preparing for battle.

Swift couriers had carried the tidings across the St. Charles to Montcalm, and the roll of drums was heard amid his camp, and soon the French division were pouring across the bridge of boats. At nine o'clock, the armies were facing each other on the Plains above the city. Then the rattle of musketry began as the French sharpshooters lined the bushes and entrenchments previously prepared to the north-west of the city.

On came the columns of Montcalm, firing and shouting in an inspiriting manner, led by their renowned leader in person.

How different those thin red lines of Highlanders, Grenadiers and hardy colonial levies. An ominous silence hung like a cloud over the English ranks. It was the silence that presages the storm–the calm, still waters of a dam about to burst its bounds and spread havoc and death.

As the French fire became more effectual, the gaps in the English ranks became frequent, but they were filled in silence as the rear men stepped to the front. In those ranks scarce a word was spoken, and as yet not a shot had been fired. Officers of Montcalm have since said that this ominous silence cast a chill over the French columns that half decided the issues of the day.

Not till the French were within forty yards was the word given to fire, then simultaneously the long line of muskets were brought to the level, and from end to end of the English ranks a crashing blaze of leaden hail was poured upon the enemy. The columns of Montcalm reeled and staggered before this dreadful impact. A second volley was fired, and then, before the smoke had rolled away, or the enemy had had an opportunity to reform his shattered ranks, a deafening cheer rang from end to end of the Plains. The flood of British fury was at length undammed, and trampling the dead and dying they swept the shattered columns before them in one mad, wild stampede. The Highlanders, wielding their terrible broadswords, chased the fugitives right up to the gates of the city and across the St. Charles River.

The defeat was crushing and absolute, and in that moment of victory the destiny of Canada was settled, but the cheers of the victors were silenced as the sad news passed from rank to rank that Wolfe had fallen. In the heat of the fight, leading on the Grenadiers, his wrist had been shattered by a ball. He quickly bound it in a handkerchief, and continued the fight. A second ball pierced his side, but he stayed not. Then a bullet entered his breast, and he reeled and fell.

Four soldiers raised him up, and carrying him to the rear laid him gently upon the grass. He appeared to be unconscious, but when a soldier near him exclaimed–

"See how they run!"

"Who run?" asked the dying soldier, opening his eyes.

"The enemy, sir! They give way everywhere!" was the reply.

"Then tell Colonel Burton to march Webb's regiment down to Charles River to cut off their retreat from the bridge. Now, God be praised! I will die in peace," were the last words of General Wolfe. That day England gained an Empire, but lost a hero.

The three scouts had finished their task when they led the forlorn hope up the precipice and on to the Plains, but they were not to be denied a share in the fight, for they had received permission to join the ranks of the centre column, which was under the personal command of Wolfe, and bore the brunt of the fight on that never-to-be-forgotten morning. They were in the forefront of that wild rush to the bridge, where the fight was thickest, and where many hundreds were hurled into the St. Charles River, and where Montcalm's retreat was effectually blocked and victory made secure.

The battle was over now, for though one of the most glorious, it was one of the briefest in history, and though they had lost each other in the pursuit, the three comrades were glad to rejoin the ranks at the roll-call on the Plains and find each other alive and well, except for minor wounds, though the joy of victory was damped and a chill went to every heart when the word was passed down the ranks that their illustrious leader had fallen.

Next morning General Townshend passed to the head of every regiment in succession, and thanked the troops for their brilliant services, and soon afterwards one of his aide-de-camps approached the scouts and requested their immediate presence in the General's tent. They followed him, wondering that he had not forgotten them altogether in the excitement of so great a victory. When they stood in his presence they saluted and waited for him to speak.

"Jamie Stuart and Jack Elliot!" said General Townshend, and instantly several other officers, who had been busily engaged writing dispatches for England, rose and stood at attention. "In the name of His Most Gracious Majesty, King George the Second, I thank you for the eminent services you have rendered to your country. I have appointed you both from this day to be ensigns in the Royal Americans. Here are your commissions. Right nobly have you won them. May you be spared long to serve your country! God save the King!"

The youths were overwhelmed with this generous tribute from so great a soldier. They could find no words to express their gratitude for this signal honour conferred upon them. A commission in His Majesty's victorious army seemed too great a reward for their poor services, so each raised his hand to the salute again and repeated the General's words–

"God save the King!"

The General then turned to the hunter, who had been an interested and sympathetic witness of this stirring scene, but as he spake his voice softened, for he had noticed that down the bronzed cheek of the old man there trickled a tear.

"Frontiersman, what is your name?" he asked.

There was a pause, and for a few seconds the hunter's eyes were turned to Jamie, and a strange far-away look came into his face. Then in a half-broken voice he answered–

"John Stuart of Burnside! An exile!"

"Father!" burst from Jamie's lips, and the next instant the paleface hunter and his son were hugging each other with joy.

The next moment General Townshend advanced to the hunter, and pinning the King's medal upon his breast, he said–

"He is no longer an exile who wears this honoured decoration. John Stuart, I thank you for the work you have already done, but there are still further services that I wish to ask of you. I understand that your knowledge of the river and the forest from this point to Mont Royale is unsurpassed by that of any person in the camp. Your knowledge will shortly be invaluable to us. I appoint you as Frontiersman and Chief Guide to the British Army in the Canadas, and, furthermore, I desire to say that His Majesty shall be reminded after the war of the important services which I trust you will then have rendered to your country."

"General," said the hunter, "I am an exile from my native land, but I have never committed a crime, and my conscience is clear. England has treated me unkindly, but I love my country, and without any thought of reward I freely offer you my services. If necessary, I will gladly die for my country."

"Thank you, Frontiersman!" said the General, touched by these words. "A grateful country will not forget your devotion to her interests in the hour of her need. May every son of Britain likewise forget his private wrongs in England's hour of danger."

Four days later, on that memorable 17th of September, 1759, the white flag was hung out from the citadel at Quebec, and on the next day the Gibraltar of North America passed for ever from its old masters into the hands of Britain.

"Look, Jack! The French ensign is coming down," said Jamie, and they both looked towards the citadel, and a moment afterwards, amid the clash of martial music, the salute of the batteries, and the wild cheering of the soldiers, the English flag waved proudly over the fort and the river.

"There, Jamie, our dream has come true, it's the old flag at last, and, thank God, we have helped to plant it there."

After the fall of Quebec, the paleface hunter and the two youths accompanied the army in its victorious march upon Mont Royale, and when the war was over they returned to England. Jack survived his two brothers, and in time became the Squire of Burnside, and I find that to John Stuart, Esquire, of Burnside, Yorkshire,

a grant of Crown land was made for his services to his country, and that the old farmhouse, which still stands, above the wood and the trout-stream, was built by him and his son Jamie in 1775. And there they lived happily for many years, and there Jamie's descendants live to this day, for only two years ago, while visiting his ancestral home and poring over ancient deeds and the old family Bible, with its records and dates, the author discovered this forgotten story of adventure and peril.

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