THE BOY CAPTIVE

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PARLEY

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William Dowdy
Christmas

THE BOY CAPTIVE.

THE BOY CAPTIVE;

OR,

Jumping Rabbit's Story.

BY

PETER PARLEY.

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The Boy Captive.

CHAPTER I.

The beginning—My earliest recollections—My Home—My parents—A fearful scene.

KIND reader, as you and I are about to take a ramble together, I beg leave to settle one or two points at the outset.

In the first place, then, I shall tell you my story in a very simple, plain way; for the circumstances of my life have qualified me to speak in no other fashion. In the next place, I shall endeavour to make my story the means of giving you some useful information. I have been a wanderer over the Far West; have seen the rivers, the mountains, the valleys, the wild animals, the tribes of Indians that are there; I have crossed the Rocky Mountains, and stood upon the shore of the broad Pacific; and I have thus picked up a good deal of information.

While, therefore, I shall give you an account of my adventures, I shall endeavour to make you acquainted with some matters relating to the geography, the natural history, and the manners and customs of the great West. Thus, while I try to amuse you, I shall try also to give you some little knowledge. I hope this arrangement will suit you; for if I give you *cake*, to which I compare tales of adventure, you should be content to take, now and then, a slice of solid *bread and butter*, to which I compare such useful matters as geography and natural history.

And now to begin. At the period of my earliest recollection, I must have been about six years old. My father was then living on the White River, nearly one hundred miles west of the Mississippi, and in what is now the state of Arkansas. His house, which was only a log cabin, was four or five miles from any other white man's dwelling. There was no town or village in that quarter, excepting a few scattered settlers here and there; the country was still uninhabited, save by native wild animals, or roving tribes of Indians.

The latter were at peace with the whites, for a long period, and therefore we had no fear of

them. We frequently saw parties of Indian hunters, and occasionally considerable numbers came into the region where we dwelt. They often visited our cabin, but never gave us any

annoyance. But the time arrived when a change took place. We heard fearful stories of Indian massacres, and more than one family, in the region where we lived, were entirely cut off.

I remember that one night my father came home, and told my mother that a party of Kickapoos had been in the neighbourhood, and killed every member of the family which lived nearest to us. He, of course, expected they

would be upon us before morning! What was now to be done? The number of the savages was over a dozen, and it seemed quite hopeless to attempt either resistance or escape. If we were to fortify the house, we might make a brief defence, and kill a few of the enemy, but we must yield at last, and fall into the hands of our exasperated foe. If we were to fly, the savages, keen as bloodhounds in following their prey, would soon track us out, and we should become their easy victims.

People who are brought up in quiet and secure towns, free from the dangers of the wilderness, and who only hear of adventures with the Indians, can hardly appreciate the feelings of those who are inured to every species of danger and trial. I remember the looks of my father and mother upon that fearful night, when they expected the savages to be upon their dwelling in a few hours, and to see themselves and their children become the victims of their bloody vengeance. They were brave people, and, though their countenances looked troubled, there was more of courage than fear in their faces.

There were four of us children: my brother Dick, about fourteen years old; my sister Jane,

two years younger, and little Harry, a year younger than myself. The decision of our parents being to fortify the house, and make the best defence in their power, we were all, except Harry, employed in the preparations. The latter was the only one who did not comprehend what was going on. While the rest of us were busy in bringing in the axes, hoes, spades, and other implements capable of being used for a deadly encounter, Harry was running about, seeming to enjoy the flurry and rejoice in the spirit of activity that animated the scene.

Everything that could be done for defence was at last accomplished. The windows were strongly barred; the door was barricadoed; the wide-mouthed chimney, down which an Indian might easily have slid, was defended by large sticks crossed and jammed into the crevices of the stone work of the fireplace. Near the door sat our dog, Tiger; he was stretched upon his belly at full length on the floor, with his chin between his extended fore-legs. He was not asleep, for it was evident that he understood that something fearful was in the wind. An erect fore-corner of his ear showed that he was listening intently; and his

eye, steadily bent toward the door, betokened the expectation of danger in that direction.

My father loaded the old gun, now our chief hope, with care; he picked the flint, examined the priming, looked at his stock of powder and ball; and now, as if everything was prepared, he sat down. I remember how he looked, when he turned round and glanced at my mother and us children. I remember how she looked too. My father's lips trembled, and his eyes seemed to grow dim, for he lifted his hand and brushed it across his brow; but in a moment he looked again at his priming, glanced at old Tiger, fixed his eye on the door, and sat still. His face now became as stern as marble. My mother sat on a bench in one corner, and we children behind her upon the floor. By her side was an axe. She was very pale, and her eye turned often, first on father and then up to Heaven. Once in a while, she looked round on us, and especially upon little Harry, with a long gaze, as if it might be her last, and then a kind of shudder came over her. I think my mother was a very beautiful woman, for never in any dream has anything so like an angel visited my fancy, as my faint remembrances of my mother in that fearful hour. Her eyes

were blue, her hair light, and her whole appearance soft and gentle. Never did she seem so gentle as when she looked around on us; yet, as she gazed on the axe at her side, and stole a glance around upon the defences of our little fort, her look changed, and she had the aspect of a hero.

We sat for more than an hour in breathless silence. Every ear was stretched to catch the slightest sound, until the effort became painful. At last, Tiger lifted his head and uttered a low growl. In an instant after, he sprang to his feet, his eye glittering like fire, every muscle of his body being stretched for action. My father looked through a crevice he had left for observation. It was a clear moonlight night, and soon he saw four dusky figures gliding through the edge of the adjacent forest. He turned to mother, and said, in a firm tone, "They are coming!" She reached for the axe; I saw her fingers tremble as she grasped it. Dick, with a stout club, moved forward and stood by my father. He was a noble fellow; black-eyed, black-haired, and daring as a wild-cat. His look gave tone and courage to us all. He was stout for his years, and as he turned round to look at the group in the corner, there was some-

thing in his manner which seemed to say, "You shall have a brave defence!" I saw the tears come in my mother's eyes; but it was not from fear.

There was silence for some time, when suddenly the most fearful yell burst upon our ears! It seemed to come from a hundred voices, and filled the forest with its terrific echoes. The scream of the panther is not so terrible as the war-cry of the savage, especially when heard at night, and by those who are exposed to his fury. Nearer and nearer came the yell, and at last we heard the enemy around our dwelling.

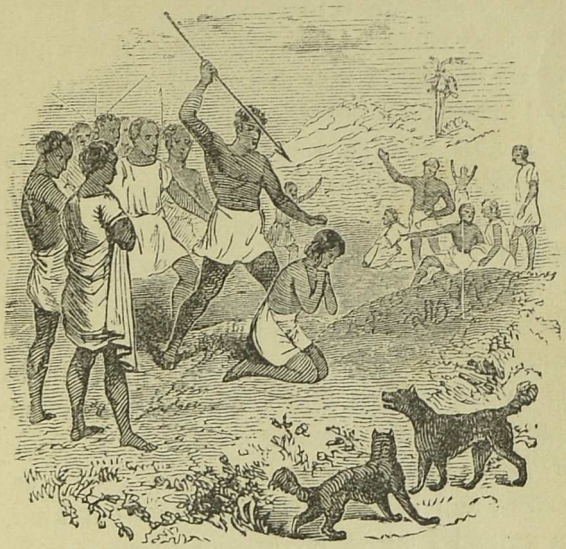
My father, who kept his eye steady at the crevice, now slowly thrust the muzzle of his gun through the hole, and taking a deliberate aim, he fired. There was one wild shriek, a heavy fall, a brisk scampering, and then a death-like silence. This continued for some time, when again the war-whoop burst from the forest, and at least a dozen savages immediately surrounded our dwelling. They encompassed it with dry leaves and branches, and set them on fire. In a few minutes the smoke began to fill the room, and shortly the outside of our little cabin was wrapped in a sheet of flame!

Up to this time, my remembrance of the

scene is very distinct; but what immediately followed I cannot clearly recall. I have a faint recollection, or fancy, of my father rushing out through the blaze, and struggling with a tall Indian in the flames, till they both fell exhausted and involved in the conflagration. I have a dim remembrance of my mother bursting out through the falling timbers, carrying little Harry on her back, and leading Jane and myself through the flames. But I was suffocated with smoke and overwhelmed with the terrors of the scene. From this point my memory of that dreadful night is a blank—save one incident alone. Old Tiger and Dick went before my mother, as if they were her peculiar guard. The poor dog was dreadfully singed, for he had already had one or two deadly tussels with the Indians in the flames. The long silken hair of his ears and tail was burnt off, and the latter stuck out straight and stiff, looking actually as if it had been a cooked sausage. In that fearful hour, I remember to have thought that it had quite a ludicrous appearance.

The poor dog, however, nad his senses about him, and kept with my mother and Dick, till we had proceeded a considerable distance. We

were concealed from the view of the Indians by a dense cloud of smoke, that rolled between us and them. We had not gone far, however, before we were discovered, and two savages immediately pursued us. Coming up with us, they fell upon Dick, who defended himself for a time, but receiving a blow upon the head, he was laid prostrate on the earth. Tiger, half dead as he was, sprang upon his body, and stood erect for his defence. One of the savages struck him over the head, and with a sad moan the poor creature lay dead by the side of his master. A sickness now came over me. I tottered, and fell unconscious to the ground.



CHAPTER II.

I am carried to an Indian village—The scene described—Am insulted by the young Indians—They get well punished—Painful thoughts.

I DO not know how long it was after the scene I have described, when I so far recovered my senses as to notice the objects around me. When my consciousness returned, I was lying

on the ground, and no one appeared to be near me. I attempted to rise, and nearly got upon my feet, when I became giddy, and was obliged to sit down. I was distressed with a pain in the head and a burning thirst.

I now saw at a little distance a group of Indians, and about the same day one of them noticed me. He spoke and pointed to me, upon which an Indian woman and two children ran towards me. I fell upon my knees, and begged them to have pity on me. The woman spoke to me, but I could not understand her. The children, who were Indians, and fierce-looking creatures, stood at a little distance for a time, as if afraid of me. Pretty soon the whole group came nearer, and in order to discover what kind of an animal I might be, one of them struck me with his spear.

I writhed and groaned, for it hurt me; but this only made the young Indians laugh. The woman scolded them, however; and when the youngsters gave me another poke, she flew toward them, and aimed a blow with her hand at the head of the aggressor. It missed, however, and the two imps ran laughing to a distance. There, in safety, they stood gibbering and jeering, like two monkeys, till the woman,

in a rage, set out after them; but diving into a thicket, the young rogues easily escaped and disappeared.

The men having left me, the woman helped me upon my legs, and took me to a tent, around which were several Indians, mostly women and children. I noticed also several other tents, and knew that I was in an Indian village or encampment. How I had been brought hither I did not know, nor did I ever afterwards ascertain. It is probable, however, that it was by the care of the Indian woman, in whose charge I now was. She took me into a tent, and procured me some water. This refreshed me greatly, and I was soon able to take notice of the things around me.

The tent was made of dried deerskins, and was supported by poles about twelve feet long. The whole tent was about fourteen feet across. There were in it, a few skins of bears and buffaloes, a bow and some arrows, two or three gourd-shells, a small brass kettle, a buffalo's pate with the horns attached, a bunch of long, crooked bear's claws, and a bundle of human scalps. These were all the articles I noticed.

After a while I felt very sleepy, and lying down, I had a long nap. When I awoke I felt

nearly well, and went and looked out of the tent. There were at least fifty tents around, occupying a space of several acres, upon the edge of a small prairie, bordered by forests. The scene was quite lively; for two or three hundred Indians were before me—nearly all, however, being women, children, and old men. I was afraid to go forth, and was about to creep back into the tent, when the woman before mentioned came, and taking me by the arm, led me out.

I was very soon surrounded by a host of people, and such a chattering I never heard before. A ring was formed around me, and every one seemed to have something to say. If I had been a new monster under the sun, there could not have been more wonder expressed. I imagine that they treated me very much as a parcel of Boston boys would treat a young alligator, should they happen to catch one. I looked in the faces of many of these persons, but I saw not one look of kindness. At last a boy about my own age, who had a small bow in his hand, shot an arrow at me, which, being pointed with a bit of sharp iron, entered the flesh of my arm. A moment after, two or three of the little savages set upon me, and began to tear off my

clothes. They pulled me hither and thither, and in a short space I was entirely naked.

For a time I made no resistance, for I had an idea that natural pity would teach even these creatures to spare one so helpless as myself. But finding that they had no pity, my anger began to rise; and when the boy who had shot his arrow into my arm came up and began to pinch me, I struck him by the side of his head, and he went reeling and tumbling, like a smitten nine-pin, upon the ground. This caused a loud laugh, and I saw that a feeling of interest and respect was instantly created in my behalf by my resistance. This taught me a lesson, and instead of waiting for Indian pity and sympathy, I determined to obtain the regard of my captors by my spirit. When, therefore, the little imps set upon me again, as they very soon did, they paid dearly for it. I was very strong and active for my age; and when, at last, an Indian lad, much larger than myself, came softly behind me, and gave my hair a twitch, I turned to punish him.

The fellow fled, and I pursued. The ring opened to give him space, and he struck into the little plain encircled by the tents. I hung close at his heels. It was a tight race, and

such yells broke from the congregation of Indians as I had never imagined. The fellow went nearly across the plain, and, dodging this way and that, sought to throw me off. At length he passed round one of the tents, and returned toward the point from which we started. I followed, and finally, just as we reached the ring, I seized his hair, and gave it a jerk which made him yell like a catamount. This completely sealed my triumph. The looks of contempt around were exchanged for those of admiration, and I was borne back to my tent with shouts of praise and exultation.

It was but a few weeks before I was at home among the Indians. I was adopted as the son of the woman who had taken care of me, in the place of one she had lost. By degrees I became accustomed to Indian sports and pastimes, and gradually learned their language. I was generally well treated after the fashion of savage life. There is little family government among these people; everything between the children is settled by strength; those principles of kindness, justice, pity, and tenderness for the weak, which are so strongly inculcated among civilized people, being unknown to them. Matters are regulated very much as between animals—a

herd of bisons, for instance, or a pack of wolves. I had, therefore, to fight my way, and being very strong, I not only fared pretty well, but I obtained no little applause. At first, I was taunted and sneered at for being *white*, but I always punished such impudence, and at last these gibes ceased.

I often thought of my father and mother, my sister and brother, and longed to know their fate—for I was uncertain whether they had escaped or had perished, on that fearful night in which our house had been reduced to ashes. Of these things, however, I could obtain no information. I knew too little of the Indian language to ask questions, which often arose in my own mind. Sometimes, and especially at night, the thoughts of home and my kindred stole over me, and the tears would come into my eyes; but in the morning these painful thoughts would subside, and perhaps be forgotten in the pursuit of present objects.

CHAPTER III.

The return of the war party—Sports and festivities.

After I had been about a month in the village, a swift Indian, dispatched by the warriors who had been absent on an expedition against some distant tribes, came in and announced that the whole party were near at hand, and would enter the village the following morning. Preparations were therefore made to receive them.

All was bustle and activity, though this seemed to consist more in running about, and chattering like a set of magpies, than anything else. The children leaped, frolicked, shouted, and fought mimic battles as well as real ones, in which they bit, scratched, kicked, and pulled hair, in honour of the coming celebration. The women went about from tent to tent, talking with great animation and keeping up the hum, which might be heard at the farther extremity of the village.

Evening at last came, but there was no cessation of the excitement. The greater part of the night was spent in talking, squabbling,

dancing, jumping, leaping, and yelling. At length the morning came, and just as the sun was rising, an Indian, painted blue and red, carrying on his head the skin taken from the pate of a grisly bear, was seen creeping along in the edge of the adjacent wood. He was soon followed by another, painted in a similar manner, with the horns and pate of a buffaloe upon his head. Others succeeded, all of them painted and dressed in the most wild and fantastic manner, until about a hundred warriors had gathered in the thickets of the forest, close to the village.

A pause of at least half an hour ensued. All within the wood was silent, and not a trace of the savages that lurked in its bosom could be discovered. The women, children, and old men of the village had gathered in the open space encircled by the tents, where they awaited the coming spectacle in breathless expectation.

At last, a wild yell, as if a thousand demons filled the air, broke from the forest. In an instant after, the warriors started from their cover and ran toward the village with the greatest swiftness. Approaching the group of women and children, they formed themselves in a circle and began to dance in a most violent

manner. They leaped, jumped, ran, brandished their weapons, screamed, chattered, and appeared more like infernal spirits than human creatures. They were all on foot except about a dozen, who were on horseback, and attired in the most fantastic manner. These rode round the circle with great swiftness, flourishing their long spears, and performing a sort of wild mimic battle.

Nothing could be more fierce and frightful than the whole scene, yet the women and children were greatly delighted, and evinced their ectasy by uproarious acclamations. The warriors were excited by the applause to greater feats, and for about an hour they kept up their savage revel. They seemed to be as proud of their greasy paint and their savage foppery, as a well-dressed company of militia marching on a muster-day through one of our villages. A bear's or buffalo's pate was fully equal to a cocked hat; a raccoon's or oppossum's hide was equivalent to a pair of epaulettes; the bow and arrow were an offset to the sword.

But the Indian warriors had one advantage over our training-day soldiers. They had been in actual service, and carried with them evidences of their victory. Several of them bore in their

hands large bundles of bloody scalps, which they had taken from their enemies, and these they flourished in the faces of the admiring spectators. It is obvious that the same vanity and foppery which are found in the fair-weather soldiers of towns and cities, belong to the savage warriors of the wilderness.

At length, the ceremony was over, and the savages dispersed themselves to their several wigwams. The next day, however, they had a great exhibition, which was a kind of war-dance, in which the warriors attempted to exhibit their several battles and exploits. It was, in fact, a sort of pantomime, in which several of the Indians displayed great powers of mimicry. Though I was not much accustomed to these things, I understood a good deal of what the Indians meant by their performances.

One of these fellows amused me very much. He seemed to be fond of fun, and, like the clown in a circus, appeared to think more of making a laugh than anything else. It seemed, from his representation, that on one occasion he was sent to spy out the situation of a party of Indians, whom they intended to attack. It was night, and as he was proceeding along a deer path in the forest, he chanced to see a

shunk immediately before him. The creature stood still, and positively refused to stir a step.

The Indian hesitated for some time what to do, but at last he put an arrow to the bow-string, and shot the impertinent animal to the heart. The air was, however, immediately filled with the creature's effluvia, and the Indians, whom the spy was seeking, being ever on the watch, were startled by the circumstance, and the spy himself was obliged to retreat for safety. This whole story was easily comprehended from the admirable mimicry of the actor. Nothing could exceed his drollery, except the applause of the spectators. He seemed to have the reputation of an established wag, for he could hardly turn his eye, or crook his finger, but the action was followed with bursts of applause.

There was one thing that characterized all the warriors, and that was a love of boasting and self-glorification. Every one represented himself as a hero, and as performing the most wonderful feats of strength and valour. Boasting, I suspect, is a thing that naturally belongs to those who have little refinement, and modesty is doubtless the fruit of those finer sentiments which belong to civilization.

For several days there were sports and festivities, and every one seemed to give himself up to amusement. The warriors had brought home with them a young Indian prisoner, who was about eighteen years old. He was a fine, proud-looking fellow, and when he was brought out and encircled by all the Indians, he seemed to survey them with a kind of scorn. He was tied to a stake, and the young Indians, stationed at a certain distance, were allowed to shoot their arrows at him. Several of them hit him, and the blood trickled freely down his body. He stood unmoved, however, and seemed not to notice the wounds. The women then surrounded him, and jeered him, making mouths, and pinching his flesh and punching him with sharp sticks.

At last, it was determined by the chiefs to let him loose upon the prairie, and give him a chance of escape. The warriors were to pursue him. If he was retaken, he was to die; if he outran his pursuers, he was to have his liberty.

The prisoner was unbound and placed at the distance of about six rods in advance of those who were to pursue him; the signal was given, and he departed. He seemed fleet as the mountain deer, and life was the wager for which he ran. He was, however, pursued by

more than half a dozen Indians, scarcely less lightfooted than himself. He struck across the prairie, which lay stretched out for several miles, almost as level as the sea, and, in the distance, skirted by the forest.

He kept in advance of his pursuers, who strained every nerve to overtake him. On he flew, casting an occasional glance backward. The yells broke often from his pursuers, but he was silent. It was for life that he fled, and he would not waste a breath. On he sped, and as he and his followers seemed to grow less and less in the distance, my eyes grew weary of the scene. But such was the interest that I felt for the poor fugitive, that I kept my gaze bent upon the chase for almost an hour.

The Indians seemed at last in the remote distance, to be dwindled to the size of insects; they still strained every limb, though they appeared scarcely to move; they still yelled with all their might, but only an occasional faint echo reached our ears. At last, the fugitive plunged into the forest; his pursuers followed, and they were lost to the view. After the lapse of several hours, the pursuing party returned without their prisoner. He was at liberty in the unbounded forest!

CHAPTER IV.

Hunting adventures.

SOME time now passed without any remarkable event. After a hunting or war expedition, the Indian men usually spend a large part of their time in idleness. For several weeks after their return, the warriors might be seen stretched at full length in their wigwams upon the beds of skins, and often, during the day, upon the bare ground, basking in the warm sunshine.

Thus they would repose day and night, sleeping a part of the time, and dozing away the rest of the hours. When hungry, they arose and ate the meal provided for them by the women, and then returned to their rest. At this period, they seemed like mere animals, as wolves or foxes, idly slumbering in their caves, careless of the past, the present, and the future.

Once in a while these men would rouse themselves from their indolence, and spend a night in a wild war-dance, or in other sports. When excited in their amusements. they shook off

their lethargy, and seemed totally changed from the stupid beings which they appeared to be a few hours before. Their black eyes would now flash with fiery excitement; their parted lips would display their white teeth; their long, black air would stream in the wind; their hands and arms would exhibit the most lively gestures, and their whole form seem to be animated by intense excitement. After the sport was over, these warriors would relapse into the same state of merely animal existence, as if they had no minds, no cares, no plans, no fears or hopes.

Thus some weeks passed away, but at last it became necessary that a supply of food should be obtained. It is true that small game was obtained by the boys, and some of the men, almost every day. This consisted of the heathhen, which resembles the partridge or pheasant of the Atlantic states; black and grey squirrels, rabbits and hares, wild turkeys, raccoons, prairie dogs, etc. These creatures were abundant, and I often accompanied the young Indians in hunting them.

There were some guns and rifles in the tribe, but the chief weapons were the bows and arrows. The boys, and most of the young men, had no other. It was surprising to see with what

precision and force the arrows were thrown. I have often seen a squirrel, perched upon the limb of an aged tree, and being nearly a hundred feet in air, look down as if to laugh and jeer at the sportsman below; when the arrow was sent from the string, and, striking him in the head, he was brought whirling and sprawling to the ground.

There were several small rivers and lakes in the neighbourhood, and some of them were stocked with fish; the shooting of them with the bow and arrow was a favourite sport, and one of our common means of subsistence.

In these hunts I took a keen delight; and such was my enterprise and success, that I soon became rather famous as a hunter of the lesser game. My agility in pursuing a wounded bird or quadruped, and the facility with which I threaded the tangled forests, gave me the title of *Jumping Rabbit*, which long continued to be my name.

In these hunts, we seldom wandered to any great distance from the encampment, and rarely remained out over night. In a few instances, we were absent for two or three days, and extended our excursions to the distance of twenty or thirty miles. I recollect that in one

of these expeditions we came to a considerable lake, entirely surrounded with dense forests. It was difficult even to peep through the woods, for the trees stood so very close together, and the spaces between them were choked up with dead trunks and branches, woven and wedged together, as if the whole constituted one fabric.

With a great deal of labour, creeping and winding, like serpents, through the openings, we made our way through the forest, and came to the shores of the lake. Accustomed, as I was, to nature in her wild moods, the scene that then presented itself greatly surprised me. The territory that encircled the lake consisted, to a great extent, of hills and cliffs, which stood close to the water, and formed, along its whole border, what seemed to be a mountain wall, rising almost to the clouds, and thus bestowing upon the spot an aspect of the most perfect protection and seclusion.

As if invited to the place by its security and repose, myriads of aquatic birds were there, some resting upon its bosom, some wading in its depths, some standing along its borders, and thousands winnowing the air above its surface. There were flocks of swans, with arching necks and snowy bosoms; multitudes of pelicans,

either darting down upon their prey, or lazily digesting their food as they stood upon the rocks along the shore; and wild geese and ducks almost without number. There was the pensive heron, standing half leg deep in the water, and patiently waiting to snap up some luckless frog or fish; there was the tall crane, with crested head and spiteful countenance, looking keenly into the mud for his meal; and red flamingoes, standing in rows that looked like gaudy files of soldiers.

The scene presented the idea of a paradise for water-birds; a spot unknown to man, and wholly secured to the use and behoof of its feathered tenantry. The birds themselves seemed so to regard it, for such were their habits of confidence, that when we approached them, they hardly noticed us or moved from us. We shot a few arrows among them, and killed several, but this created no general alarm. One of our party had a rifle, and taking aim at the leader of a long file of swans that glided upon the water near us, he fired, and the noble bird, uttering a faint scream, spread his wings for flight, and fell dead upon the surface. His companions rose heavily from the lake, and sweeping round and round in the air, settled

again upon the water encircling their dead companion.

Loaded with game, we now set out for our return; but this expedition was destined to be signalized by adventures. In our progress homeward, we had occasion to cross a deep valley, through which a considerable river found its way. On the high rocky banks of this stream our party sat down to rest themselves for an hour or two, and then set forward. It happened that I had crept into the bushes and fallen asleep; and when my companions went away, not observing me, they left me soundly wrapt in repose.

They had been gone a considerable time when I was waked by a noise, and looking up, I saw a huge grisly bear at a little distance, looking stedfastly at me. I knew that the next moment he would be upon me, and seizing my bow and arrows, I sprang forward, and at a single bound leaped over the high bank into the stream. It was not more than fifty yards in width, and I had hardly crossed it when I heard the heavy plunge of the bear behind me. Clambering up the opposite bank with the quickness of a wild-cat, I seized upon the bark and branches of a tree, and rapidly mounted it.

The fierce beast came close upon me, and seizing the boughs with its claws and teeth, tore them in a hundred pieces. By this time, however, I had ascended beyond its reach.

The grisly bear is twice the size of the common bear, and from its savage disposition and great strength, is altogether the most dreadful beast of the American continent. But, happilv for me, it does not often climb trees. I therefore felt secure. Pausing on a large limb of the tree, I looked down at my shaggy acquaintance below. He had now got over his fury, and gazing in my face with a look of the deepest interest, he seemed to think, if he did not say—"Oh, how I love you!"

After sitting upon the tree for some time, I began to grow impatient to be released—but Bruin seemed to have no idea of parting with me thus. He continued for several hours, sitting upon his rump in a kind of brown study, but occasionally looking at me. At last, growing weary, I reclined against the trunk of the tree, and my grisly jailer, as if to torment me, lay down upon the ground, and putting his nose to his tail, seemed to say that he had made up his mind to stay till I should come down. I waited for some time in silence, to see if he

would not fall asleep and allow me an opportunity of escape; but the moment I moved a foot or hand, I could see his keen eye twinkle, thus showing that the sentinel was awake and watchful.

At last I got out of patience, and selecting a good arrow, I sent it fiercely at his head. It struck him over the eye, and evidently gave him great pain, for he growled terribly, and rubbed the wounded place with his huge paw; and finally he looked up at me, at the same time curling his lip and showing a set of teeth that made me shudder. I could easily understand this pantomime, and I knew it to mean something like this: "Sooner or later, my lad, you must come down, and these teeth shall take due revenge upon you!"

Darkness at length came—and still the beast remained at his post. Hour after hour passed away, during which I caught a little sleep, but I was too fearful of falling to the ground to get any sound repose. Early in the morning I heard the call of my companions, and now knew that they had missed me, and were come to find me. I answered their shout with a cry that filled the valley with echoes. The old bear seemed startled; he rose, shook his shaggy coat, and gazed wistfully around.

Directed by my voice, my friends soon drew near; and when they came to the opposite bank of the river, I told them my situation, and pointed out Bruin at the foot of the tree. In a moment the rifle was levelled at my tormentor, and the ball entered his side. Stung with pain, but not mortally wounded, the monster turned towards his new enemy. Leaping into the stream, he began to swim across; but his head being exposed, several arrows were aimed at him, some of which took effect. As he ascended the rocky bank of the river, the rifle being re-loaded was again discharged, and the ball passing through his heart, he fell backward. and rolled with a heavy plash into the stream!

But I have wandered a little from my track. I said that the necessity of obtaining a supply of food at last roused the men of the encampment from their repose. After making due preparation, by providing themselves with knives, bows and arrows, etc., about twenty of them departed; and as I was now a tolerably expert hunter, I was permitted to accompany the party. The events which followed will be described in the next chapter.

CHAPTER V.

The buffalo hunt.

FIVE of our hunting party were on horseback, and the rest on foot. We proceeded over a hilly country for two days, meeting with no other game than a single deer, which was shot by one of the party, thrown across one of the horses, and carried onward. We came, at length, to the borders of an extensive prairie, which lay spread out like the sea before us. In taking a general view of its surface, it seemed to be almost perfectly level. But as we advanced, I perceived that it was undulating, like the ocean thrown into long waves by a gale of wind.

It was now late in the autumn, but the prairie was covered with a great variety of flowers, some of them exceedingly brilliant and beautiful. I hardly noticed these objects then. I was with savages, and they never perceive anything lovely in flowers, or landscapes, or Nature's fairest scenes. It might seem that those who live always in the midst of Nature's

works would feel their beauty and admire them. But it is not so. The exquisite emotions excited in a refined mind by beautiful landscapes and the picturesque objects of nature, belong only to those who have enjoyed the advantages of civilization. No savage is ever either a painter or a poet. You never see these dwellers in the wilderness culling bouquets, or making wreaths of blossoms.

We held a straight course for several hours, until at last we reached a little dell which was covered with trees. At a distance, this appeared like an island in the sea. Here we paused, and preparations were made to remain for some days. Early on the ensuing morning, most of the party were roused, and went forth in quest of game; but the only result was the killing of two or three deer. Several days now passed, but on the fifth day after our arrival we met with more stirring adventures.

Soon after the sun arose, one of the Indians announced that a herd of buffaloes was coming. We all looked in the direction to which he pointed, and, at the distance of nearly two miles, we saw an immense number of objects, seeming like small black spots on the surface of the prairie. These gradually approached us,

and we could soon hear a confused noise, like the distant roar of a tempest. The Indians were immediately on the alert.

As the wind was blowing toward the herd, they were afraid that the quick scent of the buffaloes would perceive us, and that the affrighted animals would take to flight. To avoid this danger, we immediately determined to shift our position. Those who had horses mounted them and departed, and those who were on foot followed them. Some proceeded to the right and some to the left, making a wide sweep, and intending to come in upon the herd in the opposite direction.

We were not long in performing this manœuvre. I shall never forget the scene that was now presented. Before us, and near at hand, were several thousands of these huge animals, many of them equal in size to the largest ox. They had also an aspect entirely distinct from our tame cattle. Their swarthy colour, their wild, shaggy hair, their thick mane, the profusion of rough and bristling hair about the face, the enormous hump upon the shoulders, together with the fierce countenance of these animals, rendered them objects at once striking and formidable.

And if this was their appearance, taken singly, the spectacle of thousands of these huge beasts was hardly short of sublime. The whole mass were moving slowly forward. Some paused occasionally, to nip the herbage, or devour the leaves from a favourite shrub, and others sauntered on with a careless and indifferent air. But many of the bulls, and some of the rest seemed to be almost constantly occupied in wrangling with their neighbours.

Some were pawing the earth and scattering the dust in the air; some were kneeling and plunging their horns into the little hillocks of earth, lowing at the same time, and seeming desirous of giving a challenge to mortal combat; some were already fighting, and, with their horns locked, were straining every nerve for the mastery; others were leaping and frisking as they went; and others still were burying their horns in the sides of such of their brethren as came within their reach. The lowing of the herd was incessant, and came upon the ear with a deafening roar. The air was filled with confused sounds, and the earth was shaken beneath our feet by the trampling multitude.

Accustomed as I was to scenes of adventure, I was still startled at this spectacle, and, for a

time, my mind was somewhat confused. My excitement was increased by an incident which immediately followed. The Indians who had accompanied me had dispersed themselves, and being upon the flank of the herd, and sheltered by the tall grass, were stealing toward their unsuspecting victims.

I had myself crouched down in a thick tuft of grass, upon one of the thousand swells of the prairie. It chanced that a buffalo of the largest size, straying a little from his companions, was coming directly toward the spot where I lay! He soon came near, and I could see his curly pate and the glistening of his eye. He came slowly, but steadily on. I had a rifle in my hand, but such was my amazement that I never thought of using it. I remained crouched upon one knee until the animal was within six feet of me.

It is impossible to describe the consternation depicted in the brute's countenance when he first saw me. He paused for a moment; his eyeballs stood out, his nostrils expanded, and the long stiff hair upon his neck stood erect. After glaring at me for a few seconds, the creature lifted his tail into the air, and sped away at a prodigious canter.

He had proceeded but a few rods, however, before I heard the report of a rifle, and the flying buffalo stumbled and fell to the earth, tearing up the soil in the heavy plunge. He, however, rose to his feet, and proceeded, with a staggering gallop, for about a hundred yards. He then paused, and at length stood still. I came forward, supposing that the wound was mortal, and that the creature would soon fall to the earth; but what was my surprise, on coming up with him, to discover three or four wolves standing in front of him, and evidently on the point of making an attack.

Without reflection, I discharged my rifle among them, and killed two of them. The noise directed the attention of the wounded buffalo to me, and he immediately turned upon me. I easily kept out of his way at first; but his speed increased, and I soon found it necessary to exert myself to the utmost for escape. My great activity was now my only hope. The raging beast followed me at long bounds, and I was frequently obliged to throw him off by a short turn to the right or left, in order to escape the plunge of his horns. I had already begun to grow weary and short of breath, when I heard a loud bellow and a heavy fall to the

earth. I looked around—my pursuer lay dead upon the ground.

After a few moments my self-possession returned. I loaded my rifle, and proceeded toward the scene of action; for my companions were now at their work. I had an opportunity of seeing the manner in which the Indians on horseback attack the buffalo. I chanced to be near one of our bravest huntsmen as he assailed a bull of the largest size. The man was firmly mounted, but he had no other weapons than a bow and a quiver of arrows. The buffalo had perceived the approach of the enemy, and immediately fled at full gallop.

The hunter pursued, and, speedily coming up with the animal, he drew his arrow to the head, and lodged it between its ribs. It entered more than one-half its length, but the buffalo continued its flight. Another and another arrow were speedily discharged, and all of them took effect. The last was almost entirely buried in the flank of the huge beast. Stung with agony, he wheeled suddenly round, and made a fierce plunge at the mounted horseman. The movement was sudden and rapid, but the blow was evaded by a swaying movement to the left. The impulse of the horseman carried him past

the animal for a considerable distance, and the latter, apparently incapable of further exertion, stood still.

His sides were covered with blood, and mingled foam and blood were streaming from his open mouth. He held his head down, his tongue protruded, his eyes stood out, and he shivered in every limb. At the same time, he uttered a low and plaintive bellow. The unrelenting hunter speedily turned his horse back, and again approached his prey. He paused a moment, and seemed to hesitate whether it were needful to spend another arrow; but after a short space, he placed one upon the string. The bison watched the moment, and, at the instant it sped, uttered a terrible roar, and sprang again toward the horseman. The latter prepared for the movement, leaped aside, and the exhausted prey rolled, with a crushing sound, to the earth. The last arrow had reached his heart.

I looked over the vast plain, and the countless herd of bisons were now in full flight; plunging, galloping, and bellowing, they swept over the plain. It is impossible to give an adequate idea of the scene. A variety of stunning sounds fell upon the ear, and the earth trembled as if

shaken by an earthquake. Yet, amid this scene of confusion, the Indians seemed in their element. Mingling with the crowd of animals, their arrows flew and their bullets sped. Those who were on foot, and those who were mounted, alike kept up with the flying herd.

Nothing could exceed the fierceness of their looks, or the animation of their actions. Their whole souls seemed engaged in the work of death. Their hair streaming in the wind, their eyes gleaming with fiery exultation, and speeding from point to point with incredible swiftness, they had an aspect of wildness, energy, and power, which words alone cannot paint. For my own share in the adventure, I can say but little. I had several fair shots, but they were all without success, excepting in one instance. A buffalo calf, toward the latter part of the chase, was passing near, and I brought it down with a single arrow.

I must not omit to mention one incident that particularly attracted my attention in the midst of these scenes. From the moment the attack began, I had noticed several wolves gliding hither and thither, and seeming to watch the progress of the fight. These creatures follow the herds of bisons, and, if one of them

becomes sick or wounded, they attack and devour him. They seemed now to be quite aware that something was to be done in their behalf, and, accordingly, gathered in considerable numbers to the place where the attack was about to be made.

Several buffaloes had now been slain, and others were wounded. As I was passing along, I saw a buffalo that had received a bullet in his side, and was severely hurt. The creature seemed exhausted, and incapable of flight. As if understanding the exact nature of the case, several wolves had gathered around him, and, squatting upon their haunches at a respectful distance, were waiting the moment when the animal should be sufficiently feeble to render it safe for them to make the attack. At my approach, however, the buffalo made a new effort, and galloped beyond my reach, followed, however, by his unrelenting and greedy attendants.

In about half an hour after the attack commenced, it was all over. The herd had passed on; but scattered along, for the space of three or four miles, lay no less than sixteen dead buffaloes, the fruit of our efforts. I must say, however, that the packs of wolves, which con-

stantly hung around the buffaloes, devoured two or three that we had killed before we could secure them.

Several days were spent in skinning our game, in cutting off the best parts of the meat, and in preparations for our return. At last, having loaded our horses with the hides and a portion of the meat, and each man taking what he could carry, we set out upon our journey, and, after a laborious march, reached the settlement.

CHAPTER VI.

Another hunting expedition—The prairie set on fire—A frog concert.

ALTHOUGH we had thus secured a large quantity of buffalo meat, it was thought necessary to make another hunting expedition, in order to obtain ample supplies for the winter. A party of nearly thirty hunters, therefore, set out for a small prairie, some hundred miles to the south, famous for the quantity of deer found there. I was one of the number, being by this time almost considered to belong to the tribe.

After five days' march, we came to a prairie which consisted of a level space of ground about twenty miles in diameter. On one side it was bounded by a river, with rocky banks about two hundred feet high; on all other sides it was bordered by wooded hills.

The mode adopted here was one which I had never seen before; the prairie being covered with tall dry grass, this was set on fire at several points forming a circle. The flames extended until there was a complete belt of fire, some seven or eight miles in circuit, raging over the plain. It was a terrible yet sub-

lime scene, rendered still more dreadful by the roar like that of the ocean in a gale of wind.

There was but one opening in the belt of fire, and that was toward a point of the cliff near the river. The weather was very dry, and at first there was no wind; but as the flames extended, they seemed to create a strong breeze, which drew the fire with the greatest swiftness across the prairie. Hidden in the tall grass, there were a great many elk and deer of various kind. Very soon they began to scent the flames; they started in great fright, and ran away; but they speedily found themselves encircled by the raging conflagration. Smitten with panic, they rushed hither and thither. Now and then, one would become maddened with terror, and plunge into the fire, and perish.

As the circle grew narrower, the whole congregation of animals, now furious with fright, gradually drew near the opening left for them at the cliff. Finding a space here which was free from the raging element, and, in their terror, having lost all their ordinary caution, they rushed through the opening, and plunged headlong over the rocky precipice! Falling upon the stones beneath, which skirted the river, they were killed at once, or if only

wounded, the Indians were there to dispatch them. In this single day we secured thirteen elk, twenty-eight deer, and three antelopes. There were a few bisons upon the prairie; but these took the scent before the fire closed in a circle, and all escaped by breaking through the openings, except two, which were driven over the rocks and made a part of our spoils.

It was useless for us to try this trick of catching animals on the prairie over again; for all that remained had fled to the forests, and besides, we had secured as much game as we could carry. So we set out for home.

On our journey we met with a troop of wild horses, some fourteen in number, and we tried to catch one of them. But they were the most timid and watchful creatures I ever saw. It was indeed quite impossible to get near them. I was told that some of the Indian tribes further south were very skilful in catching wild horses, and that they made quite a business of it.

We also met with a small band of Osage Indians, who attacked us one night as we lay in our tents. They came upon us by stealth, and then set up the war-whoop as they plunged into our little camp. We were taken by surprise, and the enemy succeeded in carrying off

all our horses, four in number, together with a considerable part of our game. We pursued them the next day, but without finding them.

At last we reached home, and we got plenty of jokes from the women for being robbed by the Osages. The loss of our game proved serious, for before spring we were short of food; and as the winter was severe where we were, the whole tribe moved to the south, somewhere in the neighbourhood of the Arkansas river. There we found plenty of small game and abundance of fish.

I remember to have been greatly astonished, as well as amused, by the songs of the various animals crowded into the swamps in those regions. The spring began as early as February, and never had I imagined such a hubbub as burst from the thickets when all the birds, frogs, and alligators were satisfied winter was over.

Gentle reader! Did you ever hear a flock of children—hearty, healthy hoydens—girls and boys, black eyes and blue eyes—when all by themselves, in an attic, or a barn, or a school-room? Whew! what a racket! But excuse me, reader, if I ask another question. Were you ever, of a summer evening, in the swamp of a southern climate—one of those which border

the southern portions of the Mississippi or the Arkansas?

If not—then you have never heard one of the queerest concerts that can be listened to. How shall I describe it? We may portray things to the eye by pictures, but we cannot paint sounds. To what shall I compare the swamp serenade of the tropics? Alas, it is without a parallel. The congregated uproar of the poultry-yard—cocks crowing, turkeys gobbling, hens cackling—

> "Cut-cut-cadaw cut—
> Lay an egg every day,
> And have to go barefoot!"—

geese gobbling; ducks quacking; Guinea-hens yelling; pigs squealing—this is nothing. Reader, you may have heard the soft serenade of a couple of cats beneath your window, sounding all the louder because of your anxiety to get to sleep, and the death-like stillness around; but this is nothing!

You have perhaps heard the shout of a school set free—the hubbub of a busy factory—the clatter of steamboat paddles—the rush of some spit-fire engine and its train upon a railroad track—the tearing fire of a militia muster, "altogether"—which means one after another. All this you may have heard. Nay more—by

an effort of fancy, you may have put them all together, and worked one into another by Marmaduke Multiply's table—crossways, and up and down—and yet you have but a faint idea of the clangour made by the frogs, alligators, whippoorwills, chuck-will's-widows, and other songsters of a southern swamp, when they set up for a real serenade—*all by themselves!*

We all know that the Italian orchestras undertake to describe storms, tempests, and battles—shipwrecks, love, and murder—by music. If one of the opera companies will go to an Arkansas swamp, listen to the performances there, and come back and give us a good imitation, I engage they shall make their fortune.

Mr. Southey undertook to tell about the cataract of Lodore, and he attempted to convey some notion of the commotion of the waters by the gushing of his lines, and he succeeded very well; but how can any one put the puffing of alligators into rhyme? Old Homer, I am told, has imitated frogs in Greek—but the thing is scarcely possible in English.

After all I have said, gentle reader, I shall not attempt to describe the songs of the swamps aforesaid. This I must leave to yourself. Suppose that you are in Arkansas, or Louisiana;

suppose that it is sunset, of a day in April or May. A swampy thicket is before you; around are gigantic plants of a thousand forms, and gaudy flowers of many hues; gnats, mosquitoes, and gallinippers fill the air, and sting you at every available point. Fire-flies begin to glitter. On every hand, as the darkness falls, the scene around becomes illuminated with myriads of these fleeting meteors.

A strange, loud sound bursts suddenly from a bush at your very ear, exclaiming, "Chuck-will's-widow!" It is repeated—slowly at first—and then more rapidly. Pretty soon another voice exclaims, "Whippoorwill!" "Confound us! confound us!" says a croaking throat in the mud. "Botheration! botheration!" says one at a distance. "Thief! thief!" cries another. Then fifty voices break out, and run into each other like the notes of a watchman's rattle. The din rises higher and higher. More voices are added to the chorus, while every one speaks louder and quicker—and ever and anon, the deep voice of the alligator is distinctly heard, betwixt a grunt and guffau—seeming like the notes of the kettle-drum, or double-bass, to this wonderful concert of birds and reptiles, when all by themselves!

CHAPTER VI.

Journey over the Rocky Mountains- -The Pacific—Curious Indian customs—A river full of salmon—Fish story.

If I were to give a minute account of all that happened while I was with the Indians, it would fill a large book. Perhaps I may, some time or other, give a more particular account of my adventures; but I must now condense my

narrative, and give only the leading events of my life with the Indians.

I continued for nearly six years with the tribe of Kickapoos, who first made me their captive. During this period, these Indians frequently shifted their abode, partly with a view to the acquisition of game, and partly to escape the neighbourhood of troublesome enemies. We had occasional skirmishes with other tribes, and once a serious war with the Osages.

Small companies of white hunters and fur traders sometimes visited our camp, taking our furs, and giving us powder, ball, and trinkets in return. The trade in furs became more and more an object to the tribe, and finally, it was a part of their system to dispatch some of the men every winter to the mountainous country at the west, for the purpose of killing foxes, wild-cats, and other animals, in order to obtain their skins.

I accompanied one of these parties, which consisted of eleven men. We proceeded, early in the autumn, to the Rocky Mountains, and hearing that game was very abundant on the other side, we traversed that immense range, and found ourselves upon its western slope. We came to a river, which, it was said, emptied

its waters into a great salt lake. Impelled by curiosity, we continued our ramble to the westward, and, at last, reached the shores of the Pacific Ocean.

Novelty strikes even the imagination of the savage. Our party were, therefore, not a little excited when they gazed at the boundless sea, and noticed the greenish tinge of its waters. When they tasted it, and perceived its salt and bitter flavour, they spit violently, and uttered a great many exclamations of astonishment. It was here that I first saw a ship. This was one of the American vessels, going to trade with the Indians on the north-west coast, and to obtain their furs. She passed near us, and I could easily distinguish her sails, her ropes, and some of the men. I had often heard of the white people, since I had been with the Indians, but nothing I had ever seen had given me such an idea of their skill and power as did this vessel.

We lingered along the shores of the Pacific for some weeks, and here we met with various tribes of Indians. Some of these were called Flat-heads, the upper part of their heads being flattened, by placing them in infancy between two boards. It may seem difficult to account

for the prevalence of such a painful and unnatural custom! but we must remember that fashion governs the Indians as well as the white people. Some of the savages bore holes through their ears and noses, for the purpose of suspending jewels therein. Some submit to the burning of the flesh, in order to tattoo the skin; and those we have just mentioned compress the skull between two boards. These things are all done in compliance with fashion.

It must be remembered that the events I am now describing took place twenty years ago, before California belonged to our country, and before the gold-mines were discovered. The place where we came to the Pacific Ocean was, I suppose, the southern part of Oregon. At all events we discovered a river so stocked with fish that they seemed really to fill it; and as this corresponds with the description of the Columbia river, I presume it was one of its branches we saw. The fish were salmon, and we found them delicious.

We learned that the tribes of Indians, all along the coast and for hundreds of miles inland, came to catch salmon in the spring of the year, at which time they ascend the Columbia. Many thousands of Indians are

seen here at this season, engaged in catching and drying fish. They have long tents where they roast and smoke them, and then pound them into a kind of fish-bread, pack them in baskets of willow, and carry them home.

When the Indians arrive at the fishing station, they are very thin and lean, as if half-starved; but in a few weeks they are fat and oily. They feed their horses and dogs on fish, and these animals get very fat also. There is no place in the world where the salmon are so abundant as in the Columbia river.

There is another thing very wonderful in this region of Oregon—and that is, a kind of tree which grows three hundred feet high! The trunks are very often twenty feet in diameter, and grow to the height of two hundred feet without a branch. They are by far the largest trees in the world.

CHAPTER VII.

Return across the Rocky Mountains—I am captured by the Pawnees—I determine to escape—Interesting events.

I MUST now proceed with my story. We at last returned to the Rocky Mountains, and spent the winter in the pursuit of game. We killed a number of wild sheep and wild goats, and several beautiful little antelopes. These creatures we found in small herds at the eastern foot of the mountains. They were exceedingly agile, with gentle, black eyes and mild countenances, and seemed to speed over the ground almost as swiftly as a bird could fly.

Loaded with furs of various kinds, we set out for our return. One night, as we were encamped upon the banks of a small river, we were attacked by a party of about twenty Pawnees. Two of our Indians were killed in the fight. I was myself taken prisoner, and nearly the whole of our furs fell into the hands of the assailants.

I was now taken with my new captors to the encampment of the Pawnees, a distance of five days' journey. I submitted with apparent

satisfaction to my captivity, and, making myself useful, soon acquired the favour of the people among whom I was now adopted. I had, however, no real attachment toward them, and determined to seize the first favourable opportunity for my escape. Several months passed, and I began to be more reconciled to my lot, particularly as I was now regarded as a leader among the hunters of the tribe.

A plan was soon set on foot for a marauding expedition against the Indians dwelling far to the eastward of our present position. We had plenty of horses, and thirty of us, well-mounted and equipped, set forth upon the proposed adventure. We proceeded eastward, and traversed a large extent of country, and, at last, came within the vicinity of some scattered settlements of white men.

I now discovered that it was the purpose of my companions to attack these settlements,—a circumstance which they had before concealed from me. This concealment probably arose from their knowledge that I was of white descent, and they were, perhaps, afraid that I would not join them heartily in plundering my own kindred.

At last, however, they told me their scheme.

Though I had been long with the Indians, and had imbibed their customs and feelings, yet I was by no means pleased with the idea of attacking these white settlements. I knew it was unsafe for me, however, to avow my scruples; for, if their suspicion was excited, they would not hesitate in sending a bullet through my heart. I therefore received their proposition with apparent unconcern. Perceiving, however, the keen eyes of an old chief bent suspiciously upon me, I thought it necessary to profess an interest in the enterprise which I did not really feel.

The intention of escaping from the tribe which I had formerly cherished now revived, and an opportunity was only wanting for me to take leave of them for ever. While I was in this state of mind, we came into the vicinity of a small white settlement, consisting of four or five houses. One of our party had been in this quarter before, and knew the situation of these dwellings. They were all scattered, and one of them which he described as apart from the rest was thought likely to afford considerable plunder.

It was deemed best, however, before making the attack, to gain more exact information of

the present state of things among the settlers; and, with this view, it was proposed that four of us should paint and dress ourselves as Osages, and pay a visit to these white people under pretence of selling them furs. We halted in the thick forest, and made our preparations. Our party of spies then set out on foot, and proceeded to visit the houses of the white men. We found five or six log-houses built upon the borders of the White River, each of them having some cleared and cultivated lands around them.

A little higher up the stream, we came to the separate house which has just been mentioned. It was larger than those we have described, and had the appearance of considerable comfort and thrift on the part of the inhabitants.

When we entered the house, we saw two women; one of them about middle age, the other about sixteen. It was now several years since I had been with the Indians, during which period I had not seen a white woman. The moment I looked on those now before me, my former associations and trains of thought revived. We addressed the oldest of the females, and asked for a cup of water. She replied in tones of kindness and courtesy, but I

could perceive something of trepidation and anxiety in her manner. Her voice, also, awakened indescribable emotions in my breast.

The young lady soon brought us a pitcher of water, and when I looked upon her, it seemed to me that I had never beheld a creature so lovely. As the man of the house was not at home, we soon departed, and our business being now accomplished, we proceeded straight back to our companions, whose lurking-place we reached late in the evening. We communicated the information we had acquired, and it was soon resolved to make an attack upon the last house we had visited the very next night.

The situation in which I now found myself was most painful. The deepest interest had been excited in my breast toward those whom the savages had resolved to sacrifice. The forms of the mother and daughter continually haunted my mind; and a strange fancy that it was my mother and sister whom I had seen seized upon me. Improbable, impossible, indeed, as this seemed when I considered it calmly, there was still a conviction resting upon my heart that I was about to engage in assailing the dwelling-place of my parents, with every chance of sacrificing the lives of my kindred.

I was not long in resolving to take no part in this murderous scheme, except to baffle it. But what could be done? To escape from the savages, for ever on the watch, and doubtless in some degree suspicious of me, was a thing by no means easily achieved. I determined, however, to make the attempt, even if it cost me my life.

It was the plan of the Indians to remain where they were till about midnight, then to proceed on horseback to the vicinity of the settlement, and, having tied the horses in some sheltered spot, to go on foot to make the assault they meditated. Early the next evening, the whole party lay down for the purpose of obtaining some repose, their horses having been fastened so as to be at command. I had taken care that my own horse should be imperfectly tied, so that I knew he would soon get free.

In the course of an hour, and after most of the company were asleep, I heard the animal moving about. I then rose up, expressed some surprise, and remarked that my horse was loose, and that I must go and take care of him. One or two Indians, who were still awake, heard what I said, and seeing nothing suspicious in my conduct, I was permitted to depart without

interruption. I soon caught my horse, and cautiously led him away from the slumbering party. When I had gone to the distance of fifty rods, I mounted his back, and plunged into the woods.

For more than a mile I took a direction opposite to the houses of the settlers. Then making a wide circuit, I turned and pursued my way toward them. Coming to the bank of the river, I was easily guided in my course, and ere long reached the first of those settlements which I had visited with my Indian companions. I now awoke the people in the several houses, and in the imperfect English I was able to command, told them of the attack that was meditated.

Four men, well armed, immediately started with me for the house which was to be the first object of attack. It was nearly midnight when we arrived, and roused the inmates of the house. There was no time to be lost, and immediate preparations to receive the enemy were made. In about an hour we saw their dark forms gliding out from the edge of the forest, and approaching the house. With a soft and stealthy tread they approached. Two of them seized upon a large stick of timber, and

were advancing to the door, for the purpose of beating it in, when I thrust my head out of the window and uttered the war-whoop. The astonished Indians started back, and for a short time concealed themselves in an adjacent thicket.

I knew that they would recognise my voice, and understand that their plot was detected, and that preparations were made to repel it. I hoped, therefore, that they would retire and give up their enterprise. Such, however, was not their determination. In a short time they rallied, and setting up the war-cry, advanced with rapid steps towards the house.

I marked the leader of the band, whom I knew to be the bravest man of the party, and, presenting my rifle, I fired. The Indian fell with a terrific scream. The rest of the party halted. There was a momentary bustle, and the savages disappeared. We continued on the watch till morning, and were then happy to discover that the enemy had carried off their wounded leader, and abandoned the enterprise that had brought them hither.

I had been too intently occupied during the night to think of much beside the immediate business in hand, but I now turned my eyes

upon the inmates of the house. These consisted of four persons—a husband and wife of middle age, and a son and daughter now in the flower of youth. The thought again crossed my mind that here were my parents, my brother, and my sister. At last, in a conviction that this was so, I placed myself before the matron, and said, as well as I knew how, "Did you ever lose a son?"

"Yes, yes! why do you ask?" said she, looking at me with intense curiosity.

"He is here," said I.

"You, my son?" said she.

But I cannot describe the scene. It will be sufficient for the reader to know that I had the happiness that day of being restored to my family, and saving them from the perils of an Indian assault.

It is now a number of years since the events took place which I have described. I have learned to understand the difference between savage and civilized life; and I cannot but be thankful to a kind Providence which has brought me out of the darkness and ignorance in which I spent my early days. Some thoughtless people may deem it pleasant and amusing to live in the wilderness, and to spend

one's life in hunting and fishing, and other wild adventures. But it is not so. The life of the savage is a dull and dreary existence, enlivened only by passages of fierce excitement such as wolves and tigers may feel in hunting their victims, in satisfying their brutal appetites, and in occasional sports, which are, after all, only imitations of those scenes of blood and carnage to which their lives are chiefly devoted.

When I compare the pleasure I experience in reading, in acquiring knowledge, in studying the wonders of nature and the goodness of God in his providence towards man; when I feel the delightful emotions of love to my parents and to my kindred, and the charms of society with good, and wise, and learned people; when I compare all these with the fierce and brutal ways of Indian life, my heart bounds with gratitude and exultation that I enjoy the one and have escaped the other!

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