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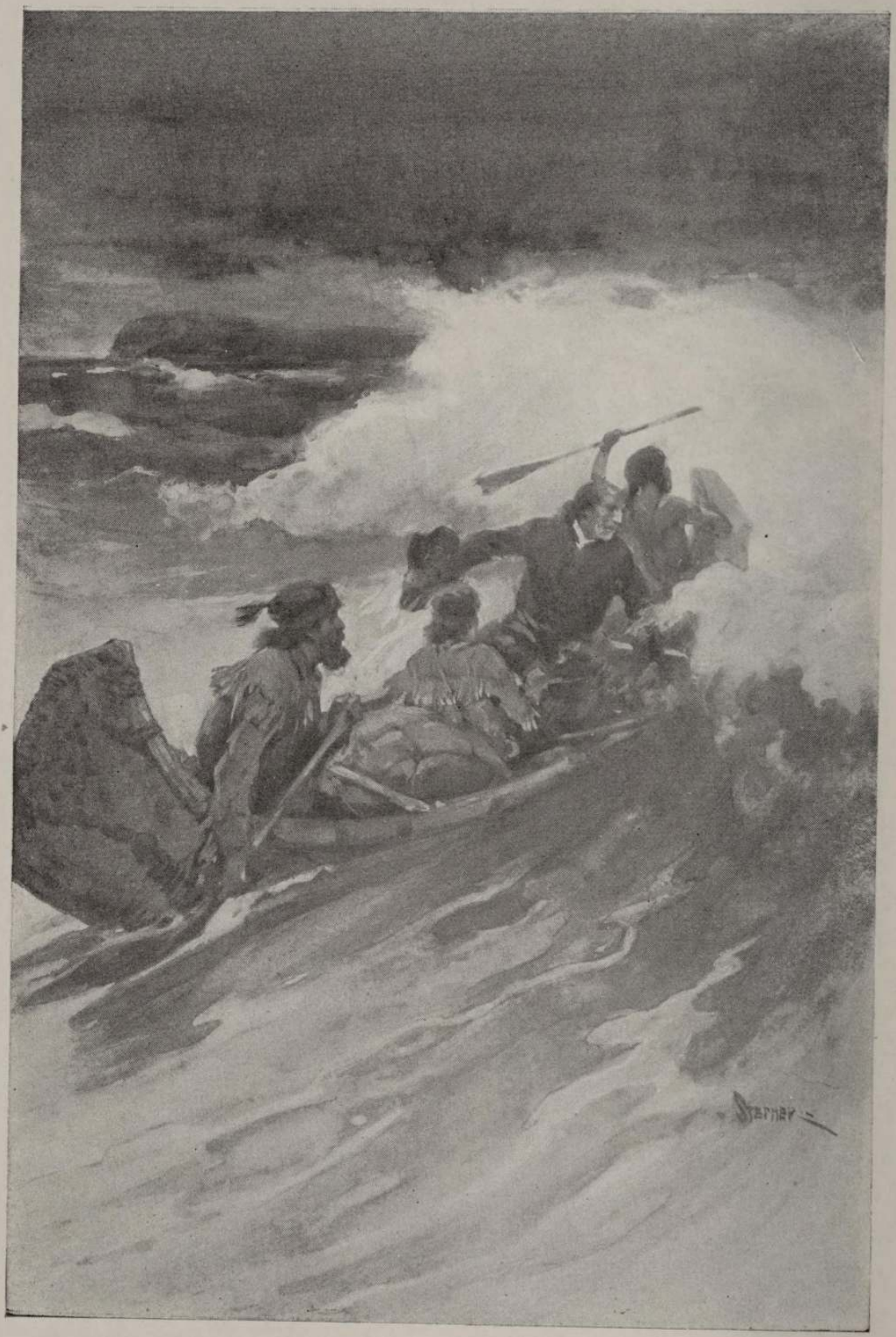
A BOY OF THE OLD FRENCH WEST



THE THIRD WAVE BROKE OVER HER.—*Page 23.*

A BOY OF THE OLD FRENCH WEST

By

ORISON ROBBINS

Author of "A Boy of Old Quebec"

ILLUSTRATED BY

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BOSTON

LOTHROP, LEE & SHEPARD CO.

A Boy of the Old French West

Printed in U. S. A.

Norwood Press
BERWICK & SMITH CO.
Norwood, Mass.

PREFACE

THE French in North American history were, above all else, explorers and governors. With no traditions to lead them into a life of adventure and its accompanying hardships, this versatile people had no sooner established a precarious footing on the shores of the St. Lawrence than it sent forth its emissaries of commerce and religion over a third of a continent. Though utterly without experience in dealing with inferior races, these men, representing at once the authority of the king and of the church, and the enterprise of the merchant, soon became the controlling force in the primitive politics of the basins of the Great Lakes and the Mississippi.

It is with the period that produced the greatest of the French explorers, La Salle, that this book deals. It is submitted with the hope that, in addition to whiling away

a few hours of the young reader's time, it will make more real to him that now long-ago period when, with bark canoe and musket, and a supreme faith in themselves, a handful of Frenchmen dominated an empire.

ORISON ROBBINS.

Washington, D. C.

ILLUSTRATIONS

A BOY OF THE OLD FRENCH WEST

CHAPTER I

"PHILIPPE, it seems to me the breeze is getting stronger. I am afraid we are in for a hard blow. What do you think?"

The speaker was one of four occupants of a birch-bark canoe that moved rapidly over the rough surface of Lake Superior. He was a man of huge build, with a massive head, covered with long, brown hair that turned up in waves and curls, as it lay upon his shoulders. Such portions of his face as were not concealed by his wavy brown beard were tanned by sun and rain to a dull red color, like that of old copper. The blue eyes that looked out from under heavy brows were clear and honest.

As he wielded his paddle with long, steady

strokes, the enormous muscles of the man swelled as if they would burst the deerskin tunic which covered them. The very paddle bespoke the strength of its user. Its blade was of twice the usual size, and its handle of tough ash was as thick as a man's wrist. And such size was necessary. No ordinary paddle could have transmitted the muscular power that caused the canoe to leap like a deer at every stroke.

This giant of the frontier was known as Le Gros (The Great One), a name given him by the Indians on account of his stature, and adopted by his fellow-Frenchmen.

The lad, Philippe, sat, or rather knelt, in the bow of the canoe. He was dressed in summer costume; leggins and moccasins of deerskin. Above the waist he was bare. His skin had the dull brown tint of an American Indian. In the glossy black of his parted and braided hair, however, there were glints of gold; and, as he turned his head to reply to Le Gros, he showed the clean-cut profile of a Caucasian. The eyes,

too, brown in color, were large and soft, not small and piercing like those of an Indian.

While he still lacked some inches and many pounds of the height and weight to which he would ultimately attain, this sixteen-year-old boy, trained on the water and in the forest, possessed skill and strength that made him well worthy of the place of second honor in the canoe, that in the bow.

The other occupants of the little craft were a stocky lad of seventeen, nephew to Le Gros, and a black-robed Jesuit priest, tall, wiry, and somewhat severe of face. The boy was known as Henri Minet; the priest, as Father Gournay.

From his place in the bow of the canoe, Philippe had studied the aspects of sky and water, and had drawn his conclusions long before Le Gros spoke. His reply was given in imperfect French.

"Very bad wind come, from there," Philippe said, pointing to the northeast.

"If there is danger of a severe storm, would it not be best to put back to the south

shore before it strikes us?" It was the priest who spoke. He had been sitting with his head bowed, engrossed with his own thoughts. Trusting the skill of his three companions, he had hardly given a thought to his surroundings since leaving the south shore, some four hours before. The question of Le Gros, however, and its answer, roused him from his reverie.

"If the Father will look back, he will see that the south shore has now disappeared below the waves," said Le Gros. "That blue haze ahead is the high land of the north shore. I know this place. Just ahead of us is a good harbor. It is called, from its shape, Two Harbors. If we can get there before the storm hits us, we shall be safe."

A week earlier (it was in July of 1683), the four travelers had left Sault Ste. Marie, the mission station at the eastern end of Lake Superior, in company with two hundred or more French and Indians. Their destination was the bay at the western extremity of the lake, where the city of Duluth

now lies. Their leader was the tireless explorer and trader for whom that city is named, Daniel Greysolon, Sieur du Luth. When within some forty miles of his destination, Father Gournay had directed Le Gros to steer across the lake to the north shore. He wished to visit a certain band of Indians located there.

Dangerous as it may seem to us for so small and frail a craft as a canoe to cross the treacherous waters of Lake Superior, it was at that time a matter of common occurrence. Practically the entire trade of the French upon the Great Lakes was carried on in these little craft, which crossed and recrossed the great inland seas at will. They were, in fact, excellent boats for heavy weather. Light and well-molded, they could, like a New England dory, almost "float in a dewdrop or in a northeaster."

Though the northern shore was only ten or twelve miles away, there was little chance that our travelers could reach it before the storm would be upon them. For an hour or

more great rollers had been coming up the lake, a sure sign of heavy weather to the east. The wind, which had blown from the south, veered suddenly to the east, and increased in violence until the surface of the lake was covered with the white combs of breaking waves. The canoe rode easily over the long swells, and danced merrily over the smaller waves.

The priest, though he did not possess the masterly skill that comes only with lifelong use of the paddle, was a fair canoeman. He now added his strength to that of his companions. Under the impulse of four paddles the canoe fairly shot over the water. Soon the blue haze to the north resolved itself into wooded hills and valleys. Le Gros scanned these closely, looking for the harbor which he had mentioned.

"There it is," he exclaimed at last, pointing to the northeast. "The canoe has drifted so far to leeward that we nearly passed it. We shall have to paddle almost into the teeth of the wind to make the harbor."

The course of the canoe was changed, but before it had gone a mile in the new direction the full force of the gale was upon it. The wind did not come in gusts, but bore upon the canoe with a hard, steady pressure that not even the strength of eight sturdy arms could overcome. Instead of moving toward the harbor, the craft was actually forced backward in spite of the utmost efforts of its crew.

"It's no use, Father," said Le Gros to the priest, after a quarter of an hour of fruitless struggle. "The wind is driving us backward. We shall have to run with it, and try to edge in toward the shore. Perhaps we can find a bay, or the mouth of a creek, where we can make a landing."

In an hour the canoe had come to within half a mile of the land, though in doing so it had traveled several miles up the lake. In the meantime the seas had increased in size until they rivaled even those of the ocean. Fully eighty yards they were from crest to crest, and, as the canoe sank deep into the

troughs, nothing could be seen by its occupants but the steep slopes of the nearest waves, and the hazy blue of the sky overhead.

Changing his course so as to run parallel with the shore, Le Gros looked anxiously for a landing-place. The seas were so heavy, however, and broke with such tremendous violence upon the rocky shore, that it would have meant destruction to attempt to land.

"There's no use in trying it," said Le Gros to the priest. "I might be able to put the canoe through the surf on a sandy beach, even in such a storm as this, but to get in safely among masses of boulders is beyond human power. We shall have to stick to the lake until we find a smoother shore. In the meantime, Father, you and Henri had best stop paddling. Philippe and I can keep the canoe to its course, and you two can save your strength. We may need it later."

The priest soon found another occupation than paddling. In spite of the skill with which it was handled, the canoe shipped

water constantly. In addition, the strain of riding the waves caused some of the seams to open, and water began to run in through them in a way that was really dangerous. Unfortunately, there was no vessel for bailing, but Gournay made effective use of his large, Jesuit hat. Even so there were times when the canoe was a quarter full, but by hard work the priest was able to keep the water below the danger-point.

"Let us hope the wind will blow itself out before we reach the end of the lake," said Gournay, when it had become evident that no safe landing-place could be hoped for on the north shore. "I should hate to have to go through such a surf as is rolling over that point we just passed, even to a smooth, sandy beach."

The wind gave no sign of abating, however, but rather increased in violence, until, as the canoe rose to the crests of the waves, it seemed that it must be blown bodily out of the water. Le Gros scanned the western horizon anxiously.

"Philippe," he said at length, "your eyes should be as keen as they are bright. Do you see any sign of land ahead?"

The half-breed boy, for such he was, looked intently to the southwest.

"Think I see one high, blue hill," he said, "and many low hills, but may be clouds."

As the canoe drove on before the tempest, it became apparent that the masses of blue were really land. To the left, too, appeared the line of hills that borders the southern shore of the lake.

"Now look even sharper than before," said Le Gros to the lad. "I have never been to this end of Superior, but I have been told that a long, narrow arm of sand separates the lake from a bay where the water is always still. Where the openings through this sand-spit are, I don't know. Watch for a channel. If we don't find one, we may all be drowned in the surf."

Le Gros spoke with the quiet earnestness of one who recognized the dangers of the situation, but was prepared to do all that

human strength and skill could do to overcome them.

In order to get the best possible view, Philippe rose from his kneeling position and stood in the bow of the canoe, bracing himself with his paddle.

"See white waves break on sand," he said. "Break all way across end of lake."

"Are you sure?" asked the guide. "I see it as you do, a continuous line of white breakers as far to the south as the eye can see. But are you sure there is no break in them?"

The boy waited fully five minutes before he replied, "No break. All white waves."

"Yes, it is as you say," said Le Gros. "There is no opening at this end of the bar. We must try to work southward until we find one."

CHAPTER II

During the time that Le Gros and Philippe had been looking for an opening in the long bar of sand, through which they could pass to the still waters beyond, the former had gradually worked the canoe away from the north shore. Now that it was certain no opening existed near the northern end of the bar, the craft was headed southward. The white lad, Henri, now resumed his paddle. Gournay kept on with his bailing.

"Keep her as dry as you can, Father," said Le Gros. "If the opening into the bay is far to the south, we shall have all we can do to make it without the handicap of a water-logged canoe." Right earnestly and well did the gray-haired priest perform his humble but necessary task, and, in spite of combing seas and leaking seams, he kept the

canoe so nearly clear of water that its buoyancy was maintained.

With consummate skill did the giant guide handle the little craft. To have been caught broadside on by a combing wave would have meant instant destruction. So easily handled was the canoe, however, and so powerful the steersman, that as soon as a foaming, roaring crest had passed, the craft swung around as on a pivot, and resumed her way to the south. The crew then paddled at top speed until another breaking wave threatened them, when the canoe was again turned to the west, to receive the blow in the stern.

Rapidly the northern shore receded, but not less rapidly did the dangerous bar of sand seem to approach from the southwest. Soon the roar of the surf sounded above the rushing noise of the wind, and the face of the guide became very grave. Then Philippe gave a joyous shout, and pointed ahead with his paddle.

"See!" he cried. "Waves not break. Channel there."

A mile or so to the south there was, indeed, a break in the long line of roaring, driving surf. The opening was but little more than a quarter of a mile in width, but here the waves ran without breaking into the bay that lay behind the bar.

"Do you think we can make it?" asked the priest of Le Gros. "We are getting very close to the surf, and the channel seems a long way ahead."

"It will be a close rub," replied the guide. "I think, though, there is a current setting southward along the bar. It may carry us into the channel."

Now that their goal was so close at hand, the efforts of the three paddlers were redoubled. Swiftly the canoe neared the channel, but even more swiftly did the wind and waves drive it toward the breakers.

"If we are driven into the surf, Henri," Le Gros called to his nephew, "be sure to keep a good grip on your musket. A white man without his gun in this part of the world is helpless. Philippe, you don't need to be

told to take care of your bow and arrows. An Indian never forgets them. If we can't reach the channel, I shall try to make the canoe ride one of the larger waves to the beach, or, at least, near enough to it so that we can wade ashore. No man can swim long in the icy water of this lake."

It soon became evident that if the opening in the bar were reached at all, it would be by the narrowest margin. Then, when the channel was only a hundred yards away, an enormous wave raised its crest just outside the little craft. It was followed by two others of equal size. The first two carried the canoe a hundred feet toward the bar. The third broke over her. It was useless to attempt to resist the rushing torrent of water. Dropping their paddles, Henri and Le Gros seized their guns, while Philippe slung his bow and quiver over his neck. Gournay held a bundle more precious to him than were even their weapons to his companions, a bundle containing an altar-cloth, and wine and bread for the communion.

Though nearly full of water, the canoe fortunately remained upright, but it was swung completely around. When fifty feet from the beach it sank. The three white men scrambled ashore, breasting their way against the pull of a terrific undertow. Philippe, however, was not with them.

With the swinging about of the canoe, the lad had found himself, as it sank, at its outer end. As he leaped with the others, the dangling end of his bow caught under one of the cross-bars of the canoe. The unexpected pull of the bowstring upon his neck caused the boy to lose his balance, and he fell backward into the water. In an instant the undertow had swept him beyond his depth. Philippe was an excellent swimmer, and struck out confidently for the shore. To his surprise, however, his utmost efforts could not overcome the treacherous outward current, the backwash of the huge rollers.

Bravely the boy struggled, but wave after wave broke over his head. Then, choking and gasping, he sank in the cold water. An-

other succession of great waves, rushing in from the lake, picked up the now still form of the lad and carried it nearly ashore. It was seized by Le Gros, who waded out shoulder-deep to meet it. The guide turned to carry his burden to the shore, but not even the strength of this giant could resist the sweep of the piled-up waters as they returned to the lake. Still clinging to his burden, he was carried out into deep water.

With the confidence of one accustomed to all the emergencies of frontier life, Le Gros swam coolly, and with all his great strength. He directed his course, not toward the shore, but toward the channel. It was a hard struggle. To the anxious watchers on the beach it seemed almost impossible that the swimmer could win. Time and again the foaming breakers covered him, but always, when the wave had passed, his sturdy form reappeared, swimming steadily and strongly, and still supporting its precious burden.

Aided by the current, Le Gros finally reached the edge of the channel. Here he

was out of the dangerous surf, and here he found another helpful current, for the water of the lake, raised by the storm, rushed like a mill-race into the bay. Soon the guide reached the shallow water on the inner side of the point, and waded ashore.

Le Gros was none the worse for his experience, and rough-and-ready treatment soon restored Philippe to consciousness. Meantime, with flint and steel and tinder from a waterproof box that he carried, the priest had kindled a driftwood fire in the shelter of a clump of pines. Clothes were dried, and chilled bodies warmed. Then the four travelers sat down to take stock of their losses. Under the circumstances these were not serious. Blankets, food, and the reserve supply of ammunition had been swept away, and Father Gournay had lost his hat. But these things could all be replaced when junction was made again with the main party. The guns had been saved. Even Philippe's bow and quiver dangled from his shoulders as he was carried ashore.

"Is the powder in your horn dry, Henri?" Le Gros asked, as he drew the wet charge from his gun, to replace it with a dry one. Henri tried to pour some of the contents of his powder-horn into his hand, but it was caked with moisture.

"I thought as much," continued the guide. "Well, work the wet stuff out with a stick, and I will give you some of my dry powder. Then, when you get a chance, seal every crevice in your horn with pitch, and you will have dry powder, even though you get soaked yourself."

While Henri was carrying out his uncle's instructions, Philippe had unstrung his bow, and now proceeded to dry the cord, as well as two spare strings that he carried. His arrows, too, were carefully wiped, and dried before the fire. As he took these necessary precautions with the weapons so vital to existence in the forest, the boy's dark eyes studied in turn the faces of his companions.

"How I get out of lake?" he asked finally. "I thought I drown."

In a few words the priest told of the rescue. Then the lad's luminous eyes met those of the guide.

"Philippe very glad," he said. "Le Gros very strong, very brave. Le Gros and Philippe be good friends."

The rough frontiersman felt a sudden leap of the heart as he looked into the bright, intelligent face, so lighted with gratitude. In fact, something about the lad had appealed to him at their first meeting, a month before. It was at Michillimackinac, the French mission station and fort on the strait between Lakes Michigan and Huron. Here the boy had been brought by a French priest from his home on the Illinois River. For a year he had studied in the school maintained for Indian boys, had learned a little French, and had been given the name Philippe. Of this French title he was very proud, though he still retained a fondness for the name, "The Brown One," which, because of the color of his hair, had been given him by his Indian companions.

When Henri Minet, a son of a sister of Le Gros, arrived at the fort with a band of traders returning from Montreal, he and Philippe had become fast friends. It followed naturally, therefore, that when Le Gros was requested by the priest, Father Gournay, to organize a small party for a long journey, he should choose the two boys as his companions.

The guide returned the friendly gaze of the young half-blood.

"Aye, lad," he said heartily. "I think we were pretty good friends already, and we will not like each other less for the little experience in the water. You are a good swimmer, but Lake Superior isn't like your smooth Illinois. When you get into the surf, and the waves go over you, keep your mouth shut. You may think you will burst unless you open it, but keep it shut. Then you will bob up like a cork, and can empty your lungs before the next wave hits you."

With their equipment dried and guns reloaded, the party was ready to resume its

journey. This must now be by land, for the canoe had been completely wrecked by the surf. For an hour the four walked over the hard surface of the wet sand before they reached the foot of the high, rocky bluffs that lined the northern shore of the lake and bay. By this time the sun had set, so camp was made. On beds of pine needles the four travelers slept the sound sleep of the healthy and the weary.

CHAPTER III

On the morning after the storm, Henri and Philippe were up with the sun. A plunge in the cool waters of the bay, followed by a run on the beach, took all the sleep out of their eyes.

"Let's climb the hill back of the camp while my uncle is getting breakfast," said Henri. He was a strong, heavy-set lad, with a shock of brown hair, and blue eyes like his uncle's. Brought up on one of the seigniories, or feudal estates, that lined the St. Lawrence River, he had been accustomed since earliest boyhood to the hardships as well as to the fun of frontier farm-life. He could fish, trap, and hunt with the skill of one who does these things as part of the day's work, and not simply for pleasure. As he was the oldest boy in a large family, he had come to the far west to earn his own

way, and to help supply the needs of the home on the St. Lawrence.

The hill was long and steep, but when the top was reached, the view proved to be worth the climb. The gale of yesterday had blown itself out, and the surface of the lake was like glass. Along the outer bar, however, there was still a white line of surf, where smooth, round rollers broke on the sand. To the south and west lay the great double harbor now called Bay St. Louis, shaped like a huge figure-eight. Beyond was the dark green of pine forests, stretching to the horizon.

" See, many canoe! " cried Philippe suddenly, pointing eastward along the rugged shore of the lake. Looking in the direction indicated, Henri saw twenty or more tiny specks on the shining surface of the lake. They seemed no larger than water-fowl, but Henri agreed that they must be what Philippe had called them, canoes.

A moment later the white boy shouted in his turn, " See, more canoes! They are com-

ing through the channel that we tried to make yesterday."

"And more canoes there," exclaimed Philippe, his brown eyes dancing with excitement as he pointed to the southwest, where another cluster of dots showed on the distant waters of the bay. "All come to big council. Have much talk, smoke peace-pipe, play games, and French give many presents. Give some to warrior, some to squaw, some to papoose, some to everybody." And in anticipation of this great event, to him what a circus is to a modern boy, Philippe threw back his head and laughed merrily. Then he leaped from the rock where he sat, and raced with reckless speed down the steep hillside, to impart the news to the guide.

"Aye, the Indians will flock to this council like crows to a cornfield," said the good-natured giant. "Du Luth has been to Paris, and it is said that he even talked with the king himself. For two months past, couriers have been traveling far and wide, inviting the tribes to send their chief men to receive

the word which the great white father sends to his children. They know well that the bearer of such a message will not come with empty hands. Big and little will be here to share in the presents."

"How is it they all get here together?" asked Henri, who had come up in time to catch the last of Le Gros' remarks. "It must have been many weeks since the invitation was given to some of them, and here they all come on the same morning, as if they had been asked only yesterday."

The guide looked at the boy in surprise.

"How is it they all get here at the same time?" he repeated with a touch of scorn in his voice. "That's what comes of spending one's time hoeing beans and corn in the settlements. Well, the Indians didn't have those little ticking things that some of the officers carry, that's sure. Philippe, how do you suppose these ignorant savages knew when to come to the council?"

Philippe's merry laugh pealed forth again in answer.

"Henri see new moon last night, first time?" he asked.

Henri nodded his head.

"Well," continued the half-breed, "messengers say council begin first day after new moon, so of course all be here to-day."

After breakfast a half-hour's walk westward brought the four to the base of the long sandy spit which separates the upper and lower portions of the bay. Another quarter of an hour brought them to its point. Hardly had they arrived there before the canoes that had been seen entering the lower bay came in sight. They carried the party of French and Indians from which Le Gros and his companions had separated the day before. In a few minutes they passed the point, as in review, breasting a swift current to gain the still water of the upper bay.

In the first canoe sat the leader of the expedition, Du Luth. Dressed in a brocaded coat, velvet knickerbockers, and silk stockings, his hair in long flowing curls, partly covered by a plumed hat, he presented a

striking contrast to the three nearly naked Indians who paddled his canoe. Very different was this splendid costume from the rough garb usually worn by this hardy adventurer; but nothing was now to be omitted that might impress the simple minds of the savages with the power and wealth of the French nation.

In the canoe with Du Luth sat a small, wiry man dressed in garments of deerskin. He waved one hand, his only one, in reply to the greetings of Le Gros and the priest. He was Henri de Tonty, an Italian officer in the service of the famous explorer, La Salle. Tonty was considered one of the most daring men on the frontier. He certainly was one of the most successful in his dealings with the Indians. From Fort St. Louis on the distant Illinois, where he commanded for La Salle, he had led a band of Illinois warriors to the council.

In the second canoe sat five men, very different in their attire from Du Luth and his companion. They were Jesuit priests;

Black Robes, they were called by the Indians, because of their long, black gowns. The garb of these men seemed no more out of place in this wilderness than did their faces. Pale and thin from long fasts and vigils, their countenances indicated deep thought and meditation, rather than resolution and reckless daring such as characterized the faces of Du Luth and Tonty. In this canoe alone, of the entire flotilla, no weapons were to be seen. The members of the Company of Jesus relied for the success of their work, not upon gun and tomahawk, but upon the powers of spirit and intellect.

In the next half dozen canoes was a motley company of French adventurers and traders. Some of the faces showed intelligence and character, but most bore the marks of reckless, vicious living. To the greater part of these " coureurs de bois," as they were called, the liberty of the forest meant only license for evil living. They gave little heed to the laws of either God or man.

Last in the procession came the Indians, the guests at the council, two hundred or more in number. They represented half a dozen tribes whose homes were on or near the Great Lakes. There were Shawnees from the Ohio, Miamis, Winnebagoes, and Menominees from Lake Michigan, Foxes from the river of that name in Wisconsin, and Tonty's band of Illinois.

The previous afternoon had been spent by the warriors on their toilets. Now they appeared in all the brilliance of savage splendor. Naked as most of them were, except for a breech-clout, they were painted from head to foot with the most dazzling designs in red, yellow, and black. The women among them were more modest in their decorations. Their principal ornaments were bracelets and strings of beads. Some, however, were the proud possessors of gorgeous shawls of European manufacture, and these were worn over deerskin tunics, regardless of discomfort from summer heat.

Most of the Indians were armed with bows

of their own make; bows of oak, hickory, or white ash. Their knives and tomahawks were of French manufacture, as were the iron points of their arrows. The French were very slow to supply their Indian allies with firearms. They realized that such a course would soon threaten their own supremacy. They were glad, however, to give the lesser weapons in return for the valuable furs of the natives. Frontier commerce consisted almost wholly of such exchanges.

Scarcely had the last canoe passed the end of the point, and turned in to its western shore, when the flotilla that had been seen in the southwest arrived. It carried a band of Chippewas, from the gloomy region about the headwaters of the Mississippi. Floating down that stream, carrying their canoes over a long portage through the forest, thence again by canoe down the St. Louis River, they now arrived as punctually as though they had possessed all the advantages of modern trains and time-tables.

Soon came the third party. Old friends

of the French were these, Hurons or Wyandots. A third of a century earlier these Indians had been driven from their homes on Lake Huron by the ferocious Iroquois. Since then they had drifted, a mere remnant of a once powerful nation, from the Ottawa to the Mississippi. They now had a temporary home on the northern shore of Lake Superior.

As the day advanced more Indians arrived. Outagamies came overland from the headwaters of the Wisconsin. Knisteneaux came over the rugged hills from the wilderness that lies north of the lake. Finally came a strong delegation of the powerful and haughty Dacotahs, or Sioux, well named the " Iroquois of the West."

To all these arrivals Du Luth gave a cordial but simple greeting. The formal welcome must wait until all the guests had arrived and the council had opened. In the meantime food was placed before the Indians, and hunters and fishermen were sent out to supply the needs of the morrow.

CHAPTER IV

At ten o'clock of the day following the arrival of the French and their savage guests at Bay St. Louis, Sieur du Luth walked out before the assembled Indians, to bid them welcome to the great council. He was still attired in the elaborate costume which he had worn on the previous day. As the French leader moved with ceremonious stateliness toward his place, the hush of absolute quiet fell upon the audience.

The company had been gathered in two concentric rings. The inner consisted of the Jesuits, Tonty, and the chiefs who headed their respective delegations. They were seated on the sand. The front rank of the outer ring consisted of the older Frenchmen, and of the warriors of renown. Back of them sat or stood the young men, the squaws, and the children. Altogether some five hun-

dred people were gathered on the sandy point.

Du Luth carried in his hand the "calumet," or pipe of peace. This was no small pocket affair like the modern pipe. Long of stem, six inches in length and height, and half as wide, it must have weighed fully ten pounds. It was carved from the red claystone found in the sacred quarries of the Sioux in southwestern Minnesota. The carving represented an Indian crouched double, with his arms resting upon his thighs. The head was thrown far back, so that the smoker looked squarely into the figure's grotesque and impudent face. The bowl consisted of a hole drilled in the creature's back.

Taking a few puffs himself, Du Luth handed the pipe to one of the chiefs. Then it was passed slowly around the inner circle. By partaking of the pipe, the smokers expressed the friendliness of their purpose in attending the council.

Du Luth now addressed the company in

the grave manner affected by Indian orators. First he welcomed the entire assembly; then he called up the leader of each delegation in turn. So wide had been the speaker's travels among the various tribes, that, with one or two exceptions, these leaders were known to him personally. Assurances of respect and of friendship from the governor at Quebec, and even from the king himself, were extended to some who for years had been faithful allies of the French.

The friendly words of the speaker were reinforced by gifts, and by the presentation of belts of wampum. The gifts were for the chiefs themselves. The belts were to be carried to the homes of the tribes, and there preserved as records of the proceedings of the council.

The replies of the chiefs were as grave and dignified as were the words of Du Luth. Each in turn expressed his appreciation of the welcome he had received as the representative of his tribe. Some were loud in their protestations of friendship and loyalty to

the French. Others, including the leader of the Dacotahs, were non-committal. All, however, accepted the gifts that had been offered.

The speeches were all of great length, and following each was a long pause in which the next speaker was supposed to meditate upon the words he had just heard before making his reply. As a consequence, at the end of three hours not half the delegations had been heard from. The chiefs and older warriors still sat as quietly as at the beginning, but little stirrings among the younger people denoted a waning of interest in the proceedings.

During one of the long pauses, Philippe, who sat near Henri, leaned over toward his comrade and whispered, " Henri have hooks and lines in pocket? "

Henri nodded in the affirmative.

" Then we go fishing," Philippe suggested. " Tired of so much talk."

Henri was of much the same mind as Philippe, for to him all the speeches, given

in the tongues of the various tribes, were unintelligible. When another pause came, the two moved away, going as quietly as if they were leaving a church in the midst of a service. Without asking any questions of its owner, Philippe appropriated a canoe that belonged to one of his Illinois friends. In a quarter of an hour the boys were busy pulling in great salmon-trout. When a commotion on the point indicated that the council had broken up for the day, the two lads returned with their catch, over thirty good fish.

"These are pretty fine eating, Philippe," said Le Gros an hour or two later, as he attacked his second baked trout. Like an Indian, he was always ready for a feast, thus making up for the fasts that were at times unavoidable in life in the forest. "I don't blame you boys much for preferring a fishing-trip to long, dry talks, but I think you would have enjoyed the last speech that was made. It was an announcement of the program for the rest of the council."

"Have games?" asked Philippe, all attention.

"Yes," answered the guide. "There will be games every morning, and the council will sit in the afternoons. That will last for perhaps three or four days. After that Du Luth will give a great farewell feast."

Le Gros then went into details regarding the character and rules of the coming games. Any one person was restricted to two entries. The prizes were knives, tomahawks, and iron arrow-heads for the men and boys, cloth and beads for the women and girls. There were to be contests in running, jumping, canoe-racing, and swimming; also in the throwing of tomahawks and knives, and in shooting with bows and arrows.

After the meal was finished, Henri and Philippe engaged in a long discussion about their chances of winning the various contests. Finally Henri chose to enter one of the swimming events and a long-distance running-race. Philippe decided upon a knife-throwing contest and a short-distance

running-race for boys of about his age. Knives were offered as prizes for both these events, and the boy was very anxious to win one of them.

"No like old knife," he said. He drew the weapon from his belt and offered it to Henri and Le Gros for inspection. It was, indeed, a disreputable-looking instrument. Apparently it had been made from a piece of iron barrel-hoop, ground into the shape of a knife-blade, and fitted with a rough wooden handle. Its quality was as poor as its appearance. It had been given to Philippe by one of the warriors of his tribe, who had obtained a better one from a French trader.

It was now dark, and in the light of the camp-fire Le Gros watched the two lads as they discussed the coming games. A thoughtful expression was on his face.

"Philippe," he said, after the boys had decided upon their part in the sports, "Philippe, you are a half-breed, are you not?"

"Yes," answered the boy. "No know father, no know mother, but think mother Creek Indian, and father English. Live with uncle, and he not tell me when I ask him."

A trace of disappointment showed in the face of the guide, as Philippe mentioned the English.

"I had hoped you were part French," he said, "but perhaps it doesn't matter." After a pause he continued, "You know how Indians live, and, now that you have been to school with the priests, you know something of the white man's life. Do you wish to grow up to be like a white man, or like an Indian?"

A bright light leaped into the boy's face.

"Could I be like Sieur de la Salle, or like Sieur de Tonty?" he asked wonderingly.

"Perhaps you may never be as great as these men," the guide answered, "but you can be just as honest and just as good."

"Then Philippe live like white man," said the boy.

"That is easy to say," continued the guide, "but it may not be so easy to do. In your games with the Illinois boys, did you ever cheat and lie to win?"

"Of course," replied the lad, his brown eyes dancing. "They no catch Philippe when he cheat. Philippe too smart to be caught."

"Yes, that's the Indian way," said the guide. "Cheating is considered part of the game. No harm is meant by it, so I suppose it is all right for them. But did Sieur de la Salle ever lie to his Indian friends?"

"La Salle always tell truth; never cheat Indians," the boy answered.

"I thought so," said Le Gros. "I know him well. He is the kind of a man who would tell the truth, even if he suffered for it. That is the way a white man is taught to live, and the way he should live."

Nothing more was said upon the subject, and soon the three were in their blankets. Le Gros and Henri fell asleep immediately, but Philippe was too much excited to fol-

low their example at once. He lay gazing at the stars, his active mind reviewing all the contests in running and knife-throwing in which he had ever engaged. Strong and lithe of body, he had been successful in most of these. He had, however, never contended for such prizes as were now offered,—prizes that assured the keenest kind of competition.

For an hour Philippe lay awake, planning for the great events; then, as sleep finally crept into his eyes and brain, the twinkling stars were transformed into shining, gleaming knives, thousands of them, that floated just out of reach. They were all to be his when he attained the goal toward which he dreamed he was running.

CHAPTER V

In his life with the Illinois Indians, Philippe had been thrown much with two or three French officers,—young men who had taken a liking to the bright-eyed, cheery-faced lad. They had taught him some of the simpler rules of training for the athletic games common among Indians. Following what he remembered of their suggestions, Philippe, on each of the next few days, rose early, took a plunge in the cold waters of the bay, and rubbed down briskly. He followed with a half-mile trot along the smooth, hard beach.

The two contests in which the boy was to take part were scheduled for the next-to-last day of the conference. By that time he was in the pink of condition,—his brain clear, his nerves steady, and his muscles like springs of steel.

Meantime the contests for which Henri had entered his name had taken place. The peasant lad did well in the swimming event, finishing a close second. In the long-distance run, however, he was no match for the more rangy Indians. He came in in fifth place.

The first event in which Philippe took part was the knife-throwing contest for young men and the older boys. A whitened log of driftwood had been set on end in the sand. The target was a black knot an inch in diameter, which showed clearly against the bleached wood. The range was twenty feet. Each contestant was allowed three throws.

There was, first, an elimination contest, in which Philippe was easily one of the winners. A second elimination left only the half-breed and a Dacotah lad named Leaping Deer. The young Sioux was perhaps a year older than Philippe, and was somewhat larger. His father, the Wolf, an old chief of renown in council and battle, was leader of the Dacotah delegation.

In the final contest the two lads threw in turn, the Sioux first. The knife struck fairly on its point, five inches from the mark. Philippe followed, but missed by six inches. The Sioux's second throw was better than his first, and Philippe's heart sank a little as he saw the keen blade quivering within four inches of the center of the knot. His own throw was good, however, and came within three inches. The two were now tied, and interest ran high among the spectators. There were whoops and yells that would have done credit to a high-school cheer-leader. Much advice was showered upon the young contestants as to how they should make the last trial.

Leaping Deer made an excellent throw. His knife missed the mark by not more than an inch and a half. His supporters were wild with delight.

As Philippe prepared to make his last cast, he was almost deafened by the roar of the crowd. He was its favorite, for the Sioux were too much feared by their neigh-

bors to be liked. Illinois, Chippewas, Hurons, and Outagamies,—all joined in "rooting" for the young half-breed.

Calm and steady amid the din, Philippe made his throw. There was a howl of delight as the point of the knife struck squarely on the knot. It was followed by a wail of disappointment, however, for the weapon rebounded and fell to the ground. The knot was too hard for the wretched material of which the knife was made, and the point had turned instead of penetrating the dense wood. As the rules required that the knife must remain sticking in the wood, the prize was given to the Dacotah boy. Philippe turned away with a lump in his throat. It was hard to lose such a prize through no fault of his own.

An hour later the runners for the race in which Philippe was to take part were called. There were six entries. Again Leaping Deer was one of Philippe's opponents.

In this race the boys were to start at a line drawn in the sand. At a distance of a

hundred paces a pole was supported horizontally on forked sticks driven in the ground. The contestants were to start at the report of a musket-shot, run to the pole, touch it, and return to the starting-line. The hunting-knife, which was to be given to the winner, was hung from a post just back of the goal, as if to inspire the runners to their greatest efforts as they sped toward it in the finish of the race.

The boys lined up for the start. Five stood, leaning ahead, waiting for the signal. But Philippe, like a modern sprinter, crouched until his hands rested upon the ground, that the full strength of arms, body, and legs might go into the first, cat-like spring. It was a trick the lad had learned from his French coaches on the Illinois. There were laughter and good-natured banter from the crowd and from the other runners as they saw the half-breed take this unusual position, but some of the wiser heads nodded in approval.

"The Brown One crouches like a pan-

ther," said one gray-haired chief. "If he springs as fast and as far, the other runners will stop laughing in trying to catch him."

The old man spoke truly. At the report of the musket, Philippe's lithe body shot through the air like an arrow from a bow, and he was a yard and a half ahead of his nearest competitor, again the Dacotah. As Philippe neared the pole at the half-way point of the course, still a yard ahead of the Sioux, he gave a great leap forward, and landed feet first, with his right hand resting on the ground. He planned to land in such a position that his left hand could just touch the stick. Then, with another panther-like spring, he would be off on the home-stretch. The plan was excellent, but the boy missed in its execution by half an inch. The tips of his fingers lacked that much of reaching their mark.

Two Indians were stationed at this end of the course, to see that the pole was touched by each runner. Philippe glanced hastily over his shoulder at them, but their

impassive faces gave no sign that they had noticed his failure to observe the rules of the race, so, like an arrow, the boy was off toward the final goal. He crossed the line a foot ahead of Leaping Deer.

As Tonty, the one-armed Italian, master of sports for the day, was about to present the prize to Philippe, one of the two Indians who had watched the other end of the course touched his arm.

"The Brown One springs like a panther and runs like a young buck," he said, "but he forgot to touch the pole."

Tonty turned to the man's companion for confirmation of the charge. But this other Indian was an Illinois, and, either because he had not noticed Philippe's failure to observe the rules, or because he wished to favor one of his own tribe, he declared that not only had he seen the boy's hand touch the stick, but that he had seen the pole shake at the touch. Tonty turned to Philippe.

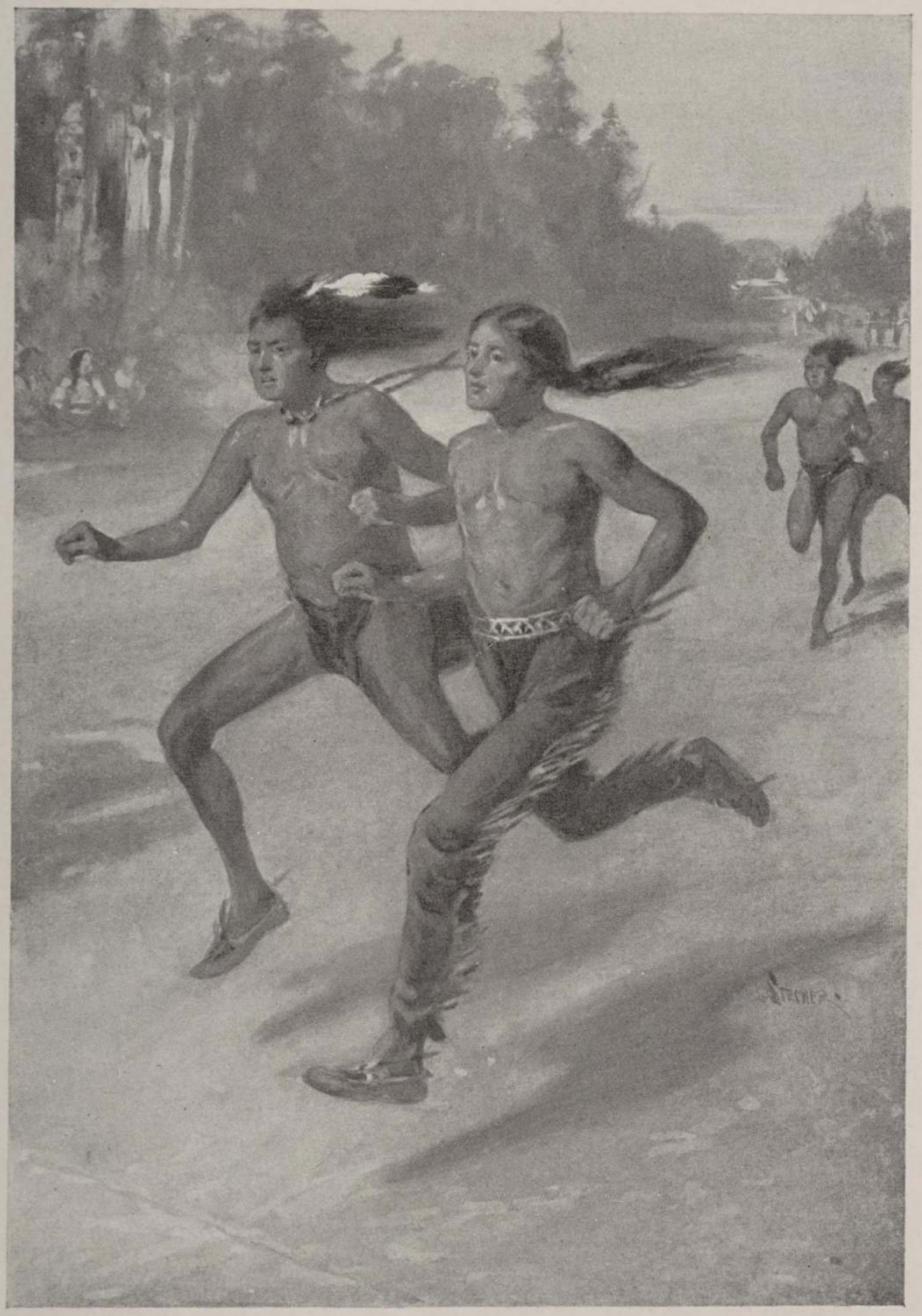
"The judges do not agree," he said. "The Brown One must himself tell us

whether or not he ran the race according to the rules."

Philippe looked Tonty squarely in the face, then his glance swept around the circle of French and Indians. His gaze was that of perfect frankness and truth, but in his heart was the deceitfulness of his boyhood training.

"Yes," he began, and the words ran glibly from his tongue; "yes, Philippe touch pole so." He put the tips of his fingers upon Tonty's arm. As he did so he found himself looking into the eyes of Le Gros. Philippe's gaze fell. A look of indecision, even of pain, swept over his face. There shot through his mind his statement of the night before, that he would live the life of a white man. He thought also of the guide's warning, that, as a white man, he must stick to the truth at all costs.

"Yes, I will do that," he thought; "but I will begin to-morrow, not to-day; not to-day, and lose the prize again. Perhaps, too, my fingers did touch the pole, and I was so



HE CROSSED THE LINE A FOOT AHEAD OF LEAPING DEER.
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excited that I did not notice it. I think they must have touched the pole."

He opened his mouth to repeat the lie, but again he met the guide's friendly, honest look. Then he made his decision. Again he looked Tonty in the face, this time with real honesty in his eyes.

"No," he said, pushing aside the prize which the Italian offered him. "Philippe not win race. Philippe tell lie; not touch pole."

As he spoke, hot tears of disappointment filled his eyes and flowed down his cheeks. In shame and anger he dashed them away, then turned and ran at top speed through the wondering crowd and away along the beach. Something hard thumped against his side as he ran. He knew it was the cheap, heavy knife that had lost him the first contest. In a rush of fierce anger and resentment he drew the weapon from his belt, and flung it far out into the bay. Then he walked with more composure over the sand toward the hills of the mainland.

An interesting custom, common to many Indian tribes, required that when a boy reached the age of sixteen or seventeen, he should go apart from his people for a period of several days. In some lonely spot, perhaps a bluff overlooking a lake, perhaps a butte rising from the prairie, he fasted and prayed. Troubled dreams, the result of excitement and hunger, came to him, and were thought to be visions revealing to the dreamer his life-work. He was to be a warrior, an orator, or a medicine-man.

Such a time of decision had now come to Philippe. He would make his choice, however, not through a dream in the night, but through hard thinking in the broad light of day. Such was the demand of the white blood that ran in his veins. Slowly the boy climbed to the highest point of the rugged hills that border the bay. Here, on a fragment of trap-rock, he sat down.

For hours Philippe remained almost motionless, thinking. His mind wandered back over the years spent in the woods and on the

prairies that bordered the peaceful Illinois. He thought of the sports, the games, the feasts, the pleasures of the hunt. He thought, too, of the hunger that sometimes came after the feasts, of the bitter cold combined with hunger, when, in winter, the deep snows made fuel and game almost impossible to obtain. He thought of the torture of fear that had swept over the whole nation when they were driven from their homes and scattered far and wide by the attacks of the ferocious Iroquois.

Then the boy's troubled mind turned to the life of the French. He had seen their forts and trading-houses on the Illinois and at Michillimackinac, and he had pictured to himself the greater glories of Montreal and Quebec. He had noted the power of the French leaders over their Indian allies, the power of trained intellects over the minds of savages. He had observed, too, how some Frenchmen ruled over others, and he had seen inferiors cringe and whine before superiors. Such things were not known

among his Indian associates, and his wild young nature rebelled against the thought of submitting to them.

The sun sank behind the western hills; the long summer twilight came and went; night crept over lake, and forest, and rocky crag. A camp-fire on the sandy point far below twinkled like a star in the growing darkness. The boy gazed long at the tiny, flickering point of light, and, as he looked, the decision he sought came to his mind and heart, for his imagination pictured before the fire the mighty frame and honest face of Le Gros. Then his mind went back to other camp-fires, on the banks of the Illinois, beside which he had come to know and to revere the stern, but just and upright, La Salle. For the sake of these two men, and that he might in some degree be like them, he would, if need be, even renounce the free life of the forest, that he might cast his lot with the race of his unknown father.

CHAPTER VI

THE darkness of a moonless night had settled over the camp when Philippe reached it. A few glowing embers only showed where groups of Indians or French slept with their feet to the dying coals. One fire alone gave forth an occasional jet of flame, and toward this the boy turned his steps. Soon a flicker of light revealed the bearded face and huge shoulders of the guide. With him was Du Luth.

Philippe, in his quiet Indian fashion, glided up to the fire and sat down. For perhaps five minutes not a word was spoken. At last the guide broke the silence.

"Well, lad," he said, and his voice was like a father's; "well, lad, how is it?"

"Philippe live like white man," the boy answered. "Philippe not cheat any more."

"I hoped you would come to that decision," replied Le Gros. "An Indian vil-

lage is a poor training-place for morality, as we white men see it, but I thought you would rise above the life of a savage. But where is your knife?" he continued as his glance fell upon the empty belt.

"Philippe was very angry," the boy replied rather shamefacedly. "Threw old knife in lake."

"That was bad," said the guide. "We all get angry at times, but to destroy our own property in our anger is just plain foolishness. I know that a poor knife tries one's temper, but it is far better in the woods than none."

During this dialogue, Du Luth had sat in silence. His attention seemed to be fixed upon one of his feet. This member, thickly bandaged, was stretched stiffly toward the warmth of the fire. Strange as it may seem, this hardy explorer and adventurer was subject to the gout, and was now suffering from one of its attacks.

As Le Gros ceased speaking, a jet of flame sputtered for a moment from a burn-

ing pine-knot. In the flickering light Du Luth studied the face of the young half-breed. Evidently he was not displeased with what he found there.

"To-morrow," he said, "there is to be a great feast, following the morning's games. I have offered a prize to the person who brings in the greatest quantity of fish for the feast, and another for the biggest fish. The prizes will be hunting-knives. I am well acquainted with this bay, and, if you wish, Philippe, I may be able to help you to win one of the prizes. You may know that a large river, that we call the St. Louis, empties into this bay. For two or three miles above its mouth, the river is wide and sluggish, and runs between low, marshy banks. There it is a feeding-place for sturgeon. I have a good fish-spear in my canoe. I should be glad to lend you both the canoe and the spear. You may win one of these."

Du Luth showed the boy the prizes which he was to offer the next day. They were not such knives as were usually supplied to the

Indians. With their long, curved blades, and stag-horn handles, they were almost works of art. Philippe's eyes shone as he accepted Du Luth's offer of the canoe and spear.

At the first flush of dawn on the following morning, Philippe shook Henri awake, and asked for his help in trying to land a sturgeon.

"A sturgeon," repeated Henri, as he stretched himself sleepily. "You can't catch a sturgeon on the little hooks that we have."

"But perhaps I can with this," said Philippe, as he proudly exhibited Du Luth's spear. It was three-pronged, like Neptune's trident, and was fitted with a light wooden handle, six or seven feet long. Attached to it was a linen line, a hundred feet long.

"That looks pretty good," exclaimed Henri, as he inspected the implement. "Are you intending to try for the prize that is offered for the biggest fish?"

Philippe nodded his head in answer, and repeated what Du Luth had said about the probability of finding sturgeon in the river.

The mouth of the river was some five miles southwest of the camp, and it was two miles further to the point where one might expect to find the sturgeon.

"Must hurry," said Philippe. "Must start fishing before sun come up."

The boy's impatience, though natural enough, was hardly justified by the circumstances. So long is the summer twilight in that high latitude that it still lacked an hour of sunrise when the fishing ground was reached. Philippe made a few preliminary casts with his spear, to accustom himself to its "hang"; then he settled to his work.

The boy stood in the bow of the canoe, his feet well apart. In his right hand he held the spear, poised for the throw; in his left, the coil of line. Henri, kneeling in the stern, propelled the canoe slowly and silently over the still water. He kept just outside the marshy growth that fringed the channel.

After ten minutes of this slow progress, Philippe motioned to Henri to stop paddling. His quick eye had caught sight of a large fish feeding in the mud of the river's bottom. Before the canoe drifted within throwing distance, however, there was a great swirl in the water, and the fish disappeared.

Twice was Philippe thus disappointed, but before long a third fish was sighted. He was a magnificent fellow, as large as the other two put together. Intent upon his morning meal of shell-fish, he had stirred up the mud of the bottom until the roily water concealed half his great length.

When fifteen feet away, Philippe made his throw, and into it he put all the strength of his vigorous young muscles. The spear hit fairly, just back of the head. Then the boy dropped to his knees, and braced himself for the coming struggle.

The first rush of the sturgeon was for the deeper water of mid-channel. Fortunate it was that Philippe did not attempt to take

the rush standing, for the canoe must surely have been overturned. As it was, water flowed over one gunwale before Henri could swing the craft about to follow the fish.

For ten minutes the sturgeon battled valiantly,—diving, plunging, leaping, in his endeavor to rid himself of the iron that galled his flesh. He had been hard hit, however, and gradually weakened from loss of blood. As his struggles became fainter, Philippe hauled in on his line until he had the fish alongside and at the surface. A blow of his tomahawk cleft the sturgeon's skull, and the fight was over.

Two hours later the various catches of the morning were laid at Du Luth's feet. They consisted mostly of salmon-trout, some of which weighed as much as sixty pounds. There were two or three sturgeons of moderate size, but none of the fish approached Philippe's in length or in weight. The coveted knife, the prize for bringing in the largest fish, was awarded to the half-breed boy.

At noon of this day, the last of the athletic events was staged,—a wrestling-match for men. Each tribe had one or more entries, but the number of contestants was reduced by elimination contests until but two remained. To the chagrin of most of the Indians present, both of these two were Dacotahs. They were twin brothers, men of about thirty. Tall and powerful, and of fierce and aggressive dispositions, these chiefs were men of note in their tribe. Perhaps because of their close relationship, they had been given similar names. One was known as Black Eagle; the other as Red Eagle.

The prize for this event was a package of a dozen iron arrow-points. This the two Eagles agreed to divide, instead of contending for it. There being no further scheduled events, the crowd had begun to break up, when Le Gros held up his hand as a sign that he wished to speak.

"I did not enter my name for this contest," he said. "I had no desire for the

prize, and I trusted to my friends, the young men of the lake tribes, to sustain the honor of their nations and of their allies, the French. But it seems that an evil spirit has weakened the muscles of my brothers; they have been overcome by the strangers from the west. I think no evil spirit has affected my muscles. I challenge the Black Eagle and the Red Eagle to wrestle with me, both at the same time. If I win, I ask no prize. If I lose, I will give each of the Eagles a good tomahawk."

A murmur of surprise and approval came from the assemblage. It had galled the pride of the lake Indians to acknowledge that two of the hated Sioux were better than their best. Le Gros was to them like a fellow-tribesman, and his challenge to the winners was salve on the hurt to their pride.

The two Dacotahs, stung by the contempt which Le Gros' offer to meet both at once indicated, lost no time in accepting the challenge. Then, while their new rival prepared for the contest, they disappeared momen-

tarily among their fellow Sioux. Confident that the remaining contest would be but child's play for them, they took advantage of the short delay to drink deeply from a jug of brandy that had been smuggled into their camp.

Meantime Le Gros stripped to the same attire as his competitors, a simple breech-clout. His clothing he left with Philippe. As the giant walked out again before the crowd, with his enormous muscles, now fully exposed, rippling smoothly under his clear white skin, he looked like another Hercules. It seemed to his friends and admirers that such a man might triumph even over such odds as he had assumed. The hope found vent in loud calls and whoops of encouragement from the crowd.

The only rule governing the contest was that when any part of a wrestler except his hands and his feet touched the ground, he lost.

When the starting-signal was given, the two Dacotahs rushed upon their opponent

in an attempt to sweep him from his feet. As well might they have attempted to uproot one of the pine-trees that crowned the neighboring hills. Foiled in this attack, they tried to lift Le Gros so as to throw him to the ground. They did, indeed, lift him from his feet, but so tightly did he grip their bodies in his bear-like grasp that they were unable to throw him without themselves going to the ground with him. So the struggle went on, while the air rang with cries of encouragement to the white man from his many supporters. The Sioux band, however, stood in silence.

After ten minutes of struggle, the Dacotah wrestlers paused to regain their breath. They were to have no breathing-spell, however. As they stood panting a few feet apart, Le Gros rushed between them, seized them around their waists, lifted them like little children, and threw them to the ground. With such force did they strike, that their remaining breath was driven completely out of their bodies.

The victorious guide, himself well winded by his tremendous exertions, and with sweat running in rivulets down his glistening skin, started slowly back to Philippe, to regain his clothing. He had not taken half a dozen steps, however, before he was startled by a warning cry from the boy. The two Dacotah wrestlers, angered by the shame of their defeat, and fired by the brandy they had drunk, had seized their knives and were rushing upon the unarmed victor.

It was a perilous moment for the good-natured giant, but he met it with the readiness of one whose life had been spent amid the dangers of the forest. Springing to the left, so as to have both of his assailants on one side, he met the attack of the nearest with a tremendous blow in the chest. The savage went down, but the swinging sweep of his knife, as he fell, cut the swelling muscles of the guide's chest. Unmindful of the wound, in fact, not feeling it in the excitement of the moment, Le Gros turned to meet the attack of the second Dacotah. He was

just in time, for already the gleaming blade of the Sioux's knife was descending, to strike him in the back. A quick guard with the right arm stopped the blow; then a short, hard jab in the ribs landed the Dacotah on the ground beside his brother.

In an instant the Eagles were on their feet, to renew the attack, but Philippe acted even more quickly. Seizing his own new knife and that of Le Gros, he sprang to the side of the guide and thrust the two weapons into his hands. Seeing their foe as well armed as themselves, the Eagles now became more cautious. Crouching like panthers, they circled about the Frenchman, looking for an opening.

The whoops and yells that had greeted the guide's victory had now changed into short, fierce cries of anger, as his supporters noted the treacherous action of the vanquished wrestlers. Menacing looks were turned upon the band of forty or fifty Sioux, who stood at one side of the ring. The Dacotahs themselves, in anticipation of an attack,

formed their fighting men in a circle, inside of which were their squaws and children. The two Eagles, sobered by the seriousness of the situation which they had brought about, joined their comrades.

Silence settled over the point, a silence soon broken by the piercing war-cry of the Chippewas, eager for an opportunity to square accounts with their ancient enemies. The Sioux braced themselves for the attack. Then Du Luth, followed by thirty armed Frenchmen, rushed between the two Indian bands. Forming in two lines, back to back, they faced the savages with cocked muskets.

The French leader was still dressed in the elaborate costume which he had worn throughout the period of the council, but his face was no longer that of the suave courtier seeking the favor of his dusky guests. His jaw was set, and his eyes flashed in anger as he faced the Chippewas. For fully a minute he stood in silence. When he spoke, his voice was hard, almost contemptuous.

" What is the meaning of these war-cries,

and of these drawn weapons?" he asked, addressing the chiefs of the Chippewas. "Are not the Dacotahs my guests, equally with you? Did not you as well as they smoke the calumet, the peace-pipe, which I offered you? Would you now violate even your own customs, and treacherously attack them protected by the calumet? Know then that he who lifts a finger against one of these my guests before the end of this council, makes an enemy of me. I have spoken."

Faced by the menacing look of the white leader, and the equally menacing muzzles of the leveled guns, the bravest among the Chippewas quailed. The war-cries died upon their lips, knives and tomahawks were restored to deerskin belts, and the angry band silently dispersed. When it was seen that Le Gros had come out of the fray without serious injury, the excitement subsided, and the disturbance to the calm of the council was soon forgotten.

CHAPTER VII

Of the Indian tribes represented at the great council, one, the Sioux, was feared and hated above all the others. Through diplomacy and hard fighting, these fine warriors had made themselves masters of a broad belt of territory stretching from Lake Superior nearly to the Rocky Mountains. Numerous, sagacious, of high military spirit, neighboring tribes did well not to incur their enmity.

Realizing that they were but a handful amidst a host of actual or possible enemies, the Sioux delegates had wisely fixed their camp fully half a mile from the bivouacs of the other Indians. As the season was midsummer, no shelters had been erected. These hardy savages paid little attention to an occasional shower, or to a chilling breeze from off the cold lake. Their clothing and blankets of deerskin gave all the protection they needed or desired.

The night after the encounter between Le Gros and his Sioux opponents was very dark. The moon, now well through its first quarter, was concealed by dense clouds. To eyes which had been gazing into the bright glare of a camp-fire, the darkness was impenetrable. Only as the eye became accustomed to the gloom could the faint outlines of point, and bay, and surrounding hills be discerned.

In this obscurity a black figure silently approached the Dacotah encampment. It was that of the Jesuit priest, Father Gournay. As he neared the camp-fire around which the Sioux were gathered, the sounds of earnest discussion caused him to halt. He was perhaps fifty paces from the group, but, in the quiet of the night, most of the conversation came to him with perfect distinctness.

The priest was one of those rare men who are born with a gift for acquiring strange tongues. With him, a word or a phrase once heard seemed never to be forgotten. As a

consequence, in the three years he had spent among the western tribes, he had mastered a dozen of their languages and dialects. The words that reached him from the circle about the camp-fire were therefore perfectly understood. Even when the words could not be heard, the meaning of the speaker was often made clear through his expressive gestures.

The first speaker whom the priest heard was Black Eagle. His manner did not belie his name. Apparently his discomfiture at the hands of Le Gros still rankled in his mind. His face bore a black scowl, and his voice was as fierce as the scream of the noble bird for whom he was named.

"In my lodge on the Minnesota," these were the first words the Jesuit heard, "in my lodge there is a long pole hung from the rafters. It is filled from end to end with scalps which I have taken with my own hand. There are scalps from Mandans, from Pawnees, from Illinois, and from Blackfeet; but, more than all the rest together, are the scalps

of the Chippewas. I took these scalps because I hated the Mandans, the Pawnees, the Illinois, and the Blackfeet; and, most of all, I hated the Chippewas. But greater even than my hatred for the Chippewas is my hatred for these arrogant palefaces.

"You have heard their words. They speak of us, not as Dacotahs, but as Nadouessioux, the Little Snakes. They call us, chiefs and warriors of the Dacotahs, children, and say we must obey the commands of their chief, who lives beyond the great waters. They bring the Black Robes, their medicine-men, who tell us our gods are demons, and that unless we worship the gods they tell us of, we shall be burned at stakes forever, instead of going to our happy hunting-grounds. They bring their terrible guns, that send out thunder and lightning, against which a shield of toughest buffalo-hide is as the leaf of a water-lily.

"Let us not be deceived by these strange men. They are here to do us harm. Their friends are our enemies, and they will com-

bine and arm these enemies against us. Already I see French guns in the hands of the Chippewas. Let us leave this council where all are our enemies, though they smoke with us the calumet. Let us strike while yet we have time."

For perhaps five minutes after the conclusion of the Black Eagle's speech the circle of Sioux sat in silence, meditating upon the words they had heard. Then the Red Eagle rose to speak. Less of an orator than his brother, though equally fierce in words and manner, he seconded the proposal to show the displeasure of the Sioux at the events of the day by taking to their canoes at once.

A pause of unusual length even for an Indian council followed the remarks of the Red Eagle. To the priest, invisible in the darkness, it seemed that the dark faces reflected not only the uncertain light of the camp-fire, but the uncertainty of mind of their possessors. The Eagles had presented the case against the French, but in this rude court of the wilderness no decision would be

reached until all who cared to present their views had had an opportunity to do so. There were those who doubted the wisdom of the course advocated by the Eagles, but most of these hesitated to take a stand that might be considered favorable to the hereditary enemies of the nation, the Chippewas. At length eyes began to focus upon the leader of the delegation, the Wolf.

For many minutes the old chief continued to puff at his pipe in grave silence. Then, laying it aside, he slowly arose. No finer example of mature Indian manhood could have been found in the length and breadth of the forest than was presented in the person of this old chief. In spite of age, for his head was white, his tall and powerful body was straight as the pine trees of his native woods. His face was that of a man who had spent years in the cruel warfare of the savage, yet there was something about the deep-sunken eyes and the furrowed brow that denoted thoughtfulness and mental power.

The Wolf's speech was short. Nothing was to be gained, he said, by breaking with the French. From them came the sharp knives and tomahawks that made the Dacotahs terrible to less well-armed tribes. If war should be declared against the pale-faces, guns would, no doubt, be supplied to the Chippewas. In that case, not even the bravery of the Dacotahs would avail against that tribe. Lastly, the French had shown their friendliness on that very day by preventing the massacre of the little band of Dacotahs by their ancient enemies.

As the Wolf sat down a murmur of approval ran around the circle of Indians. Evidently the warlike counsel of the Eagles met with little sympathy from their fellow-warriors.

The priest, Gournay, realized that the moment was favorable for his purpose. He advanced slowly to the fire. Following the custom of the Indians, he seated himself, and for several minutes gazed solemnly at the flames. At length he arose and addressed

the assembly in the deliberate manner of an Indian orator.

He had come, he said, to take counsel with his friends the Dacotahs. (The shrewd priest carefully avoided the offensive term, Sioux.) First, however, he would ask his friends to accept some small tokens of his regard. Opening a compact but heavy bundle he had brought with him, Gournay exhibited the contents to the eager eyes of the Indians. For the principal chiefs there were knives of the finest make. For the lesser warriors there were tomahawks. Even the women and children were not overlooked, but received presents of beads, needles, and awls.

When the excitement attending the distribution of the gifts had died down, the priest submitted the proposition for which the presents had paved the way. He asked permission for his party of four to accompany the Dacotah delegates back to their towns, far to the southwest.

What the decision of the Sioux would be was never in doubt. It had been purchased

with the contents of the priest's heavy bundle. Even the Eagles, as they felt the keen edges of their new knives, and caught the gleam of the fire reflected from the polished blades, gave a reluctant consent to the priest's request. It would not be practicable, however, for him to make the trip in company with the delegates, for they were to spend many weeks upon the journey, hunting and gathering berries and wild rice. He was welcome, though, to visit the towns on the Minnesota whenever he pleased. As a kind of passport to the territory of the Dacotahs, the Wolf gave him a symbolic belt of wampum.

CHAPTER VIII

The morning of the second day after the events just related broke upon a scene of busy activity on the sandy point where the great council had been held. The conference was over. Well satisfied with its results, hosts and guests prepared for an early start for the homeward journey. Du Luth, with the priests and traders, was to return by canoe to Sault Ste. Marie. The delegates of the various tribes were to go by water or by land, either to their villages or to hunting-places where food would be gathered for the coming winter.

The priest, Gournay, had arranged that he, with his three companions, should accompany the band of Chippewas on their way home as far as the Mississippi River. From that point the four would travel alone down the river to its junction with the Minnesota. This course had been decided upon after a

conference with Du Luth, who had been to the Sioux country, in the present State of Minnesota, three years earlier.

As the red disc of the sun showed above the glistening surface of Lake Superior, the paddles of the Chippewas and of their four companions dipped into the water, and the flotilla of canoes moved westward. Le Gros' canoe, which had been lost in the storm, had been replaced by an excellent craft obtained from one of the traders. Light and buoyant as a modern pleasure canoe, it carried the weight of its four occupants and several hundred pounds of supplies with perfect steadiness and safety.

The route of the party lay up the St. Louis River. The day was cool, the paddlers fresh, and the light craft sped swiftly over the smooth surface of the river. Camp was made for the night fully forty miles from the starting-point.

As the sun went down, gathering clouds and a sharp drop in temperature foretold wet weather.

"Come, lads," Le Gros said when the cargo of the canoe had been deposited at the camping-place. "I think we are in for a rainy night, and I, for one, don't care to sleep with no other protection than dripping pine-trees. Get your hatchets, and we will see if we can rig up some kind of a shelter."

Not far from the camp a grove of young tamaracks was found. A dozen of these, fifteen to twenty feet in height, were cut down and dragged to the camp. A pole was fastened horizontally, about eight feet from the ground, to two neighboring pine-trees. On this pole the butt ends of the tamaracks were laid. The tops rested on the ground, ten or twelve feet away from the pole. As there were several courses of the tamaracks, they formed a fairly tight roof. Beds of soft pine boughs completed the shelter.

Tired with the steady paddling of the day, all hands, Chippewas and French, went to bed early. About midnight, Philippe was awakened by the sound of dripping water, and by a stirring among the Chippewas. A

cold rain was falling. The Indians, who had prepared no shelters, sought out the trees with the thickest tops. Under this scanty protection they lay down, to get what sleep they might.

For a while Philippe lay awake, thinking. All his life he had done as these fellow-redskins were doing. When away from his village, he had always, except in winter, done without shelter rather than go to the trouble of providing it. Now, as he lay dry and warm under the roof of tamaracks, he listened to the continuous stirring among the Chippewas, as one after another moved his bed in the hope of finding some spot drier than the last. In a sleepy way, as his eyes closed again, Philippe was glad that he had chosen to live his life with those who preferred to take a little trouble in advance rather than to suffer later.

It was not long before Philippe and all the rest of the band were awake again, due to a great stir and commotion among the Indians. One warrior, in a loud voice, was

relating to his comrades some exciting experience he had just undergone. The sounds came to the four in the lean-to out of complete darkness, for the fires had been quenched by the rain, and not a ray of light from the moon or the stars found its way through the clouds and the dripping mat of the tree-tops.

Soon three or four Chippewa chiefs approached the Frenchmen. Their leader addressed Le Gros, who spoke their language, as well as those of all the other tribes of the lake region.

"One of our young men has dreamed a bad dream," he said. "It was a terrible dream, and it frightened him very much, so much that he has forgotten what the dream was. He knows, however, it was a very bad dream, one that showed him that it is very dangerous for us to remain in this place. We must move at once."

The thought of leaving his comfortable bed, and taking to the canoes in the dark and the rain, did not at all appeal to the guide,

but he knew from long experience that argument would be wasted upon the superstitious Indians. He decided to try the effect of ridicule instead. Having heard their story, he suddenly broke out in a loud, scornful laugh.

"That must have been a bad dream, indeed," he roared, "if your young man can't even remember what it was. Come, let him tell us the dream; then perhaps we shall believe that the spirits have spoken to him. What was the dream? Perhaps it was that a doe and her fawn met the dreamer in the game-trail, and he was frightened. Possibly he dreamed he heard a partridge drumming on a log, and he was afraid of the sound. Perchance he thought he heard the chatter of the gray squirrel in the tree-tops, and his heart failed him. Let him tell us the dream."

The Chippewas were abashed at the ridicule of the guide, but they insisted that they must leave the camp; the warning of the dream must not be neglected. The chiefs returned to their followers, who immediately

began to carry the scanty belongings of the band to the canoes.

"There's nothing to do but to follow them," Le Gros said in disgust to his companions. "We can't afford to lose the protection of this band, which is friendly, if it is foolish."

Slipping and sliding on the wet ground, the four carried their heavy load of supplies to their canoe. The Chippewas were already afloat, and impatient to get away before the threatened ill luck came upon them.

Out from under the canopy of the forest, a little light filtered through the clouds, enough so that the banks of the river could be discerned. With this scanty illumination, the canoes worked their way for an hour against the stream. Finally the leading canoe moved shoreward, and the party landed on a wooded point. The Indians at once lay down in their dripping garments, wrapped in deerskin blankets, equally wet.

The three Frenchmen and Philippe attempted to build a fire. Try as they would,

however, they could not manage to ignite the water-soaked twigs and branches which they gathered. At last they gave up the attempt, and lay down on the wet ground, to get a few winks of sleep before daybreak.

Again Philippe's active brain refused to stop working. He was decidedly uncomfortable. His deerskin garments, saturated with water, were cold and slimy, as they clung to his skin. Great drops from the tree-tops fell constantly upon his face. Beneath him, rivulets of water, dammed by his body, became cold puddles, which chilled him to the bone. And why was he enduring all this discomfort? Because a superstitious Chippewa thought he had dreamed something that betokened ill luck.

"Well," said the lad finally to himself, "there may have been something to that dream after all, for it certainly was a misfortune to leave a dry, warm bed to lie in this cold puddle. Anyway, it seems that the Indians are always wrong, and the white men always right."

Before morning a fresh north wind drove away the clouds, and the day broke clear. Getting up with the sun, Philippe again attempted to build a fire. Having now the advantage of light, he found some partially dry twigs. With the help of flint, steel, and tinder, which the priest produced from his water-tight box, the boy soon had a fire started.

Breakfast for the four was to consist of juicy cuts from a saddle of venison obtained the day before. Le Gros fried these in a long-handled iron pan, which he held at arm's length over the fire. Meantime Henri and Philippe, to get the chill out of their bodies, played at tag with two Chippewa boys who were in the party.

Philippe was " it." One of the Chippewa boys whom he was chasing dodged behind Le Gros, to avoid being touched. In following him, Philippe cut the corner a little too closely, and caught his toe in a stick that protruded from the fire. There was a shower of sparks and glowing embers. Le

Gros fell over backward. His heavy beard was singed, and one of his wrists was burned by a flying coal.

Perhaps the guide was not quite his usual cheerful self that morning. It is hard to keep sweet-tempered when your night's rest has been spoiled by the foolishness of another. At any rate, Le Gros completely lost his temper. With a roar like that of an angry bull, he seized a stick, and strode after Philippe.

The boy had stopped when he saw what mischief he had brought about, and stood, looking contritely at the prostrate giant. But when he saw the stick in the guide's hand, the expression of his face changed. A red flush of anger glowed under his clear, dark skin, and his eyes flashed. Almost without knowing what he was doing, he snatched his new hunting-knife from his belt and held it by the point, poised for the throw. In spite of good resolutions, the boy was again a savage.

"Philippe is not a dog," he said hotly in

his Illinois tongue. "Philippe will not be beaten like one."

As the cowboy in the west, bravest of the brave, holds up his hands when covered by his opponent's gun, so Le Gros stopped before the threat of the glittering blade. For a moment the two stood, with wrath in their hearts and in their faces. Then the angry flash died in Philippe's eyes. His head bowed, and his hand returned the knife to its sheath.

"The Great One was a very good friend to Philippe," he said in a voice that choked somewhat. "The Great One saved Philippe from the lake. Philippe cannot strike his friend."

In an instant the flush of anger disappeared from the guide's face. Dropping his stick, he placed his huge hands on the lad's shoulders.

"I acted like a man of the settlements, to think of beating you for an accident," he said. "There is where you Indians have the better of us whites. We seem to think it

no harm to soothe our own injured feelings by causing some one, weaker than we are, to suffer. Well, it's over now, and no harm done. Let's get the fire going again and have our breakfast."

Another forenoon at the paddles brought the band to the mouth of a little river now known as the Floodwood. The head of canoe navigation of this stream was reached before night, and camp was made there. The charred remains of camp-fires indicated that this was not the first party to rest at this spot. It was, indeed, the end of a long portage that led from the Floodwood to a small tributary of the Mississippi.

Next morning, before undertaking the laborious task of carrying the canoe and its heavy cargo over the portage, Le Gros bargained with the Chippewas for their assistance. By a distribution of beads, eight of the Indians were induced to add to their own rather light burdens, forty or fifty pounds of the Frenchmen's supplies.

The sturdy savages swung off over the

trail as freely as if their now heavy burdens had been feather pillows. Gournay followed with his precious bundle of materials for the communion. In addition, he carried on his back a load of half a hundred pounds. Le Gros and the two boys were to bring up the rear, with the canoe on their shoulders. In the canoe were the guns and the reserve of ammunition, even more precious in the eyes of the guide than was the bundle of sacred articles to the priest.

"Gold and silver are, no doubt, fine things to have in the settlements," he said, addressing his nephew. "I suppose with them one can buy almost anything the heart may desire. But out here in the wilderness I wouldn't give that heavy bag of bullets and those two stout kegs of powder for a canoe full of gold.

"Keep in mind, boy, that if anything should happen to our guns, or if we should lose our ammunition, we should be worth less in the woods than the poorest Indian we might meet. Philippe here, if he should lose

or break his bow, would soon make another of a sort, and could keep himself from starving; but a gun can't be made in the forest.

"Think first, always, of your gun. If you are overturned in a canoe, grab your gun with one hand and swim out with the other. If you stumble in the trail, hold your gun high as you fall, and take the bump with your body. Bruises will heal, but a broken gun-stock will not. When you eat, have your gun at your side. When you sit at the camp-fire, place it at your feet. When you sleep, make it your bed-fellow. Care for it, keep it, and it will make you king of the forest; neglect it or lose it, and you are nothing."

Having delivered himself of this lecture, Le Gros lifted his end of the canoe lightly to his shoulder. The boys followed his example with the other end, and the three swung into the trail behind the priest. The Indians had disappeared among the trees.

With an occasional rest to ease their shoulders of their burdens, half the length of the

portage was covered. Up to this point nothing had been seen of the Chippewas, but now, at a bend in the trail, the eight who had been hired as carriers came in sight, seated at the side of the path.

"The loads are too heavy," said one of the Indians, who had evidently been selected as spokesman. "We can't carry them any farther. Our shoulders and backs are sore and lame. The white men must carry their own loads."

The Indian spoke in his native tongue, which was understood only by Le Gros. When the latter explained the situation to his companions, Father Gournay and Henri looked somewhat disconsolate. Their own burdens were beginning to bear rather heavily upon them, and the thought of making repeated trips of several miles each, carrying the packs laid down by the Chippewas, was not a pleasant one.

Philippe, however, showed no concern. His ready laugh rang out merrily as he looked at the stalwart forms of the Indians,

who tried vainly to look worn and fatigued. The idea that these athletes, who could, if necessary, have carried loads twice as heavy over the entire portage without resting, were exhausted, was too much for the sense of humor of the young half-blood.

Le Gros showed no more concern over the situation than did Philippe. Opening a bag in which he kept a supply of small articles for trading purposes, he offered to the Chippewas half as many beads as he had at first given them.

The effect upon the Indians was instantaneous. Drooping bodies straightened as if by an electric shock, clouded faces brightened, and the burdens that had seemed so heavy were tossed like playthings to their places on sturdy shoulders.

Again the Chippewas disappeared in the forest, and again, a mile down the road, was the little play repeated. When the Indians had again got out of sight with their burdens, Gournay approached the guide with a somewhat severe look on his face.

"I fear you have allowed yourself to be tricked by these fellows," he said. "Our supply of beads will not last long, if we have to pay double for all our service."

A broad grin spread over the guide's features. With a woodsman's independence, he felt no awe of the priest, in spite of the latter's position and character.

"Don't worry about the beads, Father," he said. "I know these Indians. I gave them at first only a third of the pay the job was worth. They took it because they knew they could force me to give them more before they got to the end of the portage. Now they have had two-thirds of what I expected to give. They won't get any more, for we are so near the end of the carry that, if they throw down their loads again, we will take them in ourselves. They realize this, and probably won't cause any more trouble, for they wish to keep on good terms with the French."

The prediction of the guide came true. No more was seen of the Chippewas until the

glint of running water through the trees showed that the end of the portage had been reached. The burdens of the porters were soon in the canoe. An hour's paddling down the little stream brought the party to the Mississippi.

CHAPTER IX

The Chippewas and their fairer companions had now reached the point where their paths separated. The Indians were to go up the Mississippi to their homes among the innumerable lakes of northern Minnesota. The course of the French, on the other hand, was to be down-stream.

As a token of good-will, Le Gros invited the Chippewas to postpone the continuation of their journey for a day in order to partake of a feast to be given in their honor. The beaming countenances of the Indians made their polite words of acceptance superfluous. This had, indeed, been a wonderful journey to them. Feasted and flattered by Du Luth at the great council, loaded with presents beyond their fondest dreams, they were in a mood to do full justice to this last act of hospitality on the part of these wonderful people, the palefaces.

"Philippe," said the guide that night, as he stretched himself on his blanket, "I wish you would see if you can get a deer to-morrow morning for our feast. Henri and I will try our hands at fishing. I don't want to use up our powder any quicker than necessary, and that bow of yours looks good enough to bring down the biggest buck in the woods."

Early the next morning Philippe was off after his deer. He followed the course of the river down-stream, keeping a hundred yards or so back from the bank. After traveling about two miles, he found what he had been looking for, a game-trail leading to the water. In the dust of the well-worn path were the tracks of many deer. Some led toward the river; others toward the forest. None, however, were really fresh. The slight crust of damp earth formed by the heavy dew of the preceding night had not been disturbed.

"No deer have come this way this morning," muttered Philippe to himself as he ex-

amined the tracks, "but there were plenty of them here yesterday. There will be more to-day. I will wait for them."

The river here ran nearly south. A light breeze was blowing from the northwest. Philippe ensconced himself on a fallen tree-trunk behind a cluster of alders on the south side of the trail, within thirty feet of the water. Here his scent was carried by the wind away from both the trail and the river.

With the patience of the Indians whose blood was in his veins, Philippe waited for his prey. The full light of day had just broken over the river when he began his vigil. An hour later the rising sun tinged with faintest pink the white twigs of a birch on the opposite bank. Another hour passed, two hours, three hours, and the lad still waited.

So still was Philippe that a passer-by might have thought him asleep on his log. Yet not a sign or a sound of the forest escaped him. These were new hunting-grounds to the young half-breed, and it be-

hooved him to make the acquaintance of their inhabitants. But most of the denizens of this northern forest proved to be old friends, and it was from these friends the lad received the message for which he had so patiently waited. A crow cawed far back in the forest. After a long interval of silence there came another call, the strident note of the blue-jay. This was much nearer. Then, only a hundred yards away, a gray squirrel scampered up a tree, and sat, chattering and scolding, on one of its lower branches.

Evidently something was disturbing these gossips of the forest,—something that was moving toward the lad's hiding-place. As Philippe listened even more intently than before, he thought he heard the swish of a bush as it was pushed aside by some passing body. Then his sensitive ears caught the almost inaudible thud of hard hoofs upon the dust of the trail. A moment later a magnificent buck led a doe and her two fawns into full view of the ambushed hunter.

Philippe's position behind the alders was

such that he could not shoot at the deer until they had reached the water. Then, as they drank, their hind quarters were toward him, and no vital part was exposed to his aim. When, however, the buck had drunk his fill, and turned slowly to regain the bank, the twang of the bowstring sounded. The arrow found its mark behind the deer's left shoulder.

With a bleat of mingled pain and terror, the buck sprang toward the trail, preceded by his family. Philippe was too quick for them, however, and turned them back to the river. Three bounds were enough to put the doe and her fawns in deep water. The buck tried to follow, but, hard hit as he was, his leaps were shorter and slower. As he entered the water, Philippe, knife in hand, was close behind him. The deer got to swimming depth and seemed upon the point of escaping; but the boy, with a last great leap, seized the buck's stubby tail. A hard backward pull, a quick thrust of the keen blade, and the deer was dead.

It required but a few minutes for Philippe to dress his victim. With its weight thus reduced, he slung the carcass over his shoulders and struck out triumphantly for the camp.

The lad's heart was light within him, for he felt the exaltation of spirit that follows successful accomplishment. How good the life in the forest seemed! He hoped his determination to live the life of a white man would not mean that he must exchange his beloved woods for the settlements. Here he was free. If he chose to hunt, he hunted. If he desired to go on a journey, he went. If he wished to rest in the cool shade in summer, or by the warm fire in winter, he rested.

In the settlements, he heard, it was not so. There one lived always under the eye of a master. If the master required money, or food, or clothing, the subject must supply the need, though he might be hungry or half naked himself. If the master went on the war-path, the subject had no choice; he

must follow, and perhaps lay down his life to gratify the whim of another.

Reared as he had been in the true democracy of an Indian town, Philippe could hardly believe that such conditions could exist; that men would consent to spend their lives among them. For himself ——

The boy's meditation was interrupted, not by a sight, not by a sound, but by an odor. By nostrils less sensitive than his it would have been unnoticed, so faint was it; only a whiff of the strong, pungent smell of a bear.

Philippe's active brain was instantly alert. That bear must be his. Fish was good, and venison was good, but to the active, growing boy the rich, oily meat of the black bear made an even greater appeal. The wind, such as there was, blew in his face; therefore the bear must be in front of him. As Philippe had heard no sound, the animal had probably not been disturbed, had not detected the lad's approach.

Philippe now prepared to match his wits against those of one of the craftiest denizens

of the forest. Placing the dead deer on the ground, he loosened the knife and tomahawk in his belt, tested his bowstring, and selected two or three of his best arrows. This done, he moved cautiously forward.

His own shadow was not more noiseless than Philippe, as he stalked his prey. Not once did a breaking twig or the rustle of a leaf serve to betray his presence. Every few paces he stopped in the shelter of some great tree-trunk and searched the forest with his keen eyes. At last he caught sight of the bear, forty feet above ground, stretched at full length on a great pine bough.

Continuing his noiseless approach, Philippe came unnoticed almost to the foot of the pine. The first intimation the bear had of the lad's presence was the sting of an arrow in his skin. Protected as the animal was by the limb on which he lay, Philippe had not been able to reach a vital spot. The bear's reply to the attack was a growl of rage and pain, but he kept his place in the tree.

A second arrow just missed. It would require close shooting, indeed, to bring down the quarry, for only a scant three inches of the bear's body projected on each side of the branch that supported him.

With the utmost care, Philippe prepared for his third shot. His aim was at the neck, half of which was exposed. It was a beautiful shot. The thirty-inch arrow, drawn clear to the head, flew upward with almost the speed of a bullet. Just grazing the bark of the bough, it sank deep in the muscles of the bear's neck. With another angry roar, the big animal tumbled to the ground.

Throwing his bow to one side, Philippe drew his hunting-knife. He hoped to strike the death blow before the bear could get on his feet. He knew that the fall, great though it was, would have little effect upon the animal. The thrust was well aimed, just behind the shoulder. Unfortunately, however, the point of the knife struck a rib and was deflected.

Instantly the enraged brute, smarting

with pain, but not seriously injured, was on his haunches, facing his enemy. Philippe's situation was now critical. To attack a wounded bear with no weapon but a knife was a task for an experienced hunter, not for a lad of sixteen. Philippe did not hesitate, however. Though he had never before met such a situation, he knew, from the tales of hunters told around camp-fires, about how bruin would act. He knew there were three things he must avoid,—the bear's hug, the bite of his powerful jaws, and the terrific blow of his paws. Any one of these might bring serious injury, or even death.

As the bear rose to his haunches, Philippe darted forward and struck his second blow. He trusted to his panther-like swiftness of movement to get away before the animal's forelegs could close upon him. But a bear in action is little slower than the panther itself. Philippe found himself caught in the animal's dangerous embrace.

In the bear's vise-like grip the lad was as helpless as a baby, except that, fortunately,

PHILIPPE FOUND HIMSELF CAUGHT IN THE ANIMAL'S DANGEROUS EMBRACE.—*Page 114.*

his right arm was free. As the terrific hug tightened, he struck his knife frantically into the bear's exposed side. Three times did he bury his knife to the handle, then, when it seemed that his bones must crack under the terrible pressure, he felt the bear's grasp relax. The great animal staggered, mortally hurt, but in his death spasm his right paw struck the boy a terrific blow in the side.

Philippe landed a rod away. Stunned though he was by the blow and the fall, and gasping for breath, his hand instinctively grasped his tomahawk, his sole remaining weapon. But bruin was through. Philippe's last blows had reached their mark. The bear was dead.

When the lad had recovered his breath, he again shouldered his buck. It required something of an effort, for he was badly shaken up, and was losing blood from jagged wounds left by the bear's claws in his left side. The bear was left lying where he had fallen.

It was but a mile to camp, but it seemed five to Philippe, and it was a pretty pale "Brown One" who finally staggered in from the forest and threw down the deer's carcass at the feet of Le Gros.

"What has happened, lad?" asked the guide in surprise, as he noted the lad's drawn face and the stains of blood on his skin and clothing. "Did the buck get at you with his horns or his feet? They fight wickedly sometimes when they are wounded. No, those are not the marks of a deer's antlers or hoofs," he exclaimed as Philippe raised his arm and exposed the torn flesh of his side. "The claws of a bear or a panther made those gashes. Which was it, boy?"

"A bear," replied Philippe laconically.

The guide's glance fell upon the knife in the boy's belt. Its blade was still dark from the stain of blood.

"Ah! I see how it was," he continued. "Close quarters; hunting-knife against teeth and claws. You are lucky to get away

with a torn side, lad. Many a bold hunter has gone a cripple for life for matching his skill against a wounded bear. But how about the beast? Did he get off as easily as you did?"

"Bear dead. Come, we get him," was the lad's reply.

CHAPTER X

THE whole afternoon was spent by Henri and his uncle in the primitive cookery of the wilderness. Of food there was abundance, even for the twenty or more hungry stomachs that were to be filled. Nor was anything lacking in its preparation. With the skill of their nation in the culinary art, the two cooks baked and broiled, roasted and boiled. When the call to the feast was given, more than a hundred pounds of fragrant viands, smoking hot, were ready to spread before the guests.

Philippe, at the insistence of Le Gros, had taken no part in the work of the afternoon.

"Henri and I will take care of this business," the guide had said in reply to the boy's offer of assistance. "One doesn't get over at once such a shaking as you have had. Besides, you lost a lot of blood before I got

the flow stopped. You just sit quietly on that log and watch us. It may be," he added with a touch of pride in his voice, " it may be you will learn something about roasting a bear and a deer that your Indian cooks on the Illinois couldn't teach you."

Philippe was not unwilling to comply with the guide's request. The jagged wound in his side throbbed with pain, and the loss of blood left him with a feeling of weakness and lassitude such as follows long illness.

Le Gros had proved to be a skilful surgeon. His first step had been to wash the wound thoroughly in the pure, clear water of the river. Then he had applied a healing salve, and over that a bandage of clean, white cotton.

" Water to wash out the poison, salve to keep the flesh soft, and a clean cloth to keep away flies and dirt," he had remarked as he applied the bandage. " I have treated hundreds of flesh wounds so, for both whites and Indians. I never knew the combination to fail, if the wounded man had lived the kind

of life he should. Of course, if he had wrecked his constitution with bad living, nature sometimes took this chance to square accounts. Then nothing could save him. But you won't have any trouble, Philippe. We will keep you quiet for a few days. That will give the wound a chance to heal, and you will soon be as well as ever."

If Henri and Le Gros had been busy preparing to act as hosts at the coming banquet, the Chippewas had been no less occupied in fitting themselves for their part as guests. A formal feast was an affair of importance, and Indian etiquette demanded elaborate toilets especially prepared for the occasion. These toilets did not consist of fine clothing, for such was almost unknown in the forest. The personal decorations were made up almost entirely of paint, together with such feathers and beads as were to be had.

Each warrior carried his "compact,"—a deerskin bag stocked with colored earths, and grease for their application. One was so

fortunate as to possess a crude mirror,—a slab of mica, some four inches square. In it its owner could catch a faint reflection of his face, and of the paint with which it was daubed. His less fortunate companions were forced to be content with such glimpses as they could catch of themselves in the smooth surface of the river.

No doubt it was the opinion of the Indians that the miscellaneous collection of streaks and dots with which they had covered themselves added greatly to their attractiveness. In the eyes of the whites, however, the effect was simply grotesque, an effect heightened, rather than the reverse, by the extreme gravity of mien of the warriors.

To Philippe, of course, such personal decorations were commonplace. Le Gros and Father Gournay were also too much accustomed to the habits of Indians to give the matter a second thought. Henri, however, had never been able to overcome a desire to laugh in the face of every painted Indian he met. To-day, for some unknown

reason, this desire was almost uncontrollable. As one after another of the stately clowns marched up and took the place assigned to him, the lad barely kept his face straight, though he knew that to laugh at his uncle's guests might prove to be a very serious matter.

Finally one of the leading chiefs of the Chippewas approached. He presented a picture wonderful to behold. His shaven head was painted a brilliant yellow. The left side of his face was bright red, with a yellow circle around the eye. The right side was an equally bright yellow with a corresponding red circle. The naked body presented a maze of bars and circles of all hues. To complete the picture, the naturally large ears had been stretched in childhood until they were double their normal size. As the owner of them walked, they flapped back and forth like the ears of an elephant on parade.

When this much-decorated personage approached, with all the self-conscious dignity

of a drum-major leading a band, the suppressed laughter which had been boiling inside the French boy burst forth. It was no ordinary laugh; it had been held in too long for that. Henri's haw-haw made the woods ring, and tears flowed down his cheeks; tears of mortification as much as of mirth, for, even as he laughed, the lad realized the gravity of his offense against the rigid etiquette of the woods.

The effect upon the Chippewas was all that Henri anticipated. Not even the daubs of paint could conceal the menacing frowns that darkened their faces. Hands were even laid for a moment on the handles of the deadly tomahawks. No violence was attempted, however, but, at a word from one of their chiefs, the entire band marched off to their own encampment.

Henri's laughter ceased as suddenly as it had begun. The boy looked contritely at his uncle, whose face showed a mixture of amusement and concern.

"Well, lad," he said, "you have got us

in a pretty mess with your settlement foolishness. Now come here and do exactly as I tell you, or our scalps may be hanging from Chippewa belts in an hour."

The guide walked hastily to the canoe. From one of the packages in it he drew out a bolt of cotton cloth. Cutting off a piece two yards or more in length, he wrapped it around Henri's waist and legs, making a kind of skirt.

"Now go over there to the fire," said Le Gros, "and act the part of a squaw. I will see if I can get the Chippewas to come back. If so, you will wait upon us as we eat. You will have your own meal after we finish. No foolishness now; this is serious business."

Leaving Henri thoroughly sobered, Le Gros walked slowly to the Chippewa encampment. He did not go empty-handed, however. The Indians, seated in a circle on the ground, discussed in low but angry voices the indignity to which they had been subjected. As the guide approached, their conversation ceased. The glances cast toward

the Frenchman were anything but friendly. Le Gros, however, seated himself in their midst. After a long pause he arose and addressed his disgruntled guests in their own language.

"In every village," he said, "there are warriors, squaws, and children. When councils are held, or feasts are given, the squaws and children meet apart from the warriors, as is fitting. When, however, a man-child gets his growth, trial is made of him to determine whether he has the heart and mind, as well as the body, of a man. If so, he is given a place among the warriors. If not, he is sent back among the squaws until his mind grows as well as his body.

"So it must be with my young white brother, who has caused a cloud to come over the minds of my brothers, the Chippewas. His body is that of a man, and I thought he had a man's mind. I was mistaken; therefore he must do the work of a squaw and of a child until his mind grows up. See! I have put on him the dress of a squaw, and,

like a squaw, he shall serve my friends, the Chippewas, at my feast."

As Le Gros concluded his speech, Henri appeared on the river-bank a hundred feet away, a water-bucket in his hand. The white cotton of his extemporized skirt stood out in high relief against the bushes of the shore. The poetic nature of the punishment to which the boy had been subjected appealed strongly to the childish minds of the Indians. Frowning countenances cleared as if by magic; on some faces there were even grins of approval.

Le Gros proceeded to clinch his case. To the chief who had excited Henri's risibilities, and who had naturally been most deeply offended, he gave a hunting-knife. Among the rest were distributed enough beads to bring forth grunts of pleasure. Then, at the invitation of the guide, all marched back to partake of the interrupted dinner.

CHAPTER XI

"THOSE may be the last really friendly Indians we shall see for a long time," remarked Le Gros on the morning following the feast. With the three other members of the party he stood on the bank of the Mississippi and watched the receding canoes of their recent guests.

"I have always found the Chippewas trustworthy," the guide continued. "Of course they have their outbreaks of temper, like all other Indians, and even some whites I have known; but they have never attacked a Frenchman treacherously. I wish I could feel as much confidence in the Dacotahs we are about to visit."

"How long do you think it will take us to reach the Sioux village we are bound for, Uncle?" asked Henri.

"From what the Chippewas told me, I suppose four or five days of easy paddling will bring us to the great falls of this river,

the ones Father Hennepin visited two or three years ago. The Sioux village is twenty or thirty miles beyond. But we will not start right away," Le Gros continued. "That wound in Philippe's side must begin to heal first. A few days spent in hunting, and in curing the meat we get, will not be lost. We can travel all the faster, if need be, if we don't have to hunt for all our dinners on the way."

A whole week passed before the guide pronounced Philippe fit for traveling. In the meantime, he and Henri brought in game in abundance. The birds, mostly partridges and prairie chickens, were eaten at once. The flesh of the deer, of which there were half a dozen, was cut in thin strips, or flakes, and dried in the hot summer sun, then smoked. Thus prepared, it would keep almost indefinitely.

It was the last night in camp. The canoe on the river-bank was loaded for an early morning start. A delicious supper of roasted

partridges, with fish fried in the grease of Philippe's bear, had been eaten. Gradually the long twilight of this northern latitude had given place to dusk, and dusk to darkness. An evening chill, forecasting the approach of autumn, made welcome the crackling and sputtering camp-fire.

Three of our travelers were grouped around the fire. The priest, his chin resting in his hand, gazed at the dancing flames. His mind, however, was on the work that lay ahead of him among the savage Dacotahs. Henri was busy cleaning his musket. Philippe lay prone on the ground, watching the fitful play of blaze and ember.

Le Gros approached the group. In his hand was an object that glistened in the firelight. It was a necklace made of the long claws of the bear that Philippe had killed. The lad's brown face glowed with pleasure as the ornament was fastened about his neck.

Well might a sixteen-year-old boy be proud of such a decoration. None might

wear it except the one who himself had slain the former owner of the claws. If the death-blow had been given with the knife or the tomahawk, the honor was double. In such a case the necklace was no less a decoration for valor than is the Distinguished Service Medal worn by our soldiers to-day. Seldom, indeed, was it so worn except by grown men in the prime of their strength.

In the exuberance of his gratitude, the white blood in the boy overcame his Indian reserve. Throwing his arms around the huge body of the guide, he gave a hug almost as vigorous as if he himself had been a bear. Then, a little ashamed of this manifestation of feeling, he resumed his position before the fire.

For a time there was silence, silence broken only by the cheerful crackling of the burning sticks, and by the call of a katydid, that shrilly announced the approach of autumn frosts. Finally Philippe spoke, addressing the guide, who, like himself, gazed thoughtfully at the fire.

"Why does the Great One go to the Sioux country?" he asked.

Le Gros started as his reverie was broken by the question. It was as if the lad had read his thoughts, for they were the answer to the interrogation. A look of sadness passed over the giant's kindly features as he replied:

"I might say I am going because the Jesuits give me my powder, and lead, and twenty livres a month for guiding this party; but the true answer is a longer one. Put some more of those pine knots on the fire, Henri, for the night is cool. Then I will answer the question that Philippe has asked."

When the resinous fuel was fully ablaze, so that the tanned faces of the travelers glowed in the red light, Le Gros began his reply.

"My real name is not Le Gros," he said. "The Indians call me 'The Great One,' as Philippe has just done, and the French mean the same thing by 'Le Gros'; but my

father's name was Jean Bressani. He gave me the name of Pierre.

"Like most of the whites in Canada, I was born in France. When I was only six years old, my father brought me, my mother, and two younger sisters to Quebec. Young as I was, I well remember the neat stone cottage in which we lived in France, the stone stable with its cows and geese, and the one horse with which my father tilled the ten acres of farm land that supported us.

"In Quebec we lived in the town itself until the close of the Indian war that harassed the colony when we arrived. Then my father bought land and made him a farm on the large island of Orleans, just below the town.

"As I grew toward manhood, more and more children came to our home, until, as with Henri here, it seemed best that I should earn my own living in the forest and on the lakes. I was eighteen years old.

"Near our home on the island was a settlement of Hurons. These Indians had been

driven from their homes on Lake Huron when their nation was destroyed by the Iroquois, and they had found a refuge with their French allies.

"Among the Hurons was a girl a year younger than I. She lived with an uncle. Her parents had disappeared in the confusion that followed the destruction of the Huron towns. She was a Christian girl, and bore a Christian name, Marie. As our homes were not far apart, Marie and I played together as little children. Then, as we grew older, I found that I cared more for her than for my own brothers and sisters. When I returned from my first long journey to the west, we were married.

"A year later a little boy came to us; a boy with soft, brown eyes, and hair that glistened sometimes brown, sometimes black. We named him Philippe,—the same name the priests gave you, Brown One." He turned to the half-breed lad, who still lay on the ground, looking at the fire. The boy nodded in response, and Le Gros went on:

" When the boy was a year old, word came that Marie's parents and one of her brothers, named the Hawk, were with a band of Hurons on the northern shore of Lake Huron. We determined to join them. After a long journey, and a longer search along that wild shore, we found them. They were encamped on the brow of a cliff at the head of a small, secluded bay.

" Pitiful indeed was the condition to which this remnant of the once proud and powerful Hurons was reduced Starving, nearly naked, their spirits crushed by the disasters that had overwhelmed them, their only thought was to hide themselves until the hot wrath of their Iroquois persecutors should have cooled.

" With the help of the Hawk, I soon had a comfortable log-hut built. A week's hunting stocked it with food to last many months. Then I joined a trader bound for the French posts on Lac des Illinois, which is called by the Indians Lake Michigan.

" Four months later I returned alone in

my canoe. Eagerly I searched for the opening to our bay. At last I found it. Then my eyes scanned the cliffs at the bay's end. Possibly the boy and his mother might be on some high point, watching for my return. But no one was in sight.

"As I came nearer a sudden chill of apprehension ran through my veins. There had been a change since I left the bay. No wigwams showed above the edge of the cliff. The sheltered nook where I had built my house was again nothing but barren rock. The camp had been destroyed, and so recently that a faint line of blue smoke still rose from its charred remains. With all my strength I paddled to the shore. There, on the little beach at the foot of the cliff, were the wrecks of four or five canoes. Their sides had been crushed so as to make them useless.

"Leaping from my canoe, I rushed toward the path that led up the side of the cliff. But before I reached it I heard a faint call. It seemed to come from the foot

of the hill to my left. I stopped, and again I heard the call,—my own name. Then I saw what, in my haste, my eye had missed before,—a human form flat on the ground. It was Marie.

" As I approached her, she repeated my name, and raised her hand in welcome. But even as she spoke, a shadow passed over her face, and her hand fell to her breast. Marie was mortally hurt. As I knelt beside her, she tried to speak my name again, but her voice failed, and her eyes closed.

" After a time she looked up at me again, and her lips moved. Leaning close to her, I caught some of the words faintly, like sounds coming from a great distance. ' The boy,' she said; ' my Philippe. I saved him. Find him.'

" She paused. Then came a sound I could not understand, and the words, ' —— took him away.' The brown eyes closed for the last time. My Marie was gone.

" The next day I buried her on a tiny islet far out in the lake, where neither man nor

beast would disturb her. And there on the islet, where it seemed to me I could feel her presence, I made my plans to find our boy.

"It was plain how Marie had come to her death. Fleeing with Philippe from the Iroquois, for so the destroyers proved to be, she had leaped or fallen from the rock. With her body she had broken the force of the fall for the child, but at the cost of her own life. Then some one, friend or foe, had taken the boy away. But who was that friend or that foe?

"For fifteen years I have sought the answer. First I searched out all the bands of Hurons scattered along the shores of the Great Lakes. No refugee from our band was found among them. Then I braved the wrath of the Iroquois murderers themselves. Not one band of all their six tribes did I miss, but the boy was not there.

"The Iroquois do not love the French," the guide continued, "and they gave me this." He threw back his tunic and exposed a long, ugly scar on his breast. "However,

I escaped, and they buried four warriors," he added significantly.

"Since that time I have sought no rest, and have found none. Summer and winter I have been in my canoe, or in the forest, searching for the lad. Not a rumor has come to me of the presence of a half-blood boy in a tribe, that I have not run it down. From the starving Abnaki by the great salt water, to the fur-clad Knisteneaux near the frozen sea to the north, I have wandered. Farther yet I went, when, last year, a report came that a boy, half white, had been seen far down the Mississippi. I joined the expedition which Sieur de la Salle led to the mouth of the great river. We visited many tribes, but, as always, the boy I sought was in some other village, or with some other tribe.

"We passed your town on the Illinois, Brown One," the guide went on, turning to Philippe. "I had known of you for years, but, always when I visited the Illinois, you and your uncle were away from your town. Again it was the same. You were on a visit

to the salt springs west of the Mississippi, and I failed to see you. It did not matter, though, for the people of your town told me, as you have since repeated, that your father was an Englishman.

"And now, to answer your question, lad. My reason for going to the country of the treacherous Dacotahs is, that a report came to me at Sault Ste. Marie of a young half-breed in one of their villages. It is not the town to which we are bound, but is far to the west, where there are no trees, but only mile after mile of grass-covered plains. Whether there is any truth in the rumor I do not know, and whether the Sioux will allow me to go so far, I much doubt, but I must try."

CHAPTER XII

THE voyage down the Mississippi began most auspiciously. The warmth of the August sun, tempered by gentle breezes that found their easiest path along the tortuous course of the river; the birds calling to their nearly grown offspring; the squirrels, chattering as they busily stored food for the coming winter, all made life seem very good to Philippe, as he half sat, half reclined, on a roll of soft blankets in the canoe. He was not allowed to use his paddle, lest the strain might open the wound in his side, which, under the skilful nursing of Le Gros, was fast healing.

Philippe's paddle was not needed, however. The strong arms of Henri and his uncle, aided by the current, were sufficient to send the canoe over many miles of water each day.

The river flowed as down a great stair-

case. For leagues its smooth, glassy surface was but a few feet below that of the surrounding country. Then a series of tossing, foam-flecked rapids carried it into a gorge. Thence, with gradually diminishing banks, it again appeared, smooth and shining, almost a part of the plain through which it passed. Again, in a smother of foam, it sank into its gorge.

For five days the little party journeyed down-stream. There was no need for hurry, and many of the daylight hours were spent in hunting and fishing. Le Gros did the former, and Philippe the latter. Henri, with the skill of an experienced trapper, set snares and traps, and many a luscious meal was had off the partridges and grouse which were enticed by his bait of wild rice.

As the party moved southward, the character of the country changed. The unbroken mass of pines gave way gradually to oaks and maples, and open prairies appeared at intervals along the banks of the river. Deer, elks, and antelopes were seen grazing on the

rich blue-grass that covered these openings in the forest.

On one of the little prairies even bigger game was seen. Philippe, in spite of his Indian training, almost jumped out of the canoe, when, on rounding a bend of the river, a herd of twenty or more buffaloes came suddenly into view. They were not more than two hundred yards distant. At first they paid no attention to the canoe, but when Philippe waved his arms at them, and shouted the war-whoop of the Illinois, they raised their shaggy heads, gazed at him for a moment, then ambled slowly off to the protection of the forest.

Philippe's eyes shone with excitement.

"Buffalo stop in woods," he said. "We stop, too; hunt 'em?" he asked of Le Gros, who occupied his usual place in the stern of the canoe.

"No, no, boy," the guide answered. "We don't need the meat, and an Indian doesn't hunt for the fun of killing."

"Buffalo hump very, very good, and buf-

falo robes very, very warm. We go hunt 'em?" pleaded the lad in his most persuasive tones. But Le Gros was obdurate.

"We have plenty of jerked venison to last us until we reach the Sioux village, and for a long time afterward," he said. "We still have a long portage ahead of us, and we mustn't load ourselves down with more weight than we now have. Let the buffaloes go this time, Philippe, and I promise that when we get settled in the Sioux town, you may hunt them to your heart's content. You must be satisfied with that."

So spoke the guide, but his real reason for asking Philippe to forego the hunt was the fear that not even yet was the lad's wound sufficiently healed to stand the strain of the chase.

Philippe, of necessity, accepted the decision of Le Gros, and settled back on his cushion. Scarcely had he made himself comfortable before his quick ear caught a sound that caused him to sit straight up again. It was a faint, deep rumble, that so filled the

quiet air that it was difficult to determine from what direction it came.

"Two buffalo bulls angry," Philippe cried. "Have fight. Wish we could see."

"You are wrong this time, lad," the guide replied. "No buffalo's throat ever gave out so deep a roar as that. What is it, Henri? You were brought up on the St. Lawrence, and you have been over the Niagara portage. You should know the sound of a river when it is angry."

"It is the sound of a big waterfall," Henri replied.

"Right you are," answered Le Gros. "This must be the fall Du Luth told me to watch for. Father Hennepin discovered it when on his way back to the Illinois from his captivity among the Sioux. He named it after his favorite saint, St. Anthony of Padua."

The roar of falling water grew more and more distinct. Soon a cloud of mist appeared above the surface of the river, half concealing a deep, rocky gorge that lay be-

hind it. Then the current quickened, as an athlete speeds for a long leap, and the crest of the fall appeared, sharply outlined against the mist.

The canoe was landed on the right bank, a quarter of a mile above the brink of the fall. The trained eye of the guide had detected here signs that indicated the beginning of a portage.

"Why, this is a real road, like those you have in the settlements, Henri," Le Gros exclaimed, as he noted a broad trail that led into the forest. "Keep a bright lookout, lads, and see that your arms are ready for use. This seems to be an Indian highway; and, unless my eyes deceive me, it has been traveled within the past few hours. However, the travelers seem to have been going in the same direction we are, so we may not see them. I shall be just as well satisfied if that proves to be the case."

Soon the hard work of the portage was begun. Le Gros and Henri led the way with the canoe and a hundred pounds of its cargo.

Philippe and the priest followed, with lighter loads.

Passing the fall, the trail led along the edge of the rocky cliff that formed one side of the river's gorge. Here the travelers had a full view of the cataract.

Very different was the appearance, then, of this greatest fall of our greatest river, from that it now presents, ruined as it has been by the hand of civilized man. Untouched by axe or saw were the surrounding forests. The river itself, untrammeled by works of man, sprang from the limestone ledge in a clear leap of fifty feet to the tumbled mass of boulders below. The roar of the water as it beat upon the stones was deafening, and the spray, rainbow-colored, wet the spectators like spring rain.

For a long time the four stood in the trail, drinking in the beauty and grandeur of the scene. When at length Le Gros turned to go, Philippe detained him, and slipped down over the brow of the precipice. In a quarter of an hour he returned, dripping wet, carry-

ing a bundle wrapped in the bark of a birch. Opening it, he spread the contents on the ground before his comrades. They saw a dozen or more choice beaver-skins.

"Where did you get them, lad?" asked Le Gros in surprise, as he examined the beautiful pelts. "Those skins are worth a month's pay at Sault Ste. Marie. Where did you find them?"

"Saw bundle in top of tree," replied the boy. "See, more bundles down there." He pointed to the top of an oak that grew at the very edge of the river below the fall. Some of its branches spread to within thirty feet of the descending water, and on these could be seen the bundles pointed out by Philippe.

"I understand now how the skins came to be there," cried the guide. "They are offerings made by some Indian to the spirit of the cataract. Nothing else could account for so many bundles placed so close to the falling water."

"I am sure you are right." It was the

priest who spoke. "Father Hennepin spent some months in our mission at Michillimackinac, on his return from his travels in this part of America. He talked much of his experiences with the Dacotahs. He told of seeing a warrior climb what is probably the same oak from which Philippe has just taken this bundle. The Dacotah made a long speech to Oanktayhee, one of the gods of his tribe. He left in the tree, as an offering, a fine robe of beaver-skins."

"Well, Philippe," said the guide, "you had best tie up that bundle again, and get it back into its tree as soon as you can. If the man who put it there should find that you had taken it, I wouldn't give much for your chance of keeping your scalp on your head. Speed down the hill again, and put the package back where you found it. Then we will be on our way."

Philippe obeyed, but it cannot be said that he did so willingly. A new ambition had taken possession of the boy, and he thought he saw a way to its realization.

Useful as was his good bow, and skilled as he was in its use, he had not failed to observe how much more powerful and accurate was a gun. Then, too, he had noted the high respect, almost awe, in which the mysterious weapons of the white men were held by the Indians. The thunder-like roar, the blinding flash, the burst of smoke, the speeding of the invisible bullet,—all these were the strongest kind of "medicine" to the superstitious savages. In their eyes the control of it invested the palefaces with almost superhuman attributes. No unaided human power could produce such effects.

It was one thing, however, to desire a musket; a very different thing it would be to get possession of one. Beaver-skins were the money of the frontier. Philippe had already estimated how many seasons he would have to spend in trapping to get enough of this primitive coin to pay for a gun and its necessary accompaniments. He would be a full-grown man before he could hope to attain his aim. And here, in his hand, were as many

skins as he could hope to collect in many weeks of patient toil.

A great temptation flashed to the boy's mind. This bundle that he held was only one of the many he had seen in the oak by the cataract. No doubt others, too, contained valuable furs. Probably there were enough to buy a gun. The Indians who had put them there were not his friends. The Illinois had suffered too much from the hands of their powerful neighbors, the Sioux, for one brought up with them to love the oppressors.

Philippe made his decision quickly. He would hide the package of furs among the stones at the foot of the cliff, and put a substitute bundle in its place. Then, as the village to which he was bound could not be many miles away, he hoped to have a chance to return to the falls, strip the oak of the rest of its valuables, and hide the whole of them in a " cache " among the rocks. Later he might have a chance to dispose of them.

With the fire of a great desire burning in

his veins, Philippe forgot his old determination to live and speak honestly. He failed, too, to see how impracticable his scheme was. There were no French traders within hundreds of miles. To smuggle the furs to the nearest trading-post would be simply impossible.

Looking quickly around when he reached the foot of the cliff, Philippe found a crevice in the limestone large enough to hold his bundle. A thin stone slab served to seal the opening. Making a mental note of the location of his " cache," so that he could find it, even in the night, he sped to the oak by the falls.

Half-way up the tree was a package quite like the one Philippe had taken. Perhaps some timid squaw, or some old warrior who dared not climb to the higher branches, had placed the offering there. Agile as a young monkey, the boy climbed to this bundle, cut it loose, ran up the ladder of branches to the top of the tree, and there made it fast again.

" Well, lad, did you put the water-god's

furs back where he can get them on cold nights?" Le Gros asked jocosely, as Philippe appeared again over the brow of the cliff.

"Put skins back in tree," was the boy's short reply. He spoke with downcast eyes, for, try as he would, he could not bring himself to look the honest guide in the face. Picking up his load, Philippe strode off down the trail.

It was a hard portage. For fully a mile the rough trail led through the forest before it plunged suddenly down the rocky side of the gorge to the river below. Two trips were required to transport all the belongings of the party, and it was a weary set of travelers that finally reëmbarked in the tossing rapids below the falls.

"Keep your eyes open for a camping-place, lads," Le Gros said, as with almost unconscious skill he steered the canoe past the great boulders that dotted the course of the river. "We must be getting near the mouth of the stream the Dacotahs call Min-

nesota. That means Cloudy Water in our speech. The old chief, the Wolf, said his village is a short half-day's journey by canoe up that river. We will camp as soon as we find a good place. We can finish our journey to-morrow forenoon."

Some four miles below the portage Henri spied a large creek that flowed out of a deep cut in the western wall of the gorge. Sheering the canoe into the creek's mouth with one stroke of his great paddle, Le Gros announced that the camping-place for the night had been found.

CHAPTER XIII

The camp of the four travelers on the night following the portage around St. Anthony Falls was a gloomy one. The night itself was pitchy black, for the sky was covered with heavy clouds; and a chill north wind, sweeping down the gorge of the Mississippi, moaned its discontent amid the projecting rocks of the surrounding cliffs.

The mood of the campers seemed to be in harmony with their surroundings. Philippe, whose merry laugh usually sufficed to dispel the deepest gloom, ate his supper in silence; then, taking a seat well back from the fire, he sat the whole evening, gazing at its flame.

Henri and the priest, habitually sparing of words, followed the example of the young half-blood, while Le Gros seemed no less depressed than Philippe. There was little in such an atmosphere to encourage wakefulness, and long before the usual time, Henri

and Father Gournay stretched out in their blankets. Philippe followed soon after, but the guide still sat in his place, looking into the fire. When the flames died out, he stared at the glowing coals. When these turned to ashes, he sat in utter darkness, his eyes still fixed on the place where the fire had been. At last, with a sigh, he rolled up in his blanket.

The even and heavy breathing soon announced that, in spite of the burden that seemed to be on the mind of Le Gros, the fatigue of the day's labor had brought its reward of healthful sleep. Then Philippe sat up, slipped out of his blanket, and disappeared in the forest.

Daybreak showed the forms of four sleepers, lying with their feet to the burned-out fire. Le Gros rose first, as was his wont. He gazed long at the form of Philippe as it lay completely encased in a deerskin blanket. The boy's face was concealed, but the roll of blanket expanded and contracted regularly with his deep breathing.

The guide wakened his other two companions with a shake of the shoulder.

"We will let Philippe sleep for a while," he said. "I think he is pretty tired."

At length, when the breakfast of bass, fresh caught from the creek, was ready, Philippe was called. He awoke with a start, and the gloom of the preceding night came to his face. It remained for only an instant, however; then, with his usual frank, open look on his countenance, he threw off his blanket and faced Le Gros.

He was a dilapidated-looking lad. His leggins were frayed and torn by briers, one moccasin was missing, and a livid bruise showed on one cheek. The boy seemed entirely unconscious of his appearance, however; his gaze was fixed on the face of the guide.

"Philippe told lie yesterday," he said soberly. "No put skins back in oak, but hid them to buy gun. But skins back in oak now, and Philippe not tell any more lies, ever."

With the warmth of feeling of his French nature, to which the white blood in Philippe's veins responded, the huge guide folded the lad in his arms like a baby, and crooned soft, tender things in his ear. Then he held him at arm's length, to catch the appealing honesty of his face.

"I saw yesterday how it was, lad," he said. "I know those skins were as precious in your sight as so many pieces of gold would be to a French boy. But we can't be happy, even with fine things, unless we get them honestly. I am glad you put the furs back where they belong, even though you did scratch and bruise yourself in doing it. The scratches and bruises will heal. The other kind of wound wouldn't."

Philippe understood. His answer was to sink down close by the side of Le Gros, and to commence swallowing great mouthfuls of the delicious fried bass.

By the time the sun had appeared above the oaks and basswoods that crowned the sides of the gorge, the canoe was loaded.

Philippe, in new leggins and moccasins, and with the swelling on his face reduced by cold-water applications, showed little effect of his long, night journey to St. Anthony Falls.

When all was ready for the start, Henri was found to be missing. When, after a quarter of an hour, Le Gros began to show signs of impatience at the delay, Philippe volunteered to search for his missing companion. Just then, however, a faint call sounded through the trees that filled the ravine through which the creek ran. A second call followed.

" Henri seems to want us," said the guide. " Go see what he is about, Philippe."

A few minutes later Philippe's call was heard, and Le Gros and the priest followed him up the creek. Soon they heard the rush and roar of a cataract; then, through the branches that overhung the stream, they caught glimpses of foam-flecked, falling water. A few steps more, and the delicate beauty of Minnehaha was before them.

So beautifully proportioned was this fall,

the Laughing Water of Indian legend, and so perfectly did it fit into its frame of greenery, that it seemed almost like a play-cataract, fashioned for a toy by the hand of man. In fact, however, the clear leap of the water was fully thirty feet.

"That is a beautiful sight," said Le Gros to his companion, "one worth going miles to see. But where are the two boys? I am sure their calls came from the ravine. I will see if they are within hearing."

The guide raised his voice in a deep-toned, vibrant halloo. The answer came immediately, and apparently from close at hand. It seemed to come from the direction of the falls. It was the laughing voice of Philippe, but no Philippe could be seen. Again Le Gros called, and again the response came, seemingly from the falling water itself.

"No wonder the Indians think the waterfall is a living spirit," Le Gros exclaimed. "I could almost think so, myself, and believe the spirit was answering my call, if it were not that the voice is that of our Philippe."

At this moment the two boys, dripping wet, dashed into view from behind the curtain of falling water. Their faces were covered with grins at the mystification of their elders. A shelf of rock, sheltered by the overhang of the limestone ledge that produced the fall, had given them a precarious footing, but the spray from the fall had soaked them thoroughly.

Half an hour later, the canoe with its four passengers was driving rapidly down the Mississippi. Hardly had it got well under way, however, when the wall of rock that formed the western bank of the river ended abruptly, disclosing a broad, wooded valley through which flowed a stream of considerable size, the Minnesota.

"That is the river I was looking for," exclaimed the guide, as the canoe drifted down opposite the mouth of the tributary stream. "Now we must be within fifteen or twenty miles of the Wolf's village. Three or four hours' paddling ought to put us there."

Now that the course of the canoe was to

be up-stream, Philippe insisted that he be allowed to use his paddle again. As the wound in the boy's side seemed to be completely healed, Le Gros gave his consent, and, under the propulsion of four good paddles, the light craft sped swiftly up the placid stream.

The valley, at first hemmed in by the rocky rampart of the Mississippi through which the Minnesota had cut its way, gradually spread into a fertile plain bordered by low hills, all covered with dense forest growth.

As the party advanced farther up the stream, signs indicating the nearness of men appeared along the banks. Here was the wreck of a canoe, half buried in a sand-bar. There, the charred remains of a fire marked a former camping-place. Flocks of blackbirds, like well-drilled air-squadrons, swung in intricate curves over the woods and the water. Then, rounding a bend of the river, an extensive clearing on the west bank came in sight. Instantly Le Gros checked the

canoe, that he might examine this opening before proceeding farther.

The break in the solid mass of the forest extended fully a mile along the river. It was at least half as wide. Nearly the whole of it was a corn-field; but as a field it would have been the despair of the good and industrious farmers who now occupy the valley of the Minnesota.

The heavy native growth of elms, oaks, and basswoods had been only partly removed. The trees had been killed by girdling, or by fire, and most of them had been hacked or burned down, but no attempt whatever had been made to remove the stumps. Only enough had been done to let in the light of the sun, and to make possible the scratching of the surface of the soil for cropping.

That the work of clearing had not been done more thoroughly was not due so much to unwillingness on the part of the native farmers to work, as to the primitive methods and tools which they needs must use. In

fact, the amount of labor they had expended on their fields was far greater than that performed by their modern successors in ridding the land of every trace of tree, or bush, or shrub.

The growth of Indian corn, or maize, had reached its full height, and the ears had formed, but were not yet ripe. They were not the long, heavy ears of present-day corn. They averaged not more than eight inches long. The kernels were large and round, and, when ripe, would be so hard as almost to defy the teeth of cattle, if cattle there had been to eat them.

In the middle of the cleared space was a group of a dozen large, bark-covered houses. It was on these that the attention of Le Gros was fixed. Oddly enough, though the structures were in the midst of cultivated fields, they seemed to be without occupants. Not a person was in sight; not even a dog was to be seen.

"I don't like the looks of things, Philippe," said the guide in a low tone. "It

doesn't seem natural that such houses and these green fields should be entirely deserted by their owners. Keep your eyes and your ears open, lad, for an ambuscade."

As he spoke, Le Gros edged the canoe toward the eastern bank, then sent it slowly past the fields and houses. Still there was no sign of human life. When the farther edge of the clearing had been almost reached, Philippe suddenly raised his paddle and pointed up-stream.

"See!" he said. "Much smoke."

Above the green tops of the trees that overhung the river, a haze of dark blue was spread over the paler tint of the sky, punctuated at intervals by swaying columns of hot gases, surging upwards from great fires as yet hidden from view. The anxiety that had shown in the guide's countenance disappeared.

"Ah!" he said. "I see now why there are no people in the village. These old fields are worn out, and the houses look as if they were about worn out as well. A new town is

being built up the river. There is nothing alarming in that."

Relieved from the fear that the strange silence in the old town betokened mischief, the party bent to the paddles. In a few minutes the glare of flames, glowing red even under a noonday sun, shone through the trees. Then a scene of activity, like that accompanying the building of a modern army-camp, came into view.

CHAPTER XIV

Over a space of twenty acres, fully four hundred dark figures moved busily about. Here a band of children, clothed pretty much as nature left them, dragged dead sticks and branches from the forest, to be used as fuel. There a group of squaws hacked with stone axes at the charred trunks of standing trees, while others kept fires burning at other trees, charring them for the axe-gang.

Another squad, using fire and stone axes also, cut up the trunks of felled trees into logs of such length that they could be rolled out of the way, or used for building purposes.

In yet another place were the men of the village. To them fell the task of constructing the large, bark-covered lodges that were to be the new homes of the community. Their task was no less difficult than that of

the squaws, except that some of them possessed steel knives and hatchets obtained from the French. Equipped with these hatchets, a dozen men were engaged in cutting down straight, young ash-trees, thirty or forty feet tall, and trimming them into slender, flexible poles. Another band, with knives, stripped the tough bark from young basswoods, to use as ropes and withes.

A third group, using stone knives, dug, with infinite labor, deep holes into which the poles were to be set, to form the framework of the houses. Others set up the poles, and bound them together. Still others stripped from the great elms huge sheets of thick bark, which were lashed to the framework to form side and roof sheeting. Lastly, a band of old men, unfit for the heavy toil of cutting and erecting, built into the finished houses long, elevated platforms, to serve as bedsteads and settees for the future occupants.

For many minutes the four travelers watched this busy scene, themselves unob-

served. Then a cinnamon-colored urchin, snatching a moment's rest between trips for brush, caught sight of the canoe, and gave a warning yell. Instantly the whole band was in commotion. Squaws rushed for bark cradles, in which patient papooses swung from limbs of trees. Warriors ran for bows and spears. Children filled the air with whoops and miniature war-cries.

At length a semblance of order was restored. The squaws and little children retired to the forest. The warriors gathered in an irregular group, and, headed by a number of chiefs, moved toward a small, sandy beach, which the canoe was now approaching. The younger boys, irrepressible in an Indian village, as elsewhere, spread out on either side and in the rear of their elders, and advanced in battle array, leaping from cover to cover, and pretending to send showers of arrows in the direction of the newcomers.

A hundred yards below the landing-place, a huge elm had, years before, fallen from its

place as monarch of the forest, and toppled over the bank of the river. Now, only its whitened trunk and stubs of the largest boughs remained, forming an ideal roosting-place for kingfishers, and boys.

As the canoe approached this old tree-skeleton, a mob of urchins crowded out upon it, hustling and pushing each other as they sought places of vantage. In their van was the ten-year-old boy who had first seen the strangers. In spite of a grimy face and a thick mat of uncombed hair that crowned his head, there was something really attractive in the face and in the intelligent brown eyes of the Gopher, as the lad was called. That he was a leader among the boys of his own age was evidenced by the masterful way in which he gained the best seat on the old elm, that on the extreme end of the extreme branch.

Slowly the canoe approached, Le Gros and Philippe at the paddles. Henri sat with his loaded musket in his lap, while the priest held in his outstretched hand the peace-pipe,

the calumet. At the landing-place, the chiefs, backed by the band of armed warriors, awaited the strangers in dignified silence.

The canoe passed close to the end of the old elm-snag. Never before had the village boys enjoyed such a " scoop " ; to have the opportunity to inspect the strangers at a distance of only a few feet, while their dignified but not less curious fathers waited their turn, was a thing long to be remembered.

When the canoe was opposite the elm, every boy in the crowd pushed forward to get just as close a view as possible of these mysterious, white-faced beings. Necks were craned to the limit, and beady eyes became large and round in wonder. Then came a crash of breaking wood. The Gopher had stretched too far out on the rotting limb on which he was perched, and it had broken under his weight.

The distance to the water was only six or eight feet. This would have meant nothing to the boy, had not his head struck a lower

branch as he fell. Confused by the blow, he floundered in the deep water, coughing and choking, but Le Gros, without even checking speed, reached out with his long, broad-bladed paddle, scooped up the boy, and placed him in the canoe as neatly as a good fisherman handles a bass with a landing-net.

Only a moment was required for the Gopher to get his breath back; then, proud as any chief in the village, he stood with grave face and folded arms as the canoe moved on to the landing.

There could be no question now regarding the kind of reception the strangers would receive. The Gopher, a grandson of the absent chief, the Wolf, was a great favorite in the village, and his rescue by Le Gros caused the hearts of the Indians to open to the newcomers at once.

There was, however, no outward manifestation of feeling. Grave, even solemn in manner, the chiefs accepted the proffered calumet, and it was smoked in turn by them and by the white men. Then the belt of

wampum, the Wolf's message of recommendation to his fellow-tribesmen, was presented. This token removed any lingering suspicions that may have been entertained regarding the friendliness of the visitors, for the Wolf was held in the highest respect by his people.

The Dacotahs, however, were too busy getting their new houses ready for the approaching winter to lose much time over even such an event as the coming of the whites. Three of the chiefs were delegated to act as hosts to the strangers. The rest of the band returned to its task of building and clearing.

Pulling the canoe up on the strand, the four travelers roamed for a while around the clearing, watching the various gangs at their work. Finally they came to the squaws, who were felling the larger trees.

One huge oak was causing trouble. For three hundred years this old monarch had stood his ground against wind and storm, and had spread his great branches fifty feet in all directions. He did not propose to

give way now to these pygmies who were pecking at his trunk.

If the oak had been a smaller tree, the Indians might have decided to let it stand, simply killing it by cutting or burning off the bark. But so great was the spread of the top that it was worth much labor to get it out of the way, thus letting in the light on nearly a fifth of an acre of ground.

For days the squaws had burned and hacked the tough wood, but had hardly got well started with their task. When Le Gros and his companions came up to them, the fire had just been drawn away from the tree. It had charred the wood for perhaps half an inch in depth,—this as the result of two hours of work. With their heavy stone axes the squaws were engaged in cutting away the charred wood.

"Henri," said the guide after he had watched the group for a minute or two, "run down to the canoe and get two sharp axes. Let's help the women get that old fellow down."

In a few minutes Henri returned with the keen-edged tools. Taking one of them, and bidding the squaws stand aside, Le Gros struck it deep into the hard wood. Henri, on the opposite side of the tree, followed suit. Both were excellent axmen. For half an hour the broad chips flew from the deepening cuts, then, with a roar and a crash that resounded long from the surrounding hills, the old oak came to the ground. In another half-hour the branches had been lopped off, and the great trunk lay, gaunt and bare, like a fallen hero, stripped of his armor, dead on the field of battle.

An hour before sunset work was stopped, and the band gathered about kettles of boiled fish and Indian corn for their supper. Whites as well as reds ate with keen appetites; then all "turned in" on skins and blankets spread on the ground.

Aided by the well-equipped Frenchmen, the Dacotahs went forward rapidly with their task of building the new town. By the time September frosts made open-air beds

uncomfortable, the houses were complete. In the meantime, Le Gros had built for his party a small but substantial log-house, close by the river. With heavy shutters on the one window, and with an oaken door three inches thick, the house could serve, if need be, as a fort.

There was little apparent necessity for a place of refuge, however. Appreciative of the help given them by the whites, the Dacotahs showed the utmost friendliness. On the day of the completion of the new town, a great feast of dedication was given, at which the Frenchmen and Philippe were the guests of honor. At its conclusion a most important announcement was made.

For days scouts had scoured the surrounding country for buffaloes that should serve to fill the village larders for the coming winter. On this day they had reported finding a herd of at least a hundred on a prairie, fifteen miles to the south. The herd consisted, they said, mostly of cows and their calves, especially desired for the fineness of their meat,

and the softness of the leather made from their hides. Preparations for the hunt were to begin on the following day. The guests, with the exception of the priest, were invited to take part in these preparations.

CHAPTER XV

THE morning mists were still white over the river on the day following the feast, when the party of hunters left the village. In addition to the usual arms, they carried four of the axes of the Frenchmen, for their task was to build a "corral," or enclosure, into which it was hoped the buffaloes could be driven.

Four hours of brisk walking brought this advance party to the edge of the prairie, and eager eyes scanned the great meadow for signs of game. At first nothing could be seen, but soon a mass of black specks appeared at a distance of two miles, moving out of the surrounding forest. They were the buffaloes, leaving their sleeping-place under the trees to begin their daily feeding.

With the game in sight, the hunters began their preparations for its capture. A point was selected where a gully with steep sides

ran from the prairie into the forest. A hundred yards from the edge of the prairie, in this ravine, Le Gros, Henri, and ten of the Indians set to work to build the " corral."

Over an area roughly circular, and seventy or eighty feet in diameter, all the trees but one were cut down. The one tree spared was a lofty elm that towered not only above its mates in the gully, but even above those that crowned the banks. This elm was almost exactly in the center of the cleared space.

The " corral " consisted of a fence eight feet high. It was made from the trunks of tall, young trees, laid one upon another against standing trees, and bound to the latter with withes of bark. An entrance, ten feet wide, was provided in the south side, the side nearest the prairie. From the edges of this opening, diverging fences were built through the woods and up the sides of the gully to the border of the prairie. Where these fences left the forest, they were about two hundred feet apart.

So far in its construction the "corral" was quite similar to those used on Western ranches for the impounding of horses and cattle driven in from the ranges. But now the Indians added a feature peculiar to themselves.

Beginning at the outer ends of the wing-fences, two diverging lines were established that stretched at least half a mile out on the prairie. Along these lines stubby tripods, made of short logs, were set up at intervals of about a hundred yards. In the top of each tripod freshly-cut branches or bushes were placed, to make the construction conspicuous at a distance. The last two tripods, those at the ends of the two rows, were half a mile or more apart.

Two whole days were consumed in the construction of the great trap, and busy days they were for the whole party. Then, in the forenoon of the third day, the remaining men and half the squaws of the village arrived; the men to take part in the hunt, the women to care for the flesh and hides of the victims.

The children were left behind, except that, as an unusual favor to the grandson of the Wolf, the Gopher had been allowed to accompany the band.

Final arrangements for the hunt were now made. It was to begin promptly at noon. In the meantime, except for the scouts, who kept constantly in touch with the herd, the band was to rest at the " corral."

One other exception there was. Since early morning a medicine-man, painted in the most gorgeous manner, had been perched high up in the branches of the lone elm in the " corral." Alternately he beat upon a little drum, or tom-tom, and shook a huge rattle made from a gourd. In the intervals between these performances he called at the top of his voice upon the spirits of the air to favor the coming hunt.

" Make the buffaloes to be fat, and their meat tender," he prayed. " Let the cows, and the calves, and the young bulls be caught in our trap, and let only the tough old bulls escape."

So, for hour after hour, in endless repetition, the old conjurer did his bit toward the success of the hunt.

Shortly before noon the entire band, the medicine-man included, gathered for a frugal meal. Not much food had been brought from the village. The hunt was to supply this item.

As the sun approached the zenith, the chief who had been selected as leader of the hunt gave his final instructions. The hunters were divided into two bands of about equal size. These bands, each under the direction of a young chief, gathered one on each bank of the ravine. Henri was assigned to the eastern band; Le Gros and Philippe to the western. There was thus one musket with each party. At the "corral" were to be left the squaws and the all-important medicine-man. Without the intercessions of the latter, no preparations would have been considered complete.

All was in readiness, and the leader had raised his hand to give the starting-signal,

when the medicine-man, with a storm of anger in his face, called to him to stop.

"My tom-tom!" he cried, a touch of dismay mingling with the wrath with which his voice was charged. "My tom-tom and my rattle! Where are they? I placed them at the foot of the big elm when I came down to eat, and now they are gone. Where are they?"

The old man rushed to the foot of the elm, to make sure that he had not by any chance overlooked his precious implements. They were not there. Then from one spot to another he ran, where he thought he might possibly have placed them. As he searched, the medicine-man kept a lookout from the corner of his eye for the Gopher. He apparently suspected that the disappearance of the drum and gourd was connected with that young redskin.

Such suspicions were justified. As the conjurer continued his panicky search, there sounded in the ears of the waiting hunters a loud, shrill voice. "Make the buffaloes fat,"

it called. "Send us the cows and the calves, and keep the bad bulls away." Then followed a vigorous beating of a tom-tom, and rattling of a gourd.

All eyes were turned to the lone elm, from which the sounds seemed to come. There, on the uppermost of its leafless branches, twenty feet higher than the somewhat corpulent medicine-man had dared to go, sat the Gopher. With one hand he steadied himself on his dizzy perch; the other he waved in the air, as if to attract the attention of the spirits that inhabited it.

A murmur of approval rose from the bands of hunters: "Let the boy stay. Let him be our medicine-man. The air-spirits will hear his shrill voice. Let him stay."

Dumfounded at the thought of being ousted from his office by a mere child, the medicine-man protested loudly; but the idea had caught the fancy of the Indians, and they insisted on its being carried out. So the Gopher was left undisturbed on his high perch, and throughout the rest of the day he

continued his invocations for the success of the hunt.

The matter of intercession with the spirits having been arranged to the satisfaction of every one but the old medicine-man,—that functionary was inconsolable, and spent the afternoon in a sulk,—the leader gave the long-delayed signal for the hunt to begin. The two bands filed off through the borders of the forest. Each man, with the exception of Le Gros and Henri, was equipped with a bow, a knife of stone or steel, and a blanket. At intervals of about a hundred yards the last man in each file dropped out and took his station at the edge of the woods. In this way a continuous line of hunters was stretched around the entire prairie. The chiefs, with Philippe, the two whites, and twenty-odd Dacotahs, met at the southern end of the prairie. In the meantime the herd of buffaloes had continued to graze peacefully about half a mile north of the place where the two bands met.

A smoke-signal was sent up to indicate

that the herd had been successfully surrounded. Then the chiefs, with their immediate followers, moved cautiously out of the woods toward the wild cattle. The greatest care was necessary to avoid a premature stampede of the herd.

As the chiefs advanced, the nearer hunters stationed in the border of the forest came forward also, and the long, semicircular line began to converge upon the buffaloes.

At the sight of so many dark forms advancing toward it, the herd showed signs of uneasiness. A few old bulls walked toward the hunters, as if to investigate, giving out meantime low, rumbling bellows of warning. The rest of the herd ceased grazing, and formed itself into a compact body,—calves in the center, bulls and cows in a defensive ring on the outside.

The line of hunters came on slowly until within two hundred yards of the herd. Then, at a signal from the leader, the two Frenchmen fired their muskets, and every man in the line dashed forward, waving his

blanket, and filling the air with his piercing yells.

The bulls which had been advancing trotted back and took their places in the ring of defense. Conscious of its power, even as opposed to a human enemy, the herd stood firm. It seemed that the attack had failed of its purpose to start the buffaloes toward the deadly trap at the other end of the prairie. But when the line of hunters was only fifty yards away, some of the cows showed signs of weakening. Then the Frenchmen did their part by firing their guns a second time.

The strange, terrifying roar was too much for the nerve of one young cow. With an agonized bellow to her first-born calf, which stood trembling just behind her, she broke from the line and galloped northward. She was followed, not only by her own calf, but by half a dozen others, all bawling at the tops of their voices. Their mothers galloped after them, and the ring was completely broken. The contagion of panic now seized

the entire band, and in a moment it was racing madly across the prairie.

All that remained to be done was to guide the fleeing buffaloes into the trap prepared for their destruction. This was done by the hunters who had been left in the borders of the woods. These men came forward as the herd sped northward, and, with shouts and waving blankets, held it in the desired course. Soon the buffaloes entered the converging lane marked by the tripods, and were guided down the ravine into the trap.

To the Gopher, perched high in the bare top of the big elm, all the events of the hunt had been plainly visible. He passed word of them to the squaws, waiting around the "corral" below, intermingling remarks about the progress of the hunt with his invocations to the spirits.

"The hunters are coming out of the woods," he cried. "Send us the cows and the calves. There is the smoke from the thunder-sticks of the palefaces. Now you can hear their thunder. Make the buffaloes

fat. Now the warriors are moving toward the herd, swinging their blankets. Don't let the big bulls hurt our hunters."

When the herd stampeded toward the trap, the Gopher, in his excitement, pounded his drum and rattled his gourd so vigorously that all the spirits, both good and bad, must have been frightened completely out of the neighborhood.

" Here they come," he shouted to his listeners below. " The whole herd is running straight toward us. There are many, many buffaloes; more than all my fingers and toes; more than all the fingers and toes of two boys; of three boys. And they are nearly all cows and big calves. Wasn't I a good medicine-man, to get the spirits to send us such a fine herd? Now they are past the first tripods. Now they are coming down the ravine. Now they are entering the forest. Ah! Here they are!"

With a rush and a roar like that of an express-train, the panic-stricken beasts galloped down the ravine between the converg-

ing fences, then on through the narrow gateway into the " corral."

The nearest hunters followed to within fifty feet of the opening. There they formed in line, shouting and waving their blankets to prevent the trapped animals from leaving the enclosure. Others climbed to the top of the approach-fences with their bows, prepared to send their arrows into the bodies of any buffaloes that might try to escape. Many of the bolder bulls did make the attempt; a few succeeded in passing the blockading line, but every one was finally brought down by the bowmen. Not one buffalo of the whole herd escaped.

With the arrival of the remainder of the hunters, the slaughter of the herd commenced. Archers, posted in safety on the high fence, picked off their victims at their leisure. In half an hour all was over.

CHAPTER XVI

THREE days after the successful completion of the great buffalo-drive, the Dacotah hunting-party was back in the newly completed town. It was a time of general good feeling. The stupendous task of constructing the new houses was done, and now there were literally thousands of pounds of good buffalo-meat in the smoke-houses, curing in anticipation of the needs of the fast-approaching winter. Besides, nearly every family had a new, soft buffalo-robe to add to its supply of bedding.

The hero of the hunt was the Gopher. In the minds of the Dacotahs, young and old, his vigorous intercession with the spirits of the air had had more to do with the success of the whole affair than the efforts of all the rest of the party combined. Not a little of the credit, however, was given to Le Gros and Henri, whose axes had made possible

the quick completion of the trap, and whose guns had started the game toward it.

Noting the evident friendliness of the Indians, Le Gros had decided to make use of it, if possible, in furtherance of his plan for visiting that Dacotah tribe, far out on the western prairies, with whom rumor said a half-breed boy lived. A few handfuls of beads had purchased several hundred pounds of buffalo-meat, in addition to his share as one of the hunters, and had hired a dozen men to carry it to the village. On the following day the guide invited the entire band, men, women, and children, to partake of a great feast.

All the forenoon a dozen squaws roasted, and stewed, and boiled. No expense was spared to make this a feast long to be remembered. There were fish from the river, boiled wild rice, hominy made from Indian-corn, puddings of corn meal and dried wild plums, and, above all, rounds, shoulders, loins, and humps of buffalo, seemingly without limit.

When his guests, seated in the great, new council-house, had eaten until even their Indian stomachs could hold no more, Le Gros made his request for permission to visit the tribe on the western plains, and for guides to accompany him.

After due deliberation on the part of the chiefs, an answer was given. It was friendly, but not definite. The chiefs saw no reason why one like Le Gros, who had shown himself a friend of the Dacotahs, should not have such a request granted, but it was impossible to give a final answer until the arrival of their sachem, the aged Wolf.

Le Gros was forced to be content with this disposition of the matter, though it brought an end to his hope to push on at once to the west. Autumn was now well advanced, and storms and snows that would make travel difficult, if not impossible, might come at any time. The Wolf, however, was expected soon, and Le Gros had little doubt that he would ratify the approving action of the village council.

A week later the Wolf's party arrived. It announced its presence, however, not by yells of greeting, but by a funeral dirge. The wise old Wolf, who had guided his clan in peace and war for a third of a century, had been taken ill soon after leaving Lake Superior, and, after lingering for a week, had died. His body had been buried in a strange land. His weapons, his belt of wampum, and his great war-bonnet of eagle feathers had been brought home by his son, to be given funeral honors by his mourning clansmen.

Le Gros, with his companions, stood with bared heads as the newly arrived party marched in solemn procession from the landing to the council-house, bearing the accoutrements of the departed chief. The guide's face was grave. Not only did he sympathize with the Dacotahs in their grief, but he felt that he and his party had suffered the loss of one who would have been a powerful protector in time of need.

That there would be such need was in-

dicated by the looks of hatred on the faces of the Sioux chiefs, Red Eagle and Black Eagle, as they noted the presence of the Frenchmen among the spectators.

"An Indian is slow to forgive or forget what he thinks is an injury," the guide said to Gournay when the procession had passed. "I am afraid those presents you gave to the Eagles were wasted. We shall be fortunate if we do not have real trouble with them."

A changed attitude on the part of many of the Dacotahs soon indicated that the predicted troubles would not be long delayed. Influenced by the Eagles, some who had been most friendly to the Frenchmen now avoided them, or even insulted them openly. Others, perhaps as much from dislike of the Eagles as from love for the strangers, maintained an attitude of friendship.

Among those who remained true to the French was Leaping Deer, the lad who had been Philippe's most formidable rival in the games at St. Louis Bay. He seemed not only to have a real liking for Philippe and

his companions, but to feel himself bound to give to them, so far as he might, the protection which his father's presence would have afforded them.

Another staunch friend was the Gopher, who had never forgotten his rescue from the river at the hands of Le Gros. The influence of this boy, young as he was, was not to be despised. Since the successful outcome of the buffalo-hunt, he had been looked upon as one who enjoyed, in a special way, the favor of those spirits that controlled the destinies of the clan. It was freely predicted that when he reached maturity, he would be the leading medicine-man of the tribe. With this possibility in mind, as well as the belief that even now the boy had means of communication with the powers of the air, his good opinion was courted by his fellow-villagers.

Upon the question of the treatment to be given the strangers, the clan soon divided into two factions. One, led by the Eagles, was openly hostile to them. The other,

equally large, but without recognized leadership, insisted that the laws of hospitality must be observed; that these travelers, who had received assurances of protection from the dead sachem, must remain unharmed, and must be free to come or go as they might desire.

With public opinion in this divided state, the question of allowing Le Gros to enter farther into Sioux territory came before the council. So vigorous was the opposition of the hostile party, that, after a long debate, a refusal was agreed upon.

The guide, who had been called to the council-house to receive the decision, realized at once the dangerous state of mind in the village which the verdict indicated. The hostility which was strong enough to change the action of the council in this matter, might easily threaten his very life. From such a danger he determined to escape if possible, while yet there was time. He addressed the council.

" My brothers the Dacotahs have spoken,"

he said. "They cannot grant my request that I be allowed to visit the village of their brothers on the great prairies. It is well. Now it is time that I and my friends go back to our brothers, the Frenchmen, on the river of the Illinois."

Le Gros left the council-chamber and sought the priest, to urge the necessity of immediate departure, if such a course were permitted by the Sioux.

Meantime, in the great hall, the question of allowing the Frenchmen to leave was debated with the usual deliberation of an Indian council. The friendly faction would have been glad to be rid of the palefaces, whose presence was disrupting the hitherto peaceful life of the village. The Eagles, however, were determined to avenge to the uttermost their fancied grievances. They would be satisfied with nothing less than the death of the offender, the big guide. This they did not as yet dare attempt to bring about; but they did not propose that their intended victim should get beyond their reach.

Under the skilful leadership of Black Eagle, the hostile party prevailed. The Frenchmen were to be forbidden to leave the village under any pretext; they were to be treated practically as prisoners. The decision was carried to Le Gros by a delegation of chiefs. The guide well understood its importance.

"This is serious business," he said, when again alone with the priest. "It isn't so much that we shall be held here against our wills. That we can endure, and you can go ahead with your preaching as if nothing had happened. It is plain, however, that we are being held here to give those red rascals, the Eagles, an opportunity to work up a greater feeling of enmity against us. Then, when the time is ripe, they will make an end of us. There is another danger we must guard against. We have, perhaps, a hundred pounds of smoked meat on hand. The Indians won't feed us for nothing, and when they realize that we are utterly dependent on them for food, they will charge us prices

that will soon exhaust our means of purchase. We must act at once."

With characteristic promptness and effectiveness Le Gros set to work to meet the changed conditions. His first step was to obtain provisions enough to last through the coming winter. Through a liberal expenditure of beads, knives, and hatchets, fully five hundred pounds of smoked meat was secured, and stowed away in the little log-house. With the meat was obtained an abundant supply of maize, together with dried plums and berries.

The precautions of the guide did not end with the gathering of a sufficient and satisfactory supply of food. His next step was to convert the log-cabin into a little fortress, not impregnable, but sufficiently strong to furnish protection against a sudden attack by the hostile faction.

The bark roof was made fireproof by means of a covering of clay, spread on while moist, and allowed to harden. Loopholes were cut between the logs, close under the

eaves. A well was dug in one corner, down to the level of the water in the river. In the end opposite the door a huge fireplace was constructed of sticks, plastered over with clay.

When the work on the house was completed, Le Gros and Henri, assisted by Philippe, who had learned to use an axe effectively, attacked the deadened trees still standing in the new fields. They soon had cords and cords of excellent fuel, which was stored in or near the house. Lastly, the canoe was brought in from the river and placed on the overhead joists of the cabin.

"Now I think we are as safe as we can be in the same town with the Eagles," Le Gros said, when all these preparations were completed. "But we shall have to be careful never to leave the house at night. That is the time to look for Indian treachery. In the daytime we shall probably not be molested as long as we have any friends in the village."

By this time the fine autumn weather, so

characteristic of the valley of the Minnesota, had passed. With the coming of December, winter set in in earnest.

First came a wind from Lake Superior, laden with moisture, which fell as a deep, soft blanket of snow. Then came the north wind, sweeping almost without obstruction clear from the arctic circle. With tremendous force it picked up the snow-blanket, and hurled it through the valleys and over the hills as a stinging, biting cloud of ice-atoms. With the shift of wind came the hard, dangerous cold of the northwest.

After the storm had continued for a day, the wind ceased, the air cleared, but the cold became even more intense. The surface of the river was quickly converted to a thick sheet of ice, while trees on its banks popped like pistols, as their fibres were rent by the expansion of freezing sap.

Within the great community houses the cold was such as to have been fatal to beings less hardy than the Sioux. But little attention was paid to it. The snow that had

drifted in through cracks and crevices was scraped up and thrown outside, and great fires were built under the gaping vents in the roof. Then, though the temperature at the sides and ends of the houses was far below zero, the usual routine of cooking, eating, and sleeping went on undisturbed in spite of the intense cold.

To the little party in the log-house, the storms and cold of this and following weeks brought little discomfort. The house was well-built; fuel and food were at hand, and plentiful. Only the enmity of the Eagles, with the accompanying danger of violence, disturbed the peace of the four travelers.

During daylight hours there was little to indicate strained relations between the whites and a faction of the Indians. Father Gournay, with the devotion to duty characteristic of the Jesuit missionaries, preached and taught wherever he could get a hearing. Le Gros chatted and smoked in the homes of friendly Indians. Henri and Philippe played games with Leaping Deer and his

mates, and meantime acquired a speaking knowledge of the Sioux tongue.

At night matters were very different. Precautionary rules were rigidly enforced. The four never left the shelter of the cabin. No visits by the Dacotahs were allowed, with two notable exceptions. Leaping Deer and his nephew, the Gopher, were welcome guests at any time of the day or night. The latter, full of a boy's adoration of the great physical strength combined with the great good-nature of Le Gros, spent nearly all his nights in the log-house. He displayed an almost unlimited appetite for the excellent suppers which were served there. After the meal he would listen for a while to the conversation of his elders. Then, as his eyes grew heavy, he would curl up like a puppy on a buffalo-skin before the fire for his night's sleep.

"I had rather have that lad asleep there on the hearth," Le Gros said one night after Leaping Deer had gone to his home, "than to have a dozen Frenchmen here in the vil-

lage with us. The Dacotahs look upon him as possessed of a very strong 'medicine' since the affair of the buffalo-hunt. I doubt if even the Eagles would dare touch us here, with the Gopher in the house. An Indian may be as brave as a lion, on the hunt or in battle, but when a question of witchcraft, or 'medicine,' is involved, he has no more courage than a cottontail rabbit."

CHAPTER XVII

WHETHER due to the friendship of the little "medicine-man," the Gopher, or to the fact that a considerable party among the Dacotahs still opposed the evil designs of the two hostile chiefs, Black Eagle and Red Eagle, the winter passed without any act of violence. It became evident, however, as time went on, that the faction opposed to the French grew more and more powerful. Further restrictions on their movements, extortions of every kind, open insults and threats,—all indicated the success of the Eagles in poisoning the minds of their fellows against the strangers.

When the warm winds and the warmer sun of April had melted the ice on the river and the snow in the forests, gossip began to whisper of an impending military expedition. It was to be directed against the Chippewas, the bitterest enemies of the

Sioux. The probability of such an enterprise became almost a certainty when half a dozen influential chiefs, including the Eagles, announced the holding of a war-dance.

The great event took place at noonday. In the large, open space before the council-house half a hundred painted warriors shouted, and leaped, and danced themselves into a state of utter exhaustion, then announced themselves ready for the fray.

Le Gros and Father Gournay looked on from the circle of spectators in silent interest. The face of the guide was full of concern, for more than once he heard the words "paleface" and "Frenchman" linked with the name of the enemy against whom the power of the Dacotahs was to be directed.

When the excitement was at its height, Black Eagle left the circle of dancers and approached the two Frenchmen.

"Men of the palefaces," he shouted in a voice so loud that all near him might hear,

"you call the Dacotahs brothers, and say we are all children of the great white chief who lives beyond the salt water. Come now, and join your brothers as they go to fight against their enemies, the Chippewas."

Black Eagle had no expectation that his request would be granted, for he knew how close was the friendship between the French and their allies, the tribe of the Chippewas. In fact, the wily Dacotah had no desire that the Frenchmen should coöperate in the expedition. What he did expect and desire was to put the white men "in a hole," from which they could not extricate themselves without lowering their standing with their few remaining friends in the village.

Le Gros appreciated the difficulty of the situation, but he answered without hesitation: "The great white chief is father not only of the French and of the Dacotahs, but of the Chippewas as well. It is not fitting that children of the same father should fight each other. We will not go on the war-path against the Chippewas."

Black Eagle accepted the answer, only repeating it in a loud voice so that all might hear. He followed with another request, even more craftily framed.

"If the Great One," he said, using the Indian's name for the guide, "if the Great One does not desire to fight with us against our enemies, let him lend us the two thunder-sticks that he and his young man carry, so that we may use them against the Chippewas."

The shrewd Dacotah had put Le Gros into another dilemma. If he conceded the demand, he and his companions would be left practically unarmed among a horde of savages. If the request was refused, responsibility for a possible defeat of the war-party might be placed on him. Only one reply could be made, however. The future must care for itself. The guns could not be given up.

Black Eagle accepted the answer quietly, and resumed his place in the circle of dancers, convinced that he had paved the

way for the alienation of the few remaining friends of the Frenchmen.

The expedition left the next morning,—fifty warriors in their canoes, under the leadership of the two Eagles. Their objective was the band of Chippewas with whom they had quarreled at the conference on Bay St. Louis. Their course was to be down the Minnesota and up the Mississippi to the gloomy forests about the sources of the latter river.

The days of waiting for the return of the war-party were long and anxious. Hardly a Sioux was there in the town who had not some near relative among the absent warriors. It was expected the party would be gone about three weeks. When that period of time had passed, and the absentees did not return, anxiety became intense. The faces of the older squaws, furrowed with hardship, showed added lines of care, and the small, brown eyes were frequently dimmed with tears at the thought of husband or son lying dead and mangled under

the dark pines of the northern woods. The light, careless laughter of the unmarried girls died on their lips. Even the children, usually noisy as a pack of coyotes, played listlessly, or sat on the old elm that projected over the river, watching for the first sign of returning canoes.

The three weeks lengthened to four, and the four to five. Still there was no word from the absent ones. Then, at sunset on the fortieth day after the departure of the war-party, a dozen men, nearly dead with fatigue and hunger, their clothing and moccasins in shreds, staggered into the town. At their head was Black Eagle.

When their hunger had been satisfied, the twelve were conducted to the council-house, where Black Eagle related his version of the disaster that had befallen him and his companions.

After traveling ten days by river and portage, so ran his story, the band arrived at a point within five miles of the village to be attacked. Hiding their canoes in the bushes

that bordered the river, they advanced on foot. Their hope was to surprise the Chippewas, burn their village, and escape to the canoes with booty and prisoners before assistance could be sent from neighboring towns.

The Dacotahs had almost reached their goal, and were on the point of deploying to surround the village, when suddenly the forest resounded with the war-cry of the Chippewas. From the front, from the rear, from right, from left it came, out of two hundred brazen throats. And with the war-cry came the deadly, iron-pointed arrows that struck down a quarter of the Dacotahs at the first fire.

Though outnumbered four to one, Black Eagle said, the Dacotahs formed in a ring, as do the buffaloes when threatened by wolves. With the courage of their tribe they met the Chippewa onset, and threw it back. Then, gathering in a compact mass, they charged the circle of enemies, hoping to break through them to their canoes. They

had almost succeeded when they found themselves faced by a hundred Frenchmen, disguised as Indians, and armed with their terrible muskets. Half the remaining Dacotahs fell at the first fire of these new enemies. Among the victims was the speaker's brother, Red Eagle.

Not more than twenty Dacotahs survived the fire of the French. Rushing to the other side of the ring of enemies, this little band finally broke through, but with heavy loss. Only a dozen men escaped. Not daring to attempt to regain their canoes, they fled through the woods. Now, after untold hardship, they were returned to tell the story of their losses and of French treachery.

The story of Black Eagle was true enough, with the exception of that part dealing with the help given to the Chippewas by Frenchmen. This was a malicious, deliberate lie, told to save the speaker's face, and to inflame his fellow-tribesmen against his old enemy, Le Gros. As a matter of fact, there had not been at the time a French-

man within a hundred miles of the scene of the battle.

Untrue as was this part of Black Eagle's story, it was told with an air of perfect candor that carried conviction to his listeners. A murmur of indignation ran through the crowd, a murmur that grew into an angry demand that the three Frenchmen in the village be brought before the council, and be made to pay the penalty for the supposed treachery of their countrymen that had brought such disaster.

To bring the Frenchmen by force, however, might not be an easy matter, few in numbers though they were. Secure in their log-house, they could resist for days any attack the Dacotahs could bring against them. Rather than incur further losses of fighting men that must necessarily accompany an attack, it was decided to resort to guile. Le Gros was to be invited on the following day to appear before the council. Once in the council-house, he could easily be made prisoner. Deprived of the leadership of the

guide, his companions must soon fall also into the hands of their enemies.

Of all their former friends in the village, only a handful now remained true to the Frenchmen. Among these few were Leaping Deer, and the Gopher. When the council broke up, Black Eagle's story, and word of the decision to seize the strangers, spread through the town. When the news reached Leaping Deer, he realized that he must act promptly if he would help his friends escape the net that was to be spread for them. Feeling certain that, as an avowed friend of the Frenchmen, he would be watched, and any attempt on his part to warn his friends frustrated, he went in search of the Gopher.

An hour later, when the long twilight had ended, there came a gentle knock on the door of the cabin. When the heavy bars had been removed, the Gopher, for it was he, entered. In few words he conveyed the message entrusted to him by Leaping Deer: the white men were in extreme peril; they must attempt to escape before morning.

Le Gros had anticipated the warning. Preparations for instant departure were already completed. The canoe had been lowered from its resting-place under the roof. Arms, tools, and provisions were in readiness.

When the Gopher had entered the room, the guide carefully replaced the bars in their sockets. Then, by the light of a candle of buffalo-tallow, he surveyed the little messenger.

"Is not the Gopher afraid the Eagle will have him punished for bringing a message to the white men?" he asked. "Black Eagle is a powerful chief, and has many followers."

The boy laughed; a merry, care-free laugh that showed his heart to be unafraid.

"The Dacotahs will not hurt the Gopher," he said. "They are afraid that if the Gopher does not like them, he will wave his arms like this, and puff out his cheeks like this, and tell the spirits of the air to bewitch them."

As he spoke the boy gave such a perfect imitation of the gestures and grimaces of the

village medicine-man that Le Gros burst out laughing.

"All right, Gopher," he said. "There doesn't seem to be any room for fear in your little head. Now you can do us another great favor. We are all ready to leave. Do you act as scout for us. When you are sure the village is asleep, and that we are not watched, go to the old elm-snag that overhangs the water, the one you fell off of on the day we came here, and give three calls of the owl. That will be the signal for us to start."

The Gopher, full of pride at the importance of the task assigned him, readily agreed to play the part of lookout. The guide then wished him good-by, and gave him two small bundles. One he was to open the next day. The other was for Leaping Deer. The little fellow's heart leaped in anticipation as he noted the weight of the parcels, for it meant they contained things made of that precious metal, iron. There were, in fact, in his package, articles to gladden the boy's heart

for many a month,—a hunting-knife in a case, iron arrow-heads, fish-hooks, and a supply of colored beads.

Carrying his precious bundles, the Gopher slipped out into the darkness. Half an hour passed; an hour; another hour. The party waited in the utmost anxiety, for unless escape was made before the end of the short summer night, it would probably never be accomplished at all. But at last there came the prearranged signal, a perfect imitation of the owl's call to its mate, thrice given.

Immediately Le Gros unbarred the door, and the canoe with its cargo was carried the short distance to the river. Noiselessly the little craft was launched. Then, with Philippe in his old position in the bow, and the guide with his great paddle in the stern, it glided, silent as the passage of a spirit, off into the darkness. No unfriendly eye noted its departure, but, as it swept past the old elm-snag, there came again the call of the night-owl. It was the farewell of the Gopher to the friends he had served so well.

When a full mile had been placed between it and the Dacotah town, the little party breathed freely once more. Henri and the priest, who had left the paddling to the more skilful hands of Le Gros and Philippe, now added their strength to that of their mates. Aided by the current, the canoe fairly flew over the water.

The June night was warm, and, added to the heat, was a sultriness that was extremely oppressive. Under such conditions, and softened as they were by months of comparative idleness while confined in the Indian town, the work of the paddlers was hard indeed, but Le Gros urged his companions not to lag. After half an hour, however, he allowed them a few minutes in which to recover their breath. Mopping the streaming perspiration from their faces, the four sat almost gasping in the oppressive heat.

"We must drive ourselves to the limit," the guide said. "It is now after midnight. In two hours day will begin to break. Then we must expect our escape to become known.

Three hours start ahead of the Dacotah war-canoes is little enough. They will have no load, and will be manned by the best canoe-men in the village. We will do well if they do not go four miles to our three. We must drive on at top speed as long as it is at all safe; then hide ourselves until darkness comes again."

"Why no leave canoe on other side of great river, and go through woods to the land of the Illinois?" It was Philippe who spoke.

"There is sense in what you suggest, lad," Le Gros replied. "I had thought of that course, but it is a long journey from the Falls of St. Anthony to Fort St. Louis on the Illinois. Between the two are hundreds of miles of ground that has never been trod by a white foot. There are large rivers to cross, and, no doubt, dense forests to be threaded. Above all, there are strange tribes of Indians to be encountered. If these tribes heard that we were fleeing from the Dacotahs, they would very likely give us up to our enemies, in order to curry favor with their

powerful neighbors. No, in my opinion we must stick to the water. Our pursuers have no means of knowing whether our course will be by land, or up or down the Minnesota or the Mississippi. They will have to throw out a wide net. We must try to escape through its meshes."

The guide dipped his paddle in the water, and again the canoe sped silently and swiftly over the dark surface of the river.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE faintest touch of light showed on the black, overcast sky as the canoe passed through the great gap which the Minnesota at its mouth has cut in the rocky wall of the Mississippi's gorge. A moment later the light craft was caught by the swift current of the great river. Le Gros heaved a sigh of relief.

"One danger at least is passed," he said. "As long as we were on the Minnesota we ran the risk of meeting parties coming from the portage at St. Anthony Falls. Now our chance of encountering any one bound for the village we have just left is at least cut in two."

The summer day came on rapidly, and rapidly did the swift canoe speed to meet it. North of east was its course. Soon the walls of the gorge receded, and the seven hills on which now lies the city of St. Paul, came

into view. Then the river changed its course, and, in a great bend, turned to the south. Le Gros gave an exclamation of bitter disappointment.

"I had hoped the river would run to the east for many miles more," he said as he laid his paddle across the gunwales of the canoe and let the craft drift with the current. "Perhaps you had noticed, Father," he continued to the priest, "that the course of the Minnesota was to the northeast. If the river we are on continues to run to the south, it must take us to a point not many miles from the Dacotah village. If so, runners are sure to have been sent across country to the Mississippi to watch for us. Perhaps, after all, we should follow the suggestion made by Philippe, and take to the woods."

"That is a matter I shall leave entirely to you," answered Gournay. "I engaged you as a guide because I believed you to be the most capable man I could find for the work. I shall not interfere with your de-

cisions, now that matters have come to a crisis."

"Let us stick to the water, then," Le Gros replied after a moment's further consideration. "Our journey is a long one, the canoe is swift, and it leaves no trail."

For two hours more the four labored silently at the paddles. Then the guide spoke to the half-breed lad.

"Philippe," he said, "you have noticed that the river has run steadily southward since we passed the great bend. We must be now within twenty miles of the Sioux town we left. If runners have come across to watch for us, we shall pass them in the next hour. Keep those sharp eyes of yours open for some sign of them."

For half an hour the canoe sped on in silence. Then suddenly Philippe pointed to the top of the bluffs that formed the western margin of the river's narrow valley.

"See," he said, his eyes glittering with excitement, "see smoke-signal."

Above the trees that crowned the bluff,

three columns of blue smoke rose slowly in the heavy air.

"Aye, lad, I see the smoke," replied Le Gros, "but are you sure it comes from signal-fires? Perhaps some party of Indians is cooking its breakfast up there."

Philippe looked at the guide in surprise.

"No had rain for three, four days," he said. "Plenty dry wood for fires. Indians not pick wet wood for fires for cooking, and dry wood not make smoke like that. And Indian not go to top of high hill to cook breakfast."

Le Gros hardly heard the words. There was no question in his mind that the columns of smoke were signals. His implied doubt was really an expression of his wish that they might prove to be something else.

"Yes," he said. "They are signals. The Sioux have seen us, and soon the whole pack will be on our heels. It is now a question of our wits and our strength against theirs. The runners will endeavor to keep in touch with us by following us along the river. We

must try to leave them behind, so that we can get into some hiding-place without being seen."

To relieve their muscles, which ached with the strain of hours of continuous labor, the canoe was let drift with the current for a few minutes. In the meantime, all but the priest stripped to the waist, that not an ounce of their strength should be lost through the restraint of clothing.

For three hours more the refugees sped down the stream; then the bluffs that lined the narrow valley receded, and the river spread out as a lake three or four miles in width, and many times that in length, Lake Pepin.

A look of relief came to the anxious face of the guide.

"Ah," he said, "this is better. It is time that we should be getting under cover, and we have a better chance to hide here than along the banks of even so wide a river as the Mississippi."

After hugging the left shore of the lake

for a mile, the party landed in a little cove where thick underbrush came down to and even overhung the water. Concealing the canoe in the brush, the weary crew threw themselves exhausted on the ground. Sixty miles of such paddling as they had done was almost more than flesh could endure. Even the sense of danger was lost in an overmastering desire to rest their strained muscles. After a quarter of an hour, however, Le Gros roused himself and walked along the shore to a point where it was free of bushes. Here he had a clear view of the lake and of the opposite bluffs. In a moment he returned, his face again filled with anxiety.

"Another signal smoke is rising from the hills across the lake," he said. "The Sioux spread their net farther than I thought they could in so short a time. Philippe, you are much lighter than I. Climb up one of these trees and see if the signal is answered from this shore. If not, we may be able to get away through the woods."

In five minutes the lad was back on the

ground with his report. His face showed, before he opened his mouth, the bad nature of the news he brought.

"Two smoke-signals," he said. "One this way; one that way," and he pointed first up-stream, then down.

"We seem to be trapped," Le Gros replied. "Some of the Sioux runners must have swum the river, and have followed us down its eastern bank. No doubt the Dacotah canoes will soon arrive. Then they will close in on us."

"Is there nothing we can do to at least attempt to escape?" asked the priest in some impatience. "Must we sit quiet, like a condemned prisoner in his cell, waiting for the executioners to arrive?"

The mild exasperation of the Father was perhaps due to the actions of Le Gros. As if he had no more concern in the fate of the party, the guide had seated himself on the trunk of a fallen tree that commanded a view of the dark-blue surface of the lake, and of the paler blue hills beyond. His atten-

tion seemed to be fixed on the clouds that had gathered over the latter, and were reflected from the water.

"There are three things we might attempt to do, Father," Le Gros said calmly. "We might launch the canoe and again try to out-distance the Sioux scouts, as they followed on foot. As we were unable to do that when we had the help of the river's current, it is not likely that we would be more successful on the still water of the lake. We might attempt to elude the scouts and make our escape through the woods before the Sioux canoes arrive. Philippe and I could perhaps do that, unless years of training in the craft of the woods have gone for nothing. But Henri has not yet learned to move through woods and underbrush silent and invisible as a bat flying in the dark; and you, Father, in that long, black robe you wear, would be about as quiet and inconspicuous as a buffalo bull thrashing his way through a thicket. A third course we might follow is to fight.

"If I were alone, I should attempt to escape, and, failing in that, I should die fighting. That were far better than the fate that Black Eagle has in store for me if he gets me alive. But much as he seems to hate me, the Eagle has no ground for enmity against the rest of you. If we await the coming of the Dacotahs quietly, and make no resistance when they attempt to take us, it may be Black Eagle will be content to vent his spite on me alone, and will let you and the boys go."

Thus, with quiet heroism, did the guide plan, not only to lay down his life for his friends, but to incur the unspeakable sufferings of Indian torture, that those friends might have a chance of escape.

"We have done all that man could do to escape the Dacotahs," Le Gros continued solemnly. "We have harmed no man, and intend to harm none. Our fate must rest with the One who is above all. It may be," and his eyes turned again to the western sky, "it may be He is preparing our rescue in the

storm that He is gathering over yonder hills."

As he spoke, the guide pointed to the southwest. There the heavy clouds that all day had covered the heavens were being gathered in great, greenish-black masses, that tumbled, and rolled, and swayed like smoke from an unseen volcano. Livid tongues of electric fire leaped from one dark mass to another, or crashed to the hills below, while through the hot, close air came reverberations of thunder like the roar of distant artillery.

"Pray God the storm may come before the canoes," cried the priest. "We might then be able to get to another hiding-place under cover of it, and make our escape during the night."

"I had hoped it might be so," replied Le Gros, "but it is now too late. Here are the canoes."

All eyes followed the guide's hand as he pointed toward the upper end of the lake. There a canoe, manned by five warriors, had

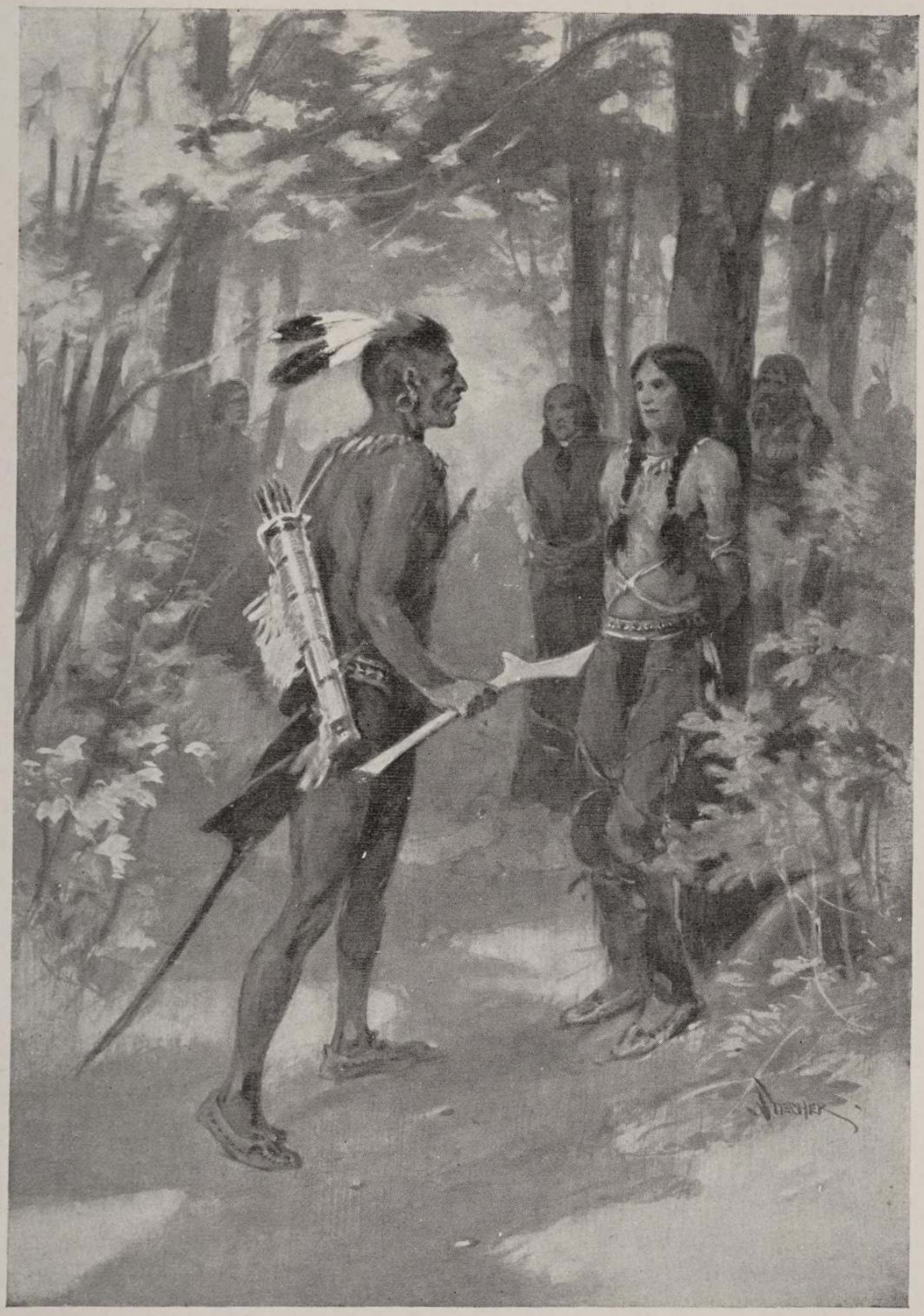
just come in sight. Another followed, then another and another, until not less than six of the little craft were seen skimming swiftly over the smooth water.

There was no uncertainty in the movements of the little flotilla. Guided apparently by signals from the top of the bluffs, it swung toward the eastern shore, and moved directly toward the hiding-place of its quarry. As it neared the shore, the warrior in the bow of the leading canoe rose to his feet. It was Black Eagle.

No second look was required to convince Le Gros of the determination of the Sioux chief that at last his old score of revenge should be settled. Nor were the faces of his followers less hateful than that of their leader. In fact, it was a chosen band, picked from the supporters of the Eagle for their bitterness toward the white giant.

No words were lost by the Dacotahs. All four of the refugees were seized and conducted along the shore a hundred paces to a spot where the forest gave place to a little

meadow of green grass. There they were bound to the trunks of trees that surrounded the opening. The Dacotahs then gathered in a group apart, to consult regarding the treatment to be accorded their prisoners.



BLACK EAGLE APPROACHED THE CAPTIVES.—*Page 233.*

CHAPTER XIX

THE deliberations of the Sioux were brief. At their conclusion Black Eagle approached the captives, to acquaint them with their fate. He spoke to Philippe first.

"The Brown One is of Indian blood," he said. "We have been told that his home is with the tribe of the Illinois. We do not know. At the council at the great lake, the Chippewas were his friends, and he came to us down the Mississippi from the land of that tribe. Let the Brown One tell us his tribe. If he is a Chippewa, he is our enemy. If he is an Illinois, one of our squaws charged us to bring him to her lodge, that she may adopt him in place of a son who was killed by the Chippewas. Let the Brown One speak."

The words that should bring his release rose to the lad's lips. Then he remembered that, though brought up as an Illinois, he

was not one by birth. According to his uncle's story, his mother was of another tribe. What that tribe was, he did not know. However, he thought, having been reared as an Illinois, it would be almost true to say that he was one. Then he thought of his promise to Le Gros after he had attempted the deception regarding the beaver-skins; that never again would he tell a lie. To claim to be an Illinois would be a lie; would be a double falsehood, in fact, for he had given his word not to lie. He could see but one honorable course open to him. He must tell the truth.

As Philippe opened his mouth to give his answer, he looked the Sioux chief squarely in the face. The words died on the boy's lips, for, behind a mask of stoicism, there showed in the countenance of Black Eagle a hatred terrible in its intensity; a hatred that embraced not only Le Gros, but all connected with him. No flesh could endure the tortures that such hatred would bring upon it.

In distress Philippe turned his look to the face of the guide; but that face, usually frank and open as that of a child, was clouded in doubt and uncertainty. Le Gros could not counsel the boy to tell an untruth; his honest nature rebelled against that. Neither could he ask him to say the word that would bring upon him the terrible wrath of his savage captor.

Then it was that Philippe was transformed in spirit from a boy to a man. Seeing clearly what he thought to be right, he determined to stand for that right at whatever cost to himself. His answer came in words clear and strong.

"I am not an Illinois," he said, "though I have lived with that tribe for years. What my tribe is, I know not."

The words of the lad were greeted with cries of derision from the Dacotahs.

"He is a Chippewa. He is a Chippewa," they shouted. "We saw him with the Chippewas at the great council. Like a Chippewa let him die."

The fate of the three white men was to be no better than that of Philippe. The hope Le Gros had entertained that the Indians would be satisfied with the death of him alone was blasted in the fierce heat of Dacotah hatred. All were to be subjected to torture by fire; a fate compared to which death itself would be sweet. The Indians immediately began preparations for their savage sport by gathering dry wood and heaping it around the trees to which their captives were bound.

Meantime the storm, that all day long had been gathering, broke over the bluffs of the lake's western shore. Then, in a smother of swirling, tossing, lightning-pierced clouds, it raced across the water toward the group of Dacotahs.

The helpless prisoners watched the oncoming tempest with strange fascination; to their excited imaginations it seemed a deliverer, speeding to their rescue. Then to their eyes a strange sight appeared. From the tumbling mass of vapor a great protuberance

was projected downward toward the surface of the lake. As it dropped lower and lower it assumed the tapering form of an elephant's trunk, that writhed and twisted over the face of the water like a living creature seeking its prey.

To the active mind of the priest came the thought that the storm might, after all, prove to be a means of rescue. He knew the superstitious dread of the forces of nature in which all Indians lived, and especially of such terrible manifestations of those forces as were about to break upon them. He resolved, if possible, to make that dread tame the minds of these children of the forest.

With minds intent on the preparations for their brutal sport, the Dacotahs had hardly noticed the approach of the tornado. In a loud voice the priest shouted to them, and, with outstretched arm and a long, gaunt finger, pointed to the twisting, funnel-shaped cloud. Then, above the roar of the approaching tempest, sounded his piercing voice.

"Down on your knees, you infidels," he shouted. "Down on your knees, and beg the forgiveness of the Great Spirit of the white men for having laid hands on His messenger. Down on your knees, lest He destroy you with the breath of His mouth."

The Indians needed no second injunction. Well they knew the fearful nature of the tornado, which they looked upon as the most terrible of all the works of the evil spirits. Now to their usual superstitious dread was added the conviction that they had mortally offended the powerful God of the pale-faces. In abject fear they groveled in the grass, calling on the good spirits to protect them, and on the priest to ward off the vengeance of his God.

One Dacotah, however, remained on his feet; it was the chief Black Eagle. When Gournay's warning shout reached him, he stood ten paces from the tree to which Le Gros was bound, directing the work of his followers. When he saw the approaching tornado, and heard the priest's denunciation,

his face blanched in fear, and his knees trembled. Then his eye fell on the form of the guide. Fierce hatred struggled for the mastery with superstitious fears, and hatred triumphed. His face still tense with the inward struggle, he swung around to face his enemy, and raised his tomahawk for the deadly throw. But the Dacotah had waited too long; the weapon never left his hand.

With a deafening roar the tornado struck the clearing. The black column of vapor that had trailed along the surface of the lake lifted a little as it came to the shore, and passed over the prostrate forms of a dozen Indians. Then, as if directed by a superhuman intelligence, it reached down and touched the defiant chief. Rising again, it swept up the face of the bluff like a gigantic mowing-machine, leaving a swath of destruction to mark its course.

To the Eagle, the touch of the whirling cloud had been that of the finger of death. No mark of violence was on his body, but the blood gushing from nose and mouth told

of the fatal vacuum that for a moment had enveloped him. With his tomahawk still clutched in his hand, he had crumpled in a heap before his intended victim.

Following the tornado came rain, not the soft, welcome showers of summer, but literally sheets of water driven with terrific force by the wind. Over and through this deluge swept the electric storm, piercing the semi-darkness with its livid darts of fire, and rending the ear-drums with the crash of its explosions. Then, as suddenly as it had come, the storm departed. The summer sun shone brightly between the scattering clouds, and the rainbow of promise was spread over the eastern sky.

Still trembling with fear and awe, the Dacotahs rose from the ground and approached the form of their leader. The manner of his death, apparently without violence, increased still more their superstitious fears and their dread of the black-robed priest, who, to them, seemed to have directed and controlled even the tornado.

With trembling fingers they loosened the thongs that bound him and his companions; then retired a safe distance, lest they too should incur the wrath of such a terrible medicine-man.

CHAPTER XX

THREE weeks after the date of the tornado on Lake Pepin, Le Gros and the priest were seated beside a camp-fire on the bank of the Illinois. A hundred feet away the two boys angled for the great cat-fish that then, as now, inhabited those waters.

Without mishap the party had descended the Mississippi, traveling at night, lest they should find themselves again in the hands of the Sioux. Reaching the mouth of the Illinois, however, they had abandoned their caution, for they were then in the land of a tribe that looked up to the French as leaders and protectors.

For a long time the guide sat in silence. Apparently he pondered over some difficult problem.

"Father," he said finally, "you know what caused me to accompany you on the journey to the Sioux village. It was that

I might continue my search for my lost boy in a region where I had never yet been. Well, I have decided to search no more."

The look on the priest's face showed the interest he felt in the guide's statement, but he said nothing.

"The reason is to be found, in part, in that brown-faced lad over there on the bank," Le Gros continued. "I have searched long and faithfully for my own son. If he were living, I must have found him. No doubt he perished at the hands of the accursed Iroquois, as did his mother. But I have come to love the Brown One almost as if he were my own boy. To-morrow we shall reach the Illinois town where his uncle lives. If he and the uncle are willing, I shall then adopt Philippe as my son."

The priest was prevented from replying by a shout from the river-bank, where Philippe was engaged in pulling ashore a fifty-pound cat-fish. Soon the two lads joined their elders, carrying the great fish on a stick thrust through its gills.

"He looks like a devil with horns," said Henri. "I never saw such an ugly face."

"Cat-fish not pretty, but very good to eat," replied Philippe, as he cut off first the creature's head, then thick slices of steak. Soon followed the hissing sound and the delicious odor of frying fish.

At noon on the following day the party arrived at the great town of the Illinois. It was situated on the north bank of the river to which the tribe has given its name, at a point nearly opposite the mouth of Great Vermilion River. Twelve hundred warriors made their homes in the bark-huts and log-cabins that were scattered from the river's edge to the border of the forest, half a mile away. All told, the inhabitants of the town numbered about six thousand.

To these Indians, white men had ceased to be a curiosity, and only mild interest was shown in the arrival of the party. The canoe was drawn up on the bank. Leaving Henri and the priest to guard its contents, Le Gros and Philippe went in search of the

latter's uncle, whose home was near the edge of the forest.

"What is your uncle's name?" Le Gros asked, as the two threaded their way among the clustered lodges that composed the town.

"The Illinois call him Springing Panther," replied the boy, speaking in his adopted Illinois tongue. "What his name was among the Creeks I do not know. My uncle almost never talks about his life with them."

The fates seemed to have conspired to prevent a meeting of Le Gros and the uncle, for again the latter was absent. He was with a party of Illinois who had left the town two days earlier, to hunt buffaloes on the prairies to the south. They were not expected back for two weeks or more.

That he might run no chance of missing the Panther on his return, Le Gros decided to stay in the town. Without ceremony, he and the two boys moved into the Panther's empty lodge. The priest Gournay accepted the invitation of a brother Jesuit, a mis-

sionary to the Illinois, to join him at Fort St. Louis, a little way up the river.

At noon of the following day Le Gros announced his intention to spend the afternoon at the fort. He would be back before morning, he said. A request on the part of the boys that they be allowed to accompany him was refused.

Sleep was sweet on these days to the two lads. For many months, in the Sioux town, they had lived in a state of apprehension and nervous tension. Now, in the midst of thousands of friendly Indians, their taut nerves relaxed. They ate enormous meals, they lounged for long hours in the shade, they slept for longer hours in their comfortable beds. Thus nature in her own beneficent way restored them to their usual healthy, normal condition.

The sun was many hours above the horizon on the next morning when Philippe stirred in his blanket, yawned, and, with a sleepy gesture, threw his hand down to the ground at his side. It struck a hard object

with force enough to waken the boy completely.

Sitting up, Philippe nursed his bruised knuckles, meantime looking ruefully at Le Gros, who stood grinning in the doorway of the lodge. Then, as he glanced down to see what had hurt his hand, his brown eyes opened until they looked like great buttons on his face; for there, on a blanket, was a beautiful, shiny, new musket, with powder-horn, and a well filled bullet-pouch.

For a moment the lad sat as if stupefied. Then his hand crept softly to the stock of the gun and touched it almost reverently. Again the brown eyes met the blue ones of the guide.

"For me?" Philippe asked doubtingly, for it seemed almost beyond belief that such good fortune should be for him.

The answer was a nod of the guide's head. The boy picked up the musket gently and laid it across his knees, tried the lock, and inspected the bullet-pouch and powder-horn. Then he looked up again at Le Gros.

"Why give Philippe such fine, fine present?" he asked.

"There are three reasons, lad," replied the guide. "In the first place, I like you. Then I liked the way in which you gave up the beaver-skins you found at the Falls of St. Anthony, which you hoped would help pay for a gun. Lastly, this is the seventeenth birthday of that other Philippe whom I have not yet found. You must take his place for to-day."

Philippe again inspected his musket, and laid it down carefully; then, with a leap like that of a wildcat, he landed beside the guide. Before that surprised person could move he was in the grip of one of those bear-like hugs with which the lad sometimes expressed his emotion.

The remaining hours of the day, and many days that followed, were spent by Philippe and Le Gros in musket-practice. The piece was a fine one, that shot true and hard. Under the skilful instruction of the guide, himself one of the best marksmen on the frontier,

the boy made rapid progress in the use of his new weapon. Special stress was laid by Le Gros on shooting at moving objects, for, as he said, in the forest the target seldom waits quietly to be shot down. If one is to use his gun without wasting ammunition, frequently more precious than gold, he must learn to get his victim on the run or on the wing. In this kind of shooting Philippe's steady nerves and quick eye soon made him almost the equal of his teacher.

As the days passed, Le Gros thought he sensed a change in the atmosphere of summer laziness that had marked the town. Warriors, gathered in groups, engaged in earnest and lengthy discussions. Others inspected and repaired their weapons. Squaws, as they labored in the fields, kept their children near them, and often glanced fearfully toward the forest as the cries of crows or jays denoted in it the presence of some moving object.

Two weeks after his arrival in the town, half a dozen of the chiefs came to Le Gros,

as he and Philippe were engaged in their daily lesson with the musket. The leader of the group spoke in his native tongue.

"The Great One is like a brother to the men of the Illinois," he said. "We will tell him the bad news we have heard. He will advise us like an older brother."

The speaker then stated that repeated rumors had come to the town of the approach of a war-party of Iroquois Indians. A band of four or five hundred of these bloodthirsty warriors, so the rumor said, had been seen to pass through the Strait of Michillimackinac, and to head southward on Lake Michigan. What their destination was, no one knew. To the minds of the Illinois, a timid people in spite of their numbers, the coming of the Iroquois could mean but one thing,—a renewal of the attack that four years before had changed this very town to a wilderness and a desolation.

"Have you scouts posted to give warning of the approach of the Iroquois?" asked Le Gros.

The answer was in the negative. There were so many towns between them and Lake Michigan that it seemed unnecessary to send out scouting parties. Word would surely be brought by the friendly Indians of these towns, in case an enemy should approach from the direction of the lake.

"Will the Illinois fight if the Iroquois come?" again asked the guide.

"Yes, we will fight," answered the chief, but there was no spirit in his words. This fact, and the depressed air of his comrades, indicated clearly that little reliance could be placed on these Indians in a fight to the death with their old enemies. In fact, what little martial spirit the Illinois ever had possessed had been pretty thoroughly crushed by the disasters they had recently suffered at the hands of the fierce masters of the forest.

"You ask for my advice," said Le Gros after he had pondered the words of the chief for a few moments. "Here it is. Fill the woods with scouting parties. The Iroquois

depend largely on surprise attacks to gain their victories. Summon the rest of your warriors to a war-dance to-night. That will encourage them to meet the attack of the Iroquois, if it comes. You outnumber your enemies nearly three to one. If you fight, you can destroy them."

The chiefs promised to give careful consideration to the words they had heard, and went back to the council-lodge from which they had come. To the experienced frontiersman it soon became apparent that his advice was not to be followed. A strange apathy settled over the town,—an apathy that rendered the inhabitants incapable either of defending themselves, or of planning intelligently for their escape.

Not all the Illinois, however, were willing to sit still, and let themselves be slaughtered like so many sheep. Fully a hundred of the younger warriors gathered before the council-house, where, with shouts and an impromptu war-dance, they tried to encourage their fellows to play the part of men. Fail-

ing in this, they marched to the lodge of Le Gros and placed themselves under his orders.

The guide acted promptly. A quarter of the force was assigned to scout duty, with instructions to spread themselves through the forest to the north and east of the town. Most especially they were to watch the two rivers that met at this place. The remaining warriors were assigned positions in the border of the woods, to which they were to go in case of an alarm.

When these dispositions were complete, Le Gros put his force through repeated drills, until every man knew exactly the place he was expected to fill. The scouting parties were then ordered to leave at once, that they might reach their stations before dark. The remaining warriors dispersed to their respective lodges.

"Do you think there will be an attack, Uncle?" asked Henri, when the Indians were gone.

"It is hard to say," answered the guide. "The report of Iroquois having been seen is

probably true. I was told by Tonty, at the fort, that rumor had come to him that a war-party could be expected here this summer. But whether the wrath of the Iroquois is to be directed against the Illinois, or against some other tribe, is more than we can know."

"What Henri and I do, if Iroquois come?" asked Philippe.

"Why, I completely forgot you two boys," replied Le Gros. "But here are your orders. At the place where our canoe is drawn up on the bank of the river is a grove of trees. When the Illinois are driven out of the woods into the town, as they probably will be, I will try to form a second line of defense. If we can do that, I think we can hold back the Iroquois long enough to give the women and children a chance to escape. More than that we cannot hope to do with the little force we have.

"If a second line is formed, its right will rest on the grove I mentioned. I wish you two to take position there. When that line breaks, it will be every man for himself. I

will try to join you in the grove and escape with you. If I do not come, you will have to get away as best you can, by canoe, or through the town."

Half an hour later there came from up the Illinois, which here flows from east to west, the report of a gun, muffled by distance. Half a dozen similar reports followed in quick succession. Then came, at measured intervals, the sound of three other discharges, much louder and deeper in tone.

"Our scouts have found an enemy," Le Gros exclaimed, when he heard the sound of the first gun. "At such a time they would not fire for any other reason. Ah! There goes the six-pounder at the fort," he added, as the deeper detonations reached his ear. "Tonty is acting the part of a friend, and is giving warning that trouble is on its way to us. Now I must go. Remember my instructions. I shall depend on you to be in the grove with your muskets, if we have to fall back that far."

The report of the six-pounder had reached

every person in the town. At this indication that the danger they dreaded was upon them, all was uproar and confusion. Women rushed in from the fields, shrieking to their children. Then, surrounded by their broods, and carrying part of the scanty equipment of their homes, they ran to the dug-out canoes that lined the river-bank. A thousand men followed, and in an incredibly short time nearly the entire population of the town was speeding to a place of safety far down the Illinois.

The warriors who had placed themselves under the command of Le Gros swarmed to the council-lodge. With them came a hundred others, who, at the last moment, decided to throw in their lot with the town's defenders. Altogether nearly two hundred men, half of whom were armed with muskets, took station at the edge of the forest.

They had not long to wait. First a dozen Illinois scouts appeared in the forest, dodging from tree to tree, and firing as they retired before a foe invisible as yet to the line

of waiting warriors. Then the Iroquois came into view. They were met by a general fire from the long, thin line of Illinois.

At this indication that their foe was not to be stampeded by their attack, the Iroquois halted while their chiefs held a council of war, to determine the procedure to be followed.

CHAPTER XXI

THE short delay in the attack, due to the consultation of the Iroquois leaders, was utilized by Le Gros in perfecting his arrangements for defense, and in encouraging his followers to hold their ground against the superior force of the enemy. Disregarding the bullets that came whistling from the forest, he walked the length of the line of Illinois. He reinforced a weak spot here; he drew back an exposed salient there; he posted groups of reserves at other points back of the advanced line. Like a skilled general, he took advantage of the last few minutes of grace to develop his force and his position to the utmost.

The scattering fire of the Iroquois increased in intensity, and their line moved forward. It was not the steady, silent advance of disciplined troops; neither was it the stealthy approach that marked Indian

night-attacks. Every warrior seemed intent on making the utmost amount of noise of which his lungs were capable. Yelling, howling, screaming, they almost drowned the sound of their own guns. Nor were their bodies less active than their throats, as they leaped and danced from cover to cover in their advance.

That the din made by the Illinois was less than that produced by their enemies was due solely to their smaller number. Individually, their vocal efforts were fully as great as those of their opponents, but the desirability of keeping under cover prevented them from emulating the antics of the Iroquois.

Having the advantage of carefully selected positions, the defenders poured a hot and effective fire upon the attacking force. In spite of their activity, many of the Iroquois were picked off as they leaped from tree to tree. Others found themselves subjected to cross-fires from which no shelter was available. They fought with their usual courage, and at some points drove the Illinois to the

edge of the forest. Le Gros was ready with his reserves, however, and with sharp counter-attacks straightened out his line. For fifteen minutes the Iroquois maintained their attack. They then withdrew to the cover of the forest, carrying with them a dozen dead and twice as many wounded.

After resting half an hour, the Iroquois again advanced. It soon became apparent that their leaders had made a new disposition of their forces. Their line had been thinned to about the same strength as that of the Illinois. The remaining warriors, over two hundred in number, were massed at the center.

When the battle was resumed, this large body, composed of picked men, drove straight and hard at the opposing line, and bent it to the point of breaking. Quickly gathering his reserves, Le Gros threw them at the advancing "shock troops," and, by the hardest kind of fighting, checked them. But, outnumbered four to one as he was at this critical point, he realized that the check

must be only momentary, that soon his line must be broken unless he withdrew. He gave the signal to retire to the second line of defense.

The strength of this second line consisted in a number of log-cabins that stretched from the grove where Henri and Philippe were stationed, almost to the forest. As the Illinois retired they applied the torch to the frail bark lodges that lay east of their new position, thus depriving their enemies of the shelter of these structures.

Well protected in the log-cabins, the Illinois were again able to check the advance of the Iroquois. In the burning lodges, however, the latter found new and effective weapons. Firebrands were attached to arrows and shot flaming through the air, to land on the bark roofs of the log-cabins. Half of the structures were soon in flames. Driven out of their shelters, the defenders still found temporary protection behind their blazing houses. This could last but a few minutes, however, and to continue the

fight without such shelter was useless. Le Gros, from his position in the edge of the grove by the river, gave the signal to retire.

The word passed quickly down the line, and in a twinkling the Illinois were scampering through the town, which they had so well defended, to the shelter of the woods. The Iroquois followed, but had little chance of overtaking their fleet-footed enemies, familiar as the latter were with every path of the forest. Scarcely a dozen prisoners were taken, and of these the greater part later made their escape. The returns to the invaders for sending an expedition of five hundred men a distance of a thousand miles were scant indeed.

When Le Gros saw that his final order had been executed, and that his faithful followers were rapidly gaining places of safety, he hurriedly entered the grove to join the two boys.

Because of intervening houses, the first stage of the battle had been invisible from

the ground in the grove. The boys, therefore, climbed high enough in one of the trees to get a view of what was going on at the edge of the town. When the first retirement came, however, they slid hurriedly to the ground. Here they were joined by eight Illinois warriors, whom Le Gros had assigned to help the boys defend the position.

Sheltered behind trees, the ten awaited the attack. For a few minutes nothing could be seen except the burning lodges in their front. Beyond these, the clearing was hidden by masses of drifting smoke. But soon dark forms appeared in the haze, darting between the blazing houses, and taking shelter behind the stumps that dotted the ground. Meantime, from thirty Iroquois throats came the horrible war-cries, well calculated to shake the nerves of the little band in the grove.

To the two boys danger was not a new thing. Risk, and life on the frontier, went necessarily hand in hand. But to defend themselves against human beings who were

bent upon their destruction, and were ready to use all the daring and ingenuity of fiends to bring it about, was an experience as new as it was trying.

When the Iroquois appeared in the smoke, the hot guns of the Illinois spoke again; but the pieces of Henri and Philippe were silent. Neither boy could bring himself to fire at a fellow-creature, even though he were one of the hated Iroquois. Frequently their guns were raised, but, before they could bring themselves to press the triggers, the active targets had disappeared.

Finally Philippe forced himself to fire at a shoulder that protruded from behind the trunk of a dead tree, fifty yards away. His hand was unsteady, and the shot went wild. With the report of his musket, however, the mist that had clouded his mind rolled away, and he thought clearly. Those darting, leaping forms out on the clearing were indeed men, but they were men who, without cause, had journeyed a thousand miles to bring death and destruction to the people who had

befriended him. The hot blood of righteous wrath which for countless centuries has made men fight and die in defense of their homes, surged through his veins. Now his brain was as clear and his hand as steady as if he were engaged in a simple hunt. Again the boy's musket barked; this time the bullet went true.

When the order for the final retirement was given, the eight Illinois warriors rushed through the grove to make their escape. For a moment the boys hesitated. They were uncertain whether to follow the Illinois, or to take to the canoe. The moment's delay nearly proved fatal. Noting the cessation of fire from the grove, and guessing its cause, eight or nine Iroquois charged boldly in the open. Bullets from the boys' guns dropped two of them, but the rest came on undaunted.

When the Iroquois entered the grove, and found its sole remaining defenders to be two young lads, who stood frantically reloading their guns, they yelled in triumph. Here were prisoners to be had for the taking, and

prisoners were the supreme prizes of Indian warfare.

Dropping their guns and seizing their war-clubs, the Iroquois formed a ring around the boys, with the intention of taking them alive. The lads stood back to back, Henri with clubbed musket, Philippe with his gun in one hand, his tomahawk in the other. They might well have yielded to superior force, but both knew that death from knife-thrust or blow of club was to be welcomed when compared with the lingering tortures that would be theirs if captured alive.

The circle of enemies closed in on them, and a hand-to-hand fight began. Henri parried a blow with his musket, and, in return, felled his assailant. Philippe countered the blow of a club with his gun, but at the next instant he sank unconscious to the ground. A second club had struck a glancing blow on his head, cutting the scalp, and stunning him with its force.

Up to this time, the rather stolid Henri

had fought steadily and methodically. Now, however, that he saw his chum lying pale and still at his feet, a great anger flared up in his heart. He lost all thought of himself, determined only that the body of Philippe should not be mutilated by the scalping-knives of his murderers. Laying about him with his heavy musket, the sturdy peasant-lad drove his enemies momentarily back. But he could not face all ways at once, and the Iroquois were closing in for the final struggle, when Le Gros, seeking the boys, came in sight.

With a coughing roar like that of an enraged lion, the guide leaped at the circle of savages. A blow of his clubbed musket felled the nearest. The stock of the gun shattered with the impact, but the heavy, iron barrel remained in the hands of the giant. In such hands it was a terrible weapon at close quarters. Under its blows two more of the Iroquois went down. Henri felled another. The remaining two found safety in flight.

Picking up the still form of Philippe as a man of ordinary strength would lift a babe, Le Gros rushed for the canoe. Henri followed, carrying his gun and Philippe's. In a moment they were afloat.

Le Gros steered up-stream to gain the shelter of the dense smoke from the burning town. He had but a hundred yards to go, and, as the Iroquois were not expecting any of their enemies to attempt to escape in that direction, over half the distance was passed before the canoe was discovered. Then a fusillade was directed at the fleeing craft, and a dozen bullets splashed in the water near it. A splinter was cut from the handle of Henri's paddle, and two balls passed through the side of the canoe, but, fortunately, no harm was done. Before the Iroquois could reload, the canoe disappeared in the smoke-screen.

There was no more firing, but sounds of a tremendous commotion ashore came to the refugees through the fog of smoke. Among the cries, Le Gros distinguished his own

name called excitedly from group to group. A grim smile came to his lips.

"The Iroquois scoundrels haven't forgotten the one who bearded them in their own dens," he said. "If I mistake not, they would give a dozen ordinary prisoners to get the Great One tied to one of their stakes."

As Le Gros spoke, his glance fell upon the form of Philippe, lying motionless in the bottom of the canoe, and the smile faded from his face. But Philippe was not seriously hurt. The glancing blow of the stone war-club had not injured the skull, and the wound in the scalp was more painful than dangerous. Soon the boy stirred uneasily; then his eyes opened wonderingly, and he sat up.

A glance at the clear eyes and the brown face showed Le Gros that Philippe had suffered no harm. With a great joy singing in his heart the giant bent to his paddle until the stout ash buckled almost to the breaking point.

Guessing from the exertions of his com-

panions that they were endeavoring to escape pursuers, Philippe reached for his paddle.

"No, no, lad! Not yet," said the guide, unwilling that the boy should exert himself so soon. "We need another kind of help first. Load and fire your musket as fast as you can. No other guns are being fired now. It may be Tonty will hear the reports, and will understand that they are signals for help."

"When we go a little farther we see fort," replied Philippe, who was familiar with every turn of the river.

"Good!" said the guide. "If we get out of this smoke by that time, Tonty may recognize us with the help of a telescope that he has."

After the fifth discharge of his gun, Philippe pointed ahead over the tops of the trees that lined the southern bank of the river. There, somewhat less than a mile away, the top of a great mass of rock, crowned with buildings, loomed above the surrounding forest. Now that the canoe had

emerged from the smoke, the rock could be clearly seen.

Philippe fired again. As the echoes of the report, thrown back from the surrounding hills, died away, an answering discharge came from the fort. A mass of white smoke leaped from the top of the palisades that protected the buildings; then followed the roar of a six-pounder.

"They have seen us," cried Le Gros. "Tonty will help us, if man can do it. Now, Philippe, take your paddle."

It was time that the canoe should be driven to the limit. Now that the smoke had been left behind, a score of Iroquois could be seen running along the north bank of the river. To keep out of their range it was necessary to hug the south bank. But from the woods on that side of the river came whoops and yells that indicated all too clearly the presence of the enemy. A dozen warriors had crossed the river in a dugout left by the fleeing Illinois. They were now racing along a broad trail that led from the

town to the fort. They were followed by a score of others who had swum the river.

In spite of the utmost efforts of the three at the paddles, the pursuers gained rapidly. They were abreast of the canoe when it was still half a mile from the fort. The face of Le Gros became very anxious.

"They will beat us to the rock," he said, "and will prevent us from landing there unless our white friends come to our rescue."

The brave and chivalrous Tonty was not the man to sit still and let comrades perish for lack of any help within his power to give. When the reports of Philippe's gun reached him, he grasped the situation at once, and made preparations to meet it. Half of his scanty force of thirty men was ordered to get ready to follow him to the plain below. The single cannon in the fort was loaded with grape-shot. It was trained on the trail that led to the Illinois town.

Almost in despair the panting trio in the canoe toiled at the paddles. So close were they to their goal that the towering rock

seemed almost within a stone's throw. But the yells of the Iroquois in the woods showed them to be well ahead of their quarry. At any moment Le Gros expected to see their dark forms on the landing at the foot of the rock.

Then through the forest crashed the report of the fort's cannon. Shrieks of pain told that the shower of grape had found its mark. A volley of musketry followed, succeeded by more howls. The foremost pursuers, intent only on heading off the canoe, had run full speed into an ambuscade. Half a dozen of them fell; the rest recoiled from the deadly fire of the French.

A moment later the canoe shot up to the landing, and the three refugees joined the band of white men. There was little time for greetings, but Le Gros squeezed Tonty's one hand in a grasp that made the little Italian wince. Then he and the two boys took their places in the battle-line.

The little band retired after the fashion of Indian warfare. Dodging from cover to

cover, they kept up a scattering fire at the Iroquois, who, reinforced, again pressed forward. Without loss the French reached the foot of the steep trail that led up the southern side of the great rock. Five minutes later they were safe behind the palisades on its summit.

CHAPTER XXII

Starved Rock, on which the explorer La Salle had built his Fort St. Louis, was an impregnable position. Towering more than a hundred feet above the bottom lands of the Illinois River, it offered but one means of ascent, the steep, perilous path that led up its southern face. Elsewhere its sides were perpendicular, or so nearly so that not even an American Indian could scale them. In such a position a dozen Frenchmen could have defied any number of Indians indefinitely. Water was to be had by dropping buckets down the northern face of the rock to the river. Only starvation could subdue the garrison of this stronghold, as almost a century later starvation did conquer a remnant of the Illinois nation which there found refuge from their Pottawattomie enemies. Hence the name Starved Rock.

In the security of their fort the French force under Tonty found little difficulty in

repelling the attacks of the Iroquois, when the latter, balked in their attempt to destroy the Illinois, laid siege to the Rock. After an investment of six days, which cost them a score or more of their warriors, the Iroquois departed.

Scarcely had the canoes of the hostile band disappeared up the river before a lone Indian, who spoke the language of the Illinois, presented himself before the French sentries and asked admission to the fort.

Philippe, now fully recovered from the wound in his head, sat at the door of the log-house in which he, with Henri and Le Gros, made his home. The guide, within the house, was engaged in cleaning his musket, which, fitted with a new stock, had rendered good service during the siege. As the newcomer entered through the gate of the palisade, a glad cry of recognition burst from Philippe's lips.

"It is the Springing Panther," he cried. "Come, Great One; come, for my uncle is here!"

Less emotional than Philippe, the Panther, for it was he, walked leisurely across the open court of the fort. As he approached his nephew, Le Gros appeared in the open doorway behind the lad. Exclamations of astonishment came simultaneously from the lips of the Frenchman and of the Indian.

"The Hawk!"

"Pierre!"

With a bound Le Gros was in front of the Indian, his great hands upon the latter's shoulders. In his eagerness the guide shook him like a child.

"Tell me," he said. "Tell me, are you a Huron, named the Hawk? Did you have a sister called Marie, who was killed by the Iroquois sixteen years ago?"

"It is so," replied the Indian.

"Then," continued Le Gros, and his voice trembled with emotion as he spoke, "who is this boy who calls you uncle?"

The answer of the warrior was given in the tongue of the Hurons.

"He is the son of my sister Marie," he

said; " and if you are Pierre Bressani, he is also your son."

The sudden and all-unexpected realization of the hope that had been the guiding star of his life proved almost too much for Le Gros. Like a man stricken with illness, he staggered, and sat down on a bench beside the door.

" Tell him, Hawk," he said, for Philippe had not understood the Huron's words. " Tell the boy who he is, and who I am."

The Hawk's story, which for sixteen long years he had kept hidden in his own heart, was soon told.

At the time of the Iroquois attack upon the little Huron band with whom Le Gros had left his wife and child, the Hawk was on the strand, repairing his canoe. The attack was by land. Hearing the sounds of fighting and the shrieks of women, he started for the path that led to the top of the cliff. But, before he reached it, Marie, with her child in her arms, crept down over the edge of the

precipice in an endeavor to reach the beach below. She had got a third of the way down when a treacherous shelf of rock gave way under her foot. A shrub which she grasped failed to hold, and she fell to the rock-strewn beach. The Hawk rushed to the side of his sister. She was conscious, but so crushed and broken by the fall that she could move only her arms. Holding out to her brother her boy, all unhurt, she urged him to fly with him while there was yet time.

The Hawk tried to lift his sister, to carry away both her and her boy, but she resisted.

"No," she said faintly, for she was in great pain, "no, I cannot live. I am hurt here," and she pressed her hand to her side. "Take the boy and escape."

Realizing that he could be of no help to his sister, and that every moment's delay lessened the chance of escape with the boy, the Huron ran to where half a dozen canoes were drawn up on the beach. Vigorous kicks stove in the sides of all but one of the frail craft. Into this one he put the boy, and in

a moment was speeding down the bay. He was not discovered by the Iroquois, who were intent on their bloody work on the top of the cliff.

As no place along the shores of the Great Lakes seemed to be safe from the vindictiveness of his enemies, the Hawk determined to put many miles of land between him and them. Crossing Lake Huron, he went on to the southern shore of Lake Erie, then up the Sandusky River as far as his canoe would carry him. Continuing his journey on foot, he crossed the valley of the Ohio, and found refuge among the Shawanoes.

For a year the Huron and his nephew lived in apparent security. Then one day there appeared in the village where they had their home, two Iroquois envoys. Under threat of incurring the wrath of their nation, they demanded that the Shawanoes give up to them the Huron warrior and the boy. A council was held to deliberate on the matter. While it was in session, the Hawk and his nephew disappeared in the forest.

The pair wandered far to the south, and finally joined the nation of the Creeks, in what is now the state of Alabama. After two years spent with this powerful people, came rumors of another demand by the Iroquois for their surrender. Again the Hawk determined to save his hosts embarrassment by departing, and took the lad with him into unknown wilds.

For a year the Huron wandered from village to village, gradually working westward until stopped by the mighty flow of the Mississippi. Turning northward he eventually reached the territory of the Illinois. This tribe was known throughout the Indian world as a friend of the French and of their allies. Trusting that he had at last found a place of safety, the Hawk decided to make his home with them. To make assurance doubly sure, he determined to conceal his identity. He spoke the Creek tongue fluently, and the child knew no other language. He announced himself therefore as a Creek, and as such was accepted by the

Illinois. In accordance with Indian custom, he was afterward adopted into that tribe.

By this time, fear of the Iroquois had become an obsession with the Hawk. Lest some idle word should reveal his true character, he withdrew within himself, spoke but little even to his nephew, and had as little contact as possible with the Illinois and their allies, the French. In his silence and aloofness the Huron had at last found security. None suspected his identity, or that his nephew, the Brown One, was the Philippe for whom the Frenchman, Le Gros, made ceaseless search.

Late into the moonlit summer night Le Gros and his newly found son sat alone, talking. Philippe told of his life with the Illinois, and of the earlier wanderings, part of which he dimly remembered. On the other hand, he had many questions to ask about his mother, about his father's early life, and of the later journeys in search of the lost boy,

himself. Then the conversation turned to the future.

"On many a night such as this," said Le Gros, "have I sat alone, planning what I should do for my Philippe when I should find him. I did not forget, either, that money would be required to carry out those plans. The earnings of fifteen years have been laid away in preparation for this day. We will go to Montreal and Quebec, where are great stone churches and stone forts, with their soldiers and their cannon. There we will see the ships that sail on the salt water. In one of them we will go to France, where are even more beautiful churches, and great castles of stone, taller than the tallest elms in our forests. We will visit the chief city of the land, Paris they call it. There we may see the great white father, who rules over all Frenchmen and their allies."

As Le Gros unfolded his plans, Philippe's eyes opened wide with wonder. It seemed impossible that such things could be for him, a poor half-breed. For another hour the

two talked of the glories of France, glories that loomed large, though hazy, in the father's memory.

After a time a wistful note crept into Philippe's voice.

"When we see all the fine things over there," he said, "then what we do? We live in France?"

Le Gros looked long into the brown, upturned face before he replied.

"No, lad," he said. "We will not stay there. France is beautiful and great, but you and I could not long be happy there. We should pine away in the great stone houses, as does the cub of the wild wolf when caught and caged. Our lives have been as free as the wind that sweeps through our forests and over our lakes. To the freedom of the forests and the lakes we will return."

Then Philippe was content.

THE END

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