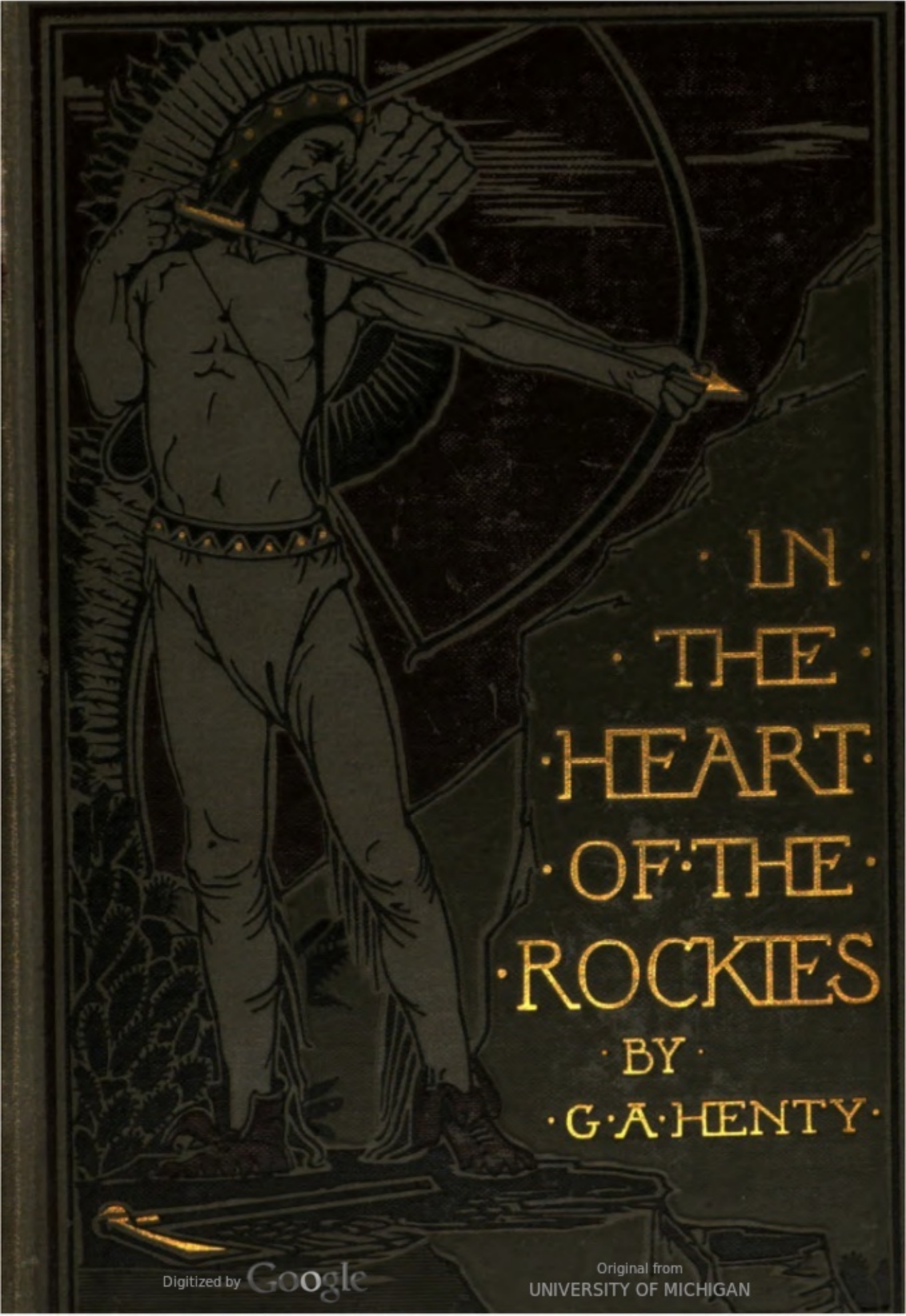
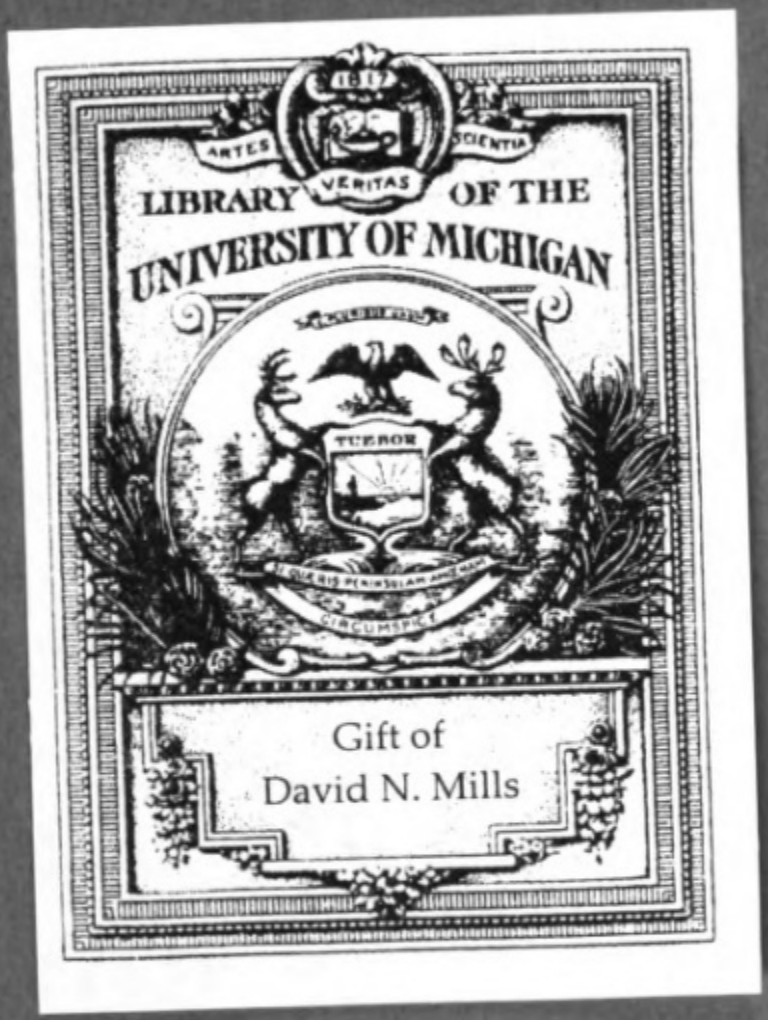


Digitized by Google
Original from
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN



Digitized by Google
Original from
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

Digitized by Google
Original from
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

Google

IN THE HEART OF THE ROCKIES

Digitized by Google

Original from
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

Digitized by Google
Original from
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

Digitized by Google

Original from
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

925

"HUNTING DOG SAVES JERRY FROM THE RAPIDS."

Digitized by Google

Original from
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

IN THE
HEART OF THE ROCKIES

A STORY OF
ADVENTURE IN COLORADO

BY

G. A. HENTY

**Author of "Redskin and Cow-boy;" "With Lee in Virginia"
"By Right of Conquest;" &c.**

WITH EIGHT FULL-PAGE ILLUSTRATIONS BY G. C. HINDLEY

LONDON
BLACKIE & SON, LIMITED, 50 OLD BAILEY, E.C.
GLASGOW, AND DUBLIN.
1895

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

Digitized by Google

Original from
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

PREFACE.

Until comparatively lately that portion of the United States in which I have laid this story was wholly unexplored. The marvellous cañons of the Colorado River extend through a country absolutely bare and waterless, and save the tales told by a few hunters or gold-seekers who, pressed by Indians, made the descent of some of them, but little was known regarding this region. It was not until 1869 that a thorough exploration of the cañons was made by a government expedition under the command of Major Powell. This expedition passed through the whole of the cañons, from those high up on the Green River to the point where the Colorado issues out on to the plains. Four years were occupied by the party in making a detailed survey of the course of the main river and its tributaries. These explorations took place some eight or nine years after the date of my story. The country in which the Big Wind River has its source, and the mountain chains contained in it, were almost unknown until, after the completion of the railway to California, the United States government was forced to send an expedition into it to punish the Indians for their raids upon settlers in the plains. For details of the geography and scenery I have relied upon the narrative of Mr. Baillie-Grohman, who paid several visits to the country in 1878 and the following years in quest of sport, and was the first white

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

man to penetrate the recesses of the higher mountains. At that time the Indians had almost entirely deserted the country. For the details of the dangers and difficulties of the passage through the cañons I am indebted to the official report of Major Powell, published by the United States government.

G. A. HENTY.

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

CONTENTS.

Chap.		Page
I.	Tom's Choice,	11
II.	Finding Friends,	28
III.	On the Plains,	45
IV.	Leaping Horse,	66
V.	In Danger,	81
VI.	United,	99
VII.	Chased,	117
VIII.	In Safety,	136
IX.	A Bad Time,	153
X.	An Avalanche,	171
XI.	Winter,	188
XII.	The Snow Fort,	206
XIII.	A Fresh Start,	223
XIV.	An Indian Attack,	242
XV.	The Colorado,	261
XVI.	Afloat in Canoes,	278
XVII.	The Grand Cañon,	296
XVIII.	Back to Denver,	315
XIX.	A Fortune,	332

Digitized by Google

Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

Digitized by Google

Original from
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

ILLUSTRATIONS.

	Page
HUNTING DOG SAVES JERRY FROM THE RAPIDS, . *Frontis.*	310
CARRIE READS UNCLE HARRY'S LETTER, ...	18
JERRY GIVES TOM A LESSON IN SHOOTING, ...	55
"LEAPING HORSE MOUNTED, AND RODE ACROSS THE STREAM,"	89
"A MOMENT LATER THE INDIAN FELL FORWARD ON HIS FACE,"	135
"THERE IS ANOTHER AVALANCHE, KEEP YOUR BACKS TO THE WALL, BOYS,"	172
"THEY WENT OUT TO LOOK AT THE INDIAN THE CHIEF HAD SHOT,"	211
"NO GOOD FIGHT HERE," SAID LEAPING HORSE, ...	250

Digitized by Google

Original from
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

Digitized by Google

Original from
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HEART OF THE ROCKIES.

CHAPTER I.

TOM'S CHOICE.

I CAN be of no use here, Carry. What am I good for? Why, I could not earn money enough to pay for my own food, even if we knew anyone who would help me to get a clerkship. I am too young for it yet. I would rather go before the mast than take a place in a shop. I am too young even to enlist. I know just about as much as other boys at school, and I certainly have no talent anyway, as far as I can see at present. I can sail a boat, and I won the swimming prize a month ago, and the sergeant who gives us lessons in single-stick and boxing says that he considers me his best pupil with the gloves, but all these things put together would not bring me in sixpence a week. I don't want to go away, and nothing would induce me to do so if I could be of the slightest use to you here. But can I be of any use? What is there for me to look forward to if I stay? I am sure that you would be always worrying over me if I did get some sort of situation that you would know father and mother would not have liked to see me in, and would seem to offer no chance for the future, whereas if I went out

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

there it would not matter what I did, and anything I earned I could send home to you."

The speaker was a lad of sixteen. He and his sister, who was two years his senior, were both dressed in deep mourning, and were sitting on a bench near Southsea Castle looking across to Spithead, and the Isle of Wight stretching away behind. They had three days before followed their mother to the grave, and laid her beside their father, a lieutenant of the navy, who had died two years before. This was the first time they had left the house, where remained their four sisters—Janet, who came between Carry and Tom; Blanche, who was fourteen; Lucie, twelve; and Harriet, eight. Tom had proposed the walk.

"Come out for some fresh air, Carry," he had said. "You have been shut up for a month. Let us two go together;" and Carry had understood that he wanted a talk alone with her. There was need, indeed, that they should look the future in the face. Since Lieutenant Wade's death their means had been very straitened. Their mother had received a small pension as his widow, and on this, eked out by drafts reluctantly drawn upon the thousand pounds she had brought him on her marriage, which had been left untouched during his lifetime, they had lived since his death. Two hundred pounds had been drawn from their little capital, and the balance was all that now remained. It had long been arranged that Carry and Janet should go out as governesses as soon as they each reached the age of eighteen, but it was now clear that Carry must remain at home in charge of the young ones.

That morning the two girls had had a talk together, and had settled that, as Janet was too young to take even the humblest place as a governess, they would endeavour to open a little school, and so, for the present at any rate, keep the home together. Carry could give music lessons, for

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

she was already an excellent pianist, having been well taught by her mother, who was an accomplished performer, and Janet was sufficiently advanced to teach young girls. She had communicated their decision to Tom, who had heartily agreed with it.

"The rent is only twenty pounds a year," he said, "and, as you say, the eight hundred pounds bring in thirty-two pounds a year, which will pay the rent and leave something over. If you don't get many pupils at first it will help, and you can draw a little from the capital till the school gets big enough to pay all your expenses. It is horrible to me that I don't seem to be able to help, but at any rate I don't intend to remain a drag upon you. If mother had only allowed me to go to sea after father's death I should be off your hands now, and I might even have been able to help a little. As it is, what is there for me to do here?" And then he pointed out how hopeless the prospect seemed at Portsmouth.

Carry was silent for a minute or two when he ceased speaking, and sat looking out over the sea.

"Certainly, we should not wish you to go into a shop, Tom, and what you say about going into an office is also right enough. We have no sort of interest, and the sort of clerkship you would be likely to get here would not lead to anything. I know what you are thinking about—that letter of Uncle Harry's; but you know that mother could not bear the thought of it, and it would be dreadful for us if you were to go away."

"I would not think of going, Carry, if I could see any chance of helping you here, and I don't want to go as I did when the letter first came. It seems such a cowardly thing to run away and leave all the burden upon your shoulders, yours and Janet's, though I know it will be principally on yours; but what else is there to do? It was not for my

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

own sake that I wanted before to go, but I did not see what there was for me to do here even when I grew up. Still, as mother said it would break her heart if I went away, of course there was an end of it for the time, though I have always thought it would be something to fall back upon if, when I got to eighteen or nineteen, nothing else turned up, which seemed to me very likely would be the case. Certainly, if it came to a choice between that and enlisting, I should choose that; and now it seems to me the only thing to be done."

"It is such a long way off, Tom," the girl said in a tone of deep pain; "and you know when people get away so far they seem to forget those at home and give up writing. We had not heard from uncle for ten years when that letter came."

"There would be no fear of my forgetting you, Carry. I would write to you whenever I got a chance."

"But even going out there does not seem to lead to anything, Tom. Uncle has been away twenty-five years, and he does not seem to have made any money at all."

"Oh, but then he owned in his letter, Carry, that it was principally his own fault. He said he had made a good sum several times at mining, and chucked it away; but that next time he strikes a good thing he was determined to keep what he made and to come home to live upon it. I sha'n't chuck it away if I make it, but shall send every penny home that I can spare."

"But uncle will not expect you, Tom, mother refused so positively to let you go. Perhaps he has gone away from the part of the country he wrote from, and you may not be able to find him."

"I shall be able to find him," Tom said confidently. "When that letter went, I sent one of my own to him, and said that though mother would not hear of my

Digitized by Google Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

going now, I might come out to him when I got older if I could get nothing to do here, and asked him to send me a few words directed to the post-office telling me how I might find him. He wrote back saying that if I called at the Empire Saloon at a small town called Denver, in Colorado, I should be likely to hear whereabouts he was, and that he would sometimes send a line there with instructions if he should be long away."

"I see you have set your mind on going, Tom," Carry said sadly.

"No, I have not set my mind on it, Carry. I am perfectly ready to stop here if you can see any way for me to earn money, but I cannot stop here idle, eating and drinking, while you girls are working for us all."

"If you were but three or four years older, Tom, I should not so much mind, and though it would be a terrible blow to part with you, I do not see that you could do anything better; but you are only sixteen."

"Yes, but I am strong and big for my age; I am quite as strong as a good many men. Of course I don't mean the boatmen and the dockyard maties, but men who don't do hard work. Anyhow, there are lots of men who go out to America who are no stronger than I am, and of course I shall get stronger every month. I can walk thirty miles a day easy, and I have never had a day's illness."

"It is not your strength, Tom; I shall have no fears about your breaking down; on the contrary, I should say that a life such as uncle wrote about, must be wonderfully healthy. But you seem so young to make such a long journey, and you may have to travel about in such rough places and among such rough men before you can find Uncle Harry."

"I expect that I shall get on a great deal easier than a man would," Tom said confidently. "Fellows might play

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

tricks with a grown-up fellow who they see is a stranger and not up to things, and might get into quarrels with him, but no one is likely to interfere with a boy. No, I don't think that there is anything in that, Carry,—the only real difficulty is in going away so far from you, and perhaps being away for a long time."

"Well, Tom," the girl said after another pause, "it seems very terrible, but I own that I can see nothing better for you. There is no way that you can earn money here, and I am sure we would rather think of you as mining and hunting with uncle, than as sitting as a sort of boy-clerk in some dark little office in London or Portsmouth. It is no worse than going to sea anyhow, and after all you may, as uncle says, hit on a rich mine and come back with a fortune. Let us be going home. I can hardly bear to think of it now, but I will tell Janet, and will talk about it again this evening after the little ones have gone to bed."

Tom had the good sense to avoid any expression of satisfaction. He gave Carry's hand a silent squeeze, and as they walked across the common talked over their plans for setting to work to get pupils, and said no word that would give her a hint of the excitement he felt at the thought of the life of adventure in a wild country that lay before him. He had in his blood a large share of the restless spirit of enterprise that has been the main factor in making the Anglo-Saxons the dominant race of the world. His father and his grandfather had both been officers in the royal navy, and a great-uncle had commanded a merchantman that traded in the Eastern seas, and had never come back from one of its voyages; there had been little doubt that all on board had been massacred and the ship burned by Malay pirates. His uncle Harry had gone away when little more than a boy to seek a fortune in America, and had, a few years after his landing there, crossed the plains

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

with one of the first parties that started out at news of the discovery of gold in California.

Tom himself had longed above all things to be a sailor. His father had not sufficient interest to get him into the royal navy, but had intended to obtain for him a berth as apprentice in the merchant service; but his sudden death had cut that project short, and his mother, who had always been opposed to it, would not hear of his going to sea. But the life that now seemed open to him was in the boy's eyes even preferable to that he had longed for. The excitement of voyages to India or China and back was as nothing to that of a gold-seeker and hunter in the West, where there were bears and Indians and all sorts of adventures to be encountered. He soon calmed down, however, on reaching home. The empty chair, the black dresses and pale faces of the girls, brought back in its full force the sense of loss.

In a short time he went up to his room, and sat there thinking it all over again, and asking himself whether it was fair of him to leave his sisters, and whether he was not acting selfishly in thus choosing his own life. He had gone over this ground again and again in the last few days, and he now came to the same conclusion, namely, that he could do no better for the girls by stopping at home, and that he had not decided upon accepting his uncle's invitation because the life was just what he would have chosen, but because he could see nothing that offered equal chances of his being able permanently to aid them at home.

When he came downstairs again Carry said:

"The others have gone out, Tom; you had better go round and see some of your school-fellows. You look fagged and worn out. You cannot help me here, and I shall go about my work more cheerfully if I know that you are out and about."

Tom nodded, put on his cap and went out; but he felt far too restless to follow her advice and call on some of his

Digitized by Google Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

friends, so he walked across the common and lay down on the beach and went all over it again, until at last he went off to sleep, and did not wake up until, glancing at his watch, he found that it was time to return to tea. He felt fresher and better for his rest, for indeed he had slept but little for the past fortnight, and Carry nodded approvingly as she saw that his eyes were brighter, and the lines of fatigue and sleeplessness less strongly marked on his face.

Two hours later, when the younger girls had gone to bed, Carry said: "Now we will have a family council. I have told Janet about our talk, Tom, and she is altogether on your side, and only regrets that she is not a boy and able to go out with you. We need not go over the ground again; we are quite agreed with you that there seems no prospect here of your obtaining work such as we should like to see you at, or that would lead to anything. There are only two things open to you, the one is to go to sea, the other to go out to Uncle Harry. You are old to go as an apprentice, but not too old, and that plan could be carried out; still, we both think that the other is better. You would be almost as much separated from us if you went to sea as you would be if you went out to America. But before you quite decide I will read uncle's letter, which I have found this afternoon among some other papers."

She took out the letter and opened it.

"'My dear Jack,—I am afraid it is a very long time since I wrote last; I don't like to think how long. I have been intending to do so a score of times, but you know I always hated writing, and I have been waiting to tell you that I had hit upon something good at last. Even now I can only tell you that I have been knocking about and getting older, but so far I cannot say I have been getting richer. As I told you when I wrote last I have several times made good hauls and struck it rich, but somehow the money has always slipped through my fingers. Some-

Digitized by Google Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

923

"CARRIE READS UNCLE HARRY'S LETTER."

Digitized by Google

Original from
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

Digitized by Google

Original from
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

times I have put it into things that looked well enough but turned out worthless; sometimes I have chucked it away in the fool's manner men do here. I have just come back from a prospecting tour in the country of the Utes, where I found two or three things that seemed good; one of them first-rate, the best thing, I think, I have seen since I came out here.

"'Unfortunately I cannot do anything with them at present, for the Utes are getting troublesome, and it would be as much as one's life is worth to go back there with a small party; so that matter must rest for a bit, and I must look out in another quarter until the Utes settle down again. I am going to join a hunting party that starts for the mountains next week. I have done pretty nearly as much hunting as mining since I came out, and though there is no big pile to be made at it, it is a pretty certain living. How are you all getting on? I hope some day to drop in on your quiet quarters at Southsea with some big bags of gold-dust, and to end my days in a nook by your fireside; which I know you will give me, old fellow, with or without the gold bags.

"'I suppose your boy is thirteen or fourteen years old by this time. That is too young for him to come out here, but if in two or three years you don't see any opening for him at home, send him out to me, and I will make a man of him; and even if he does not make a fortune in gold-seeking, there are plenty of things a young fellow can turn his hand to in this country with a good certainty of making his way, if he is but steady. You may think that my example is not likely to be of much benefit to him, but I should do for an object lesson, and seriously, would do my very best to set him in a straight path. Anyhow, three or four years' knocking about with me would enable him to cut his eye-teeth, and hold his own in the world. At the end of that time he could look round and see what line he would take up, and I need not say that I would help him to the utmost of my power, and though I have not done any good for myself I might do good for him.

"'In the first place, I know pretty well every one in Colorado, Montana, and Idaho; in the next place, in my wanderings I have come across a score of bits of land in out-of-the-way places where a young fellow could set up a ranche and breed cattle and horses and make a good thing of it; or if he has a turn for

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

mechanics, I could show him places where he could set up saw-mills for lumber, with water-power all the year round, and with markets not far away. Of course, he is too young yet, but unless he is going to walk in your steps and turn sailor he might do worse than come out to me in three or four years' time. Rough as the life is, it is a man's life, and a week of it is worth more than a year's quill-driving in an office. It is a pity your family have run to girls, for if one boy had made up his mind for the sea you might have spared me another.'

"That is all. You know mother sent an answer saying that dear father had gone, and that she should never be able to let you go so far away and take up such a rough and dangerous life. However, Tom, as you wrote to uncle, her refusal would not matter, and by his sending you instructions how to find him, it is evident that he will not be surprised at your turning up. In the first place, are you sure that you would prefer this to the sea?"

"Quite sure, Carry; I should like it much better. But the principal thing is that I may soon be able to help you from there, while it would be years before I should get pay enough at sea to enable me to do so."

"Then that is settled, Tom. And now, I suppose," and her voice quivered a little, "you will want to be off as soon as you can?"

"I think so," Tom replied. "If I am to go, it seems to me the sooner I go the better; there is nothing that I can do here, and we shall all be restless and unsettled until I am off."

Carry nodded. "I think you are right, Tom; we shall never be able to settle to our work here when we are thinking of your going away. The first thing to do will be to draw some money from the bank. There will be your outfit to get and your passage to pay to America, and a supply of money to take you out west, and keep you until you join uncle."

"That is what I hate," Tom said gloomily. "It seems

Digitized by Google Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

beastly that when I want to help you I must begin by taking some of your money."

"That can't be helped," Carry said cheerfully. "One must not grudge a sprat to catch a whale, and besides it would cost ever so much more if we had to apprentice you to the sea, and get your outfit. You will not want many clothes now. You have enough for the voyage and journey, and I should think it would be much better for you to get what you want out there, when you will have uncle to advise what is necessary. I should really think some flannel shirts and a rough suit for the voyage will be the principal things."

"I should think so, certainly," Tom agreed. "The less baggage one travels with the better, for when I leave the railway I shall only want what I can carry with me or pack on horses. Anything else would only be a nuisance. As to a rough suit for the voyage, the clothes I had before I put these on" (and he glanced at his black suit) "will do capitally. Of course I shall go steerage. I can get out for four or five pounds that way, and I shall be quite as well off as I should be as an apprentice. I know I must have some money, but I won't take more than is absolutely necessary. I am all right as far as I can see for everything, except three or four flannel shirts. I don't see that another thing will be required except a small trunk to hold them and the clothes I have on, which I don't suppose I shall ever wear again, and a few other things. You know I would only allow you to have this one black suit made. I was thinking of this, and it would have been throwing away money to have got more. Of course, I don't know what I shall want out there. I know it is a long way to travel by rail, and I may have to keep myself for a month before I find uncle. I should think five-and-twenty pounds when I land would be enough for everything."

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

"I shall draw fifty pounds," Carry said positively. "As you say, your outfit will really cost nothing; ten pounds will pay for your journey to Liverpool and your passage; that will leave you forty pounds in your pocket when you land. That is the very least you could do with, for you may find you will have to buy a horse, and though I believe they are very cheap out there, I suppose you could not get one under ten pounds; and then there would be the saddle and bridle and food for the journey, and all sorts of things. I don't think forty pounds will be enough."

"I won't have a penny more, anyhow," Tom said. "If I find a horse too expensive I can tramp on foot."

"And you must be sure not to get robbed," Janet said, breaking in for the first time. "Just fancy your finding yourself without money in such a place as that. I will make you a belt to wear under your things, with pockets for the money."

"I hope I should not be such a fool as that, Janet, but anyhow I will be as careful as I can. I shall be very glad of the belt. One does not know what the fellows might be up to, and I would certainly rather not have my money loose in my pocket; but even if I were robbed I don't think it would be as desperate as you think. I expect a boy could always find something to do to earn his living, and I should try and work my way along somehow, but as that would not be pleasant at all I shall take good care of my money, you may be sure."

For an hour they sat talking, and before the council broke up it was agreed that they should look in the news-paper in the morning for a list of vessels sailing for America, and should at once write and take a passage.

There was no time lost. Carry felt that it would be best for them all that the parting should be got over as soon as possible. Letters were written the next morning to two

Digitized by Google Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

steamship companies and to the owners of two sailing vessels asking the prices of steerage passages, agreeing that if there was not much difference it would be better to save perhaps a fortnight by taking the passage in a steamship.

The replies showed that the difference was indeed trifling, and a week after their receipt Tom Wade started from Portsmouth to Liverpool. Even at the last moment he was half-inclined to change his plans, it seemed so hard to leave his sisters alone; but Carry and Janet had both convinced themselves that his scheme was the best, and would not hear of his wavering now. They kept up a show of good spirits until the last, talked confidently of the success of their own plans, and how they should set about carrying them out as soon as they were free to act. The younger girls, although implored by the elders not to give way to their grief at the departure of their brother, were in a state of constant tearfulness, and were in consequence frequently got rid of by being sent on errands. Tom, too, took them out for hours every day, and by telling them stories of the wild animals he should hunt, and the Indians he should see, and of the stores of gold he should find hidden, generally brought them home in a more cheerful state of mind.

At last the parting was over, and after making heroic efforts to be cheerful to the end, Tom waved a last adieu with his handkerchief to the five weeping figures on the platform, and then threw himself back in his seat and gave free vent to his own feelings. Two girls sitting beside him sniggered at the sight of the strong-built young fellow giving way to tears, but a motherly-looking woman opposite presently put her hand on his knee.

"Don't be ashamed of crying, my lad," she said. "I have got a son years older than you, and we always have a good cry together every time he starts on a long voyage. Are you going far? I suppose those are your sisters? I

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

see you are all in black. Lost someone dear to you, no doubt? It comes to us all, my boy, sooner or later."

"I am going to America," Tom replied, "and may not be back for years. Yes, those are my sisters, and what upsets me most is that I have to leave them all alone, for we have lost both our parents."

"Dear, dear, that is sad indeed! No wonder you are all upset. Well, well, America is not so very far away—only a ten days' voyage by steamer, they tell me, and my boy is away in a sailing ship. He is in China, I reckon, now; he sailed five months ago, and did not expect to be home under a year. I worry about him sometimes, but I know it is of no use doing that. The last thing he said when I bade good-bye to him was, 'Keep up your spirits, mother'; and I try to do so."

The old lady went on talking about her son, and Tom, listening to her kindly attempts to draw him out of his own troubles, grew interested, and by the time they reached Winchester, where she left the train, he had shaken off his first depression. It was a long journey with several changes, and he did not arrive in Liverpool until six o'clock in the evening, having been nearly twelve hours on the road. Carry's last injunction had been, "Take a cab when you get to Liverpool, Tom, and drive straight down to the docks. Liverpool is a large place, and you might get directed wrong. I shall be more comfortable if I know that, at any rate, you will go straight on board."

Tom had thought it an unnecessary expense, but as he saw that Carry would be more comfortable about him if he followed her advice, he promised to do so, and was not sorry for it as he drove through the streets; for, in spite of cutting down everything that seemed unnecessary for the voyage and subsequent journey, the portmanteau was too heavy to carry far with comfort, and although prepared to rough it

Digitized by Google Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

to any extent when he had once left England, he felt that he should not like to make his way along the crowded streets with his trunk on his shoulder.

The cabman had no difficulty in finding the *Parthia*, which was still in the basin. Tom was, however, only just in time to get on board, for the men were already throwing off the warps, and ten minutes later she passed out through the dock-gates, and soon anchored in the middle of the river. Tom had been on board too many ships at Portsmouth to feel any of that bewilderment common to emigrants starting on their first voyage. He saw that at present everyone was too busy to attend to him, and so he put his portmanteau down by the bulwark forward, and leaning on the rail watched the process of warping the ship out of the docks. There were a good many steerage passengers forward, but at present the after-part of the ship was entirely deserted, as the cabin passengers would not come on board until either late at night or early next morning.

When the anchor had been let drop he took up his trunk and asked a sailor where he ought to go to.

"Show me your ticket. Ah! single man's quarters, right forward."

There he met a steward, who, after looking his ticket, said: "You will see the bunks down there, and can take any one that is unoccupied. I should advise you to put your trunk into it, and keep the lid shut. People come and go in the morning, and you might find that your things had gone too. It would be just as well for you to keep it locked through the voyage. I see that you have got a cord round it. Keep it corded; the more things there are to unfasten to get at the contents the less chance there is of anyone attempting it."

The place was crowded with berths, mere shallow trays, each containing a straw mattress and pillow and two coloured blankets. They were in three tiers, one above the other,

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

and were arranged in lines three deep, with a narrow passage between. He saw by the number into which bags and packets had been thrown that the upper berths were the favourites, but he concluded that the lower tiers were preferable. "It will be frightfully hot and stuffy here," he said to himself, "and I should say the lower berths will be cooler than the upper." He therefore placed his trunk in one of those next to the central passage and near the door, and then went up on deck.

The *Parthia* was a Cunarder, and although not equal in size to the great ships of the present day, was a very fine vessel. The fare had been somewhat higher than that for which he could have had a passage in a sailing ship, but in addition to his saving time, there was the advantage that on board the steamers, passengers were not obliged to provide their own bedding, as they had to do in sailing vessels, and also the food was cooked for them in the ship's galleys.

The first meal was served soon after the anchor dropped, and consisted of a bowl of cocoa and a large piece of bread. Half an hour later a tender came alongside with the last batch of steerage passengers, and Tom was interested in watching the various groups as they came on board—men, women, and children.

"Well," he said to himself, "I do think I am better fitted to make my way out there than most of these people are, for they look as helpless and confused as a flock of sheep. I pity those women with children. It will be pretty crowded in our quarters, but there is a chance of getting a fair night's sleep, while in a place crowded with babies and children it would be awful."

Being a kind-hearted lad he at once set to work to help as far as he could, volunteering to carry children down below, and to help with boxes and bundles. In many cases his assistance was thankfully accepted, but in some it was

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

sharply refused, the people's manner clearly showing their suspicions of his motive. He was not surprised at this after all the warnings Carry had given him against putting any confidence in strangers, but was satisfied, after an hour's hard work, that he had rendered things somewhat easier for many a worried and anxious woman. It was getting dusk even on deck by the time he had finished.

"Thank you, lad," a man, who went up the companion-ladder with him, said as they stepped on to the deck. "You have done my missis a good turn by taking care of those three young ones while we straightened up a bit, and I saw you helping others too. You are the right sort, I can see. There ain't many young chaps as puts themselves out of the way to do a bit of kindness like that. My name is Bill Brown; what is yours?"

"Tom Wade. I had nothing to do, and was glad to be of a little help. People who have never been on board ship before naturally feel confused in such a crowd."

"Have you been to sea?"

"Not on a voyage, but I have lived at Portsmouth and have often been on board troopships and men-of-war, so it does not seem so strange to me."

"Are you by yourself, or have you friends with you?"

"I am alone," Tom replied. "I am going out to join an uncle in the States."

"I have been across before," the man said. "I am a carpenter, and have worked out there six months, and came home six weeks back to fetch the others over. I have got a place, where I was working before, to go to as soon as I land. It makes a lot of difference to a man."

"It does indeed," Tom agreed. "I know if I were going out without any fixed object beyond taking the first work that came to hand, I should not feel so easy and comfortable about it as I do now."

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

"I have got two or three of my mates on board who are going out on my report of the place, and three families from my wife's village. She and the youngsters have been staying with her old folk while I was away. So we are a biggish party, and if you want anything done on the voyage you have only got to say the word to me."

CHAPTER II.

FINDING FRIENDS.

THE weather was fine, and Tom Wade found the voyage more pleasant than he had expected. The port-holes were kept open all the way, and the crowded quarters were less uncomfortable than would have been the case had they encountered rough weather. There were some very rough spirits among the party forward, but the great majority were quiet men, and after the first night all talking and larking were sternly repressed after the lights were out. The food was abundant, and although some grumbled at the meat there was no real cause of complaint. A rope across the deck divided the steerage passengers from those aft, and as there were not much more than one-half the emigrants aboard that the *Parthia* could carry, there was plenty of room on deck.

But few of the passengers suffered from sea-sickness, and the women sat and chatted and sewed in little groups while the children played about, and the men walked up and down or gathered forward and smoked, while a few who had provided themselves with newspapers or books sat in quiet corners and read. Tom was one of these, for he had picked up a few books on the United States at second-hand book-

Digitized by Google Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

stalls at Portsmouth, and this prevented him from finding the voyage monotonous. When indisposed to read he chatted with Brown the carpenter and his mates, and sometimes getting a party of children round him and telling them stories gathered from the books now standing on the shelves in his room at Southsea. He was glad, however, when the voyage was over; not because he was tired of it, but because he was longing to be on his way west. Before leaving the ship he took a very hearty farewell of his companions on the voyage, and on landing was detained but a few minutes at the custom-house, and then entering an omnibus that was in waiting at the gate, was driven straight to the station of one of the western lines of railway.

From the information he had got up before sailing he had learnt that there were several of these, but that there was very little difference either in their speed or rates of fare, and that their through-rates to Denver were practically the same. He had therefore fixed on the Chicago and Little Rock line, not because its advantages were greater, but in order to be able to go straight from the steamer to the station without having to make up his mind between the competing lines. He found on arrival that the emigrant trains ran to Omaha, where all the lines met, and that beyond that he must proceed by the regular trains. An emigrant train was to leave that evening at six o'clock.

"The train will be made up about four," a good-natured official said to him, "and you had best be here by that time so as to get a corner seat, for I can tell you that makes all the difference on a journey like this. If you like to take your ticket at once you can register that trunk of yours straight on to Denver, and then you wont have any more trouble about it."

"Of course we stop to take our meals on the way?"

"Yes; but if you take my advice you will do as most of

Digitized by Google Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

them do, get a big basket and lay in a stock of bread and cooked meat, cheese, and anything you fancy, then you will only have to go out and get a cup of tea at the stopping-places. It comes a good bit cheaper, and you get done before those who take their meals, and can slip back into the cars again quick and keep your corner seat. There ain't much ceremony in emigrant trains, and it is first come first served."

"How long shall we be in getting to Denver?"

"It will be fully a week, but there ain't any saying to a day. The emigrant trains just jog along as they can between the freight trains and the fast ones, and get shunted off a bit to let the expresses pass them."

Thanking the official for his advice, Tom took his ticket, registered his trunk, and then went out and strolled about the streets of New York until three o'clock. He took the advice as to provisions, and getting a small hamper laid in a stock of food sufficient for three or four days. The platform from which the train was to start was already occupied by a considerable number of emigrants, but when the train came up he was able to secure a corner seat. The cars were all packed with their full complement of passengers. They were open from end to end, with a passage down the middle. Other cars were added as the train filled up, but not until all the places were already occupied. The majority of the passengers were men, but there were a considerable number of women, and still more children; and Tom congratulated himself on learning from the conversation of those around him that a good many were not going beyond Chicago, and that almost all would leave the train at stations between that place and Omaha.

The journey to Chicago was the most unpleasant experience Tom had ever gone through. The heat, the dust, and the close confinement seemed to tell on the tempers of every

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

one. The children fidgetted perpetually, the little ones and the babies cried, the women scolded, and the men grumbled and occasionally quarrelled. It was even worse at night than during the day; the children indeed were quieter, for they lay on the floor of the passage and slept in comparative comfort, but for the men and women there was no change of position, no possibility of rest. The backs of the seats were low, and except for the fortunate ones by the windows there was no rest for the head; but all took uneasy naps with their chins leaning forward on their chest, or sometimes with their heads resting on their neighbour's shoulder. Tom did not retain his corner seat, but resigned it a few hours after starting to a weary woman with a baby in her arms who sat next to him. He himself, strong as he was, felt utterly worn out by the fatigue and sleeplessness.

Beyond Chicago there was somewhat more room, and it was possible to make a change of position. Beyond Omaha it was much better; the train was considerably faster and the number of passengers comparatively few. He now generally got a seat to himself and could put his feet up. The people were also, for the most part, acquainted with the country, and he was able to learn a good deal from their conversation. There were but few women or children among them, for except near the stations of the railway, settlements were very rare; and the men were for the most part either miners, ranchemen, or mechanics, going to the rising town of Denver, or bound on the long journey across the plains to Utah or California. It was on the eighth day after starting that Denver was reached.

Before leaving the ship Tom had put on his working clothes and a flannel shirt, and had disposed of his black suit, for a small sum, to a fellow-passenger who intended to remain at New York. This had somewhat lightened his portmanteau, but he was glad when he found that there

Digitized by Google Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

were vehicles at the station to convey passengers up the hill to Denver, which was some three miles away, and many hundred feet above it. He was too tired to set about finding the Empire Saloon, but put up at the hotel at which the omnibus stopped, took a bath and a hearty meal, and then went straight to bed.

After breakfast the next morning he at once set out. He had no difficulty in finding the whereabouts of the Empire Saloon, which he learned from the clerk of the hotel was a small place frequented almost entirely by miners. Its appearance was not prepossessing. It had been built in the earliest days of Denver, and was a rough erection. The saloon was low, its bare rafters were darkly coloured by smoke, a number of small tables stood on the sanded floor, and across the farther end of the room ran a bar. On shelves behind this stood a number of black bottles, and a man in his shirt sleeves was engaged in washing up glasses. Two or three rough-looking men in coloured flannel shirts, with the bottoms of their trousers tucked into high boots, were seated at the tables smoking and drinking.

"I am expecting a letter for me here," Tom said to the man behind the bar. "My name is Wade."

"The boss is out now," the man said. "He will be here in an hour or so. If there is anything for you he will know about it."

"Thank you. I will come again in an hour," Tom replied. The man nodded shortly, and went on with his work. When Tom returned, the bar-tender said to a man who was sitting at one of the tables talking to the miners, "This is the chap I told you of as was here about the letter."

"Sit right down," the man said to Tom, "I will talk with you presently;" and he continued his conversation in a low tone with the miners. It was nearly half an hour before

Digitized by Google Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

he concluded it. Then he rose, walked across the room to Tom, and held out his hand.

"Shake, young fellow," he said; "that is, if you are the chap Straight Harry told me might turn up here some day."

"I expect I am the fellow," Tom said with a smile. "My uncle's name is Harry Wade."

"Yes, that is his name; although he is always called Straight Harry. Yes, I have got a letter for you. Come along with me." He led the way into a small room behind the saloon, that served at once as his bed-room and office, and motioned to Tom to sit down on the only chair; then going to a cupboard he took out a tin canister, and opening it shook out half a dozen letters on to the table.

"That is yourn," he said, picking one out.

It was directed to Tom, and contained but a few lines: "*If you come I have gone west. Pete Hoskings will tell you all he knows about me and put you on the line. Your affectionate uncle.*"

"Are you Mr. Hoskings?" he asked the landlord.

"I am Pete Hoskings," the man said. "There ain't been no Mister to my name as ever I can remember."

"My uncle tells me that you will be able to direct me to him, and will put me on the line."

"It would take a darn sight cuter fellow than I am to direct you to him at present," the man said with a laugh. "Straight Harry went away from here three months ago, and he might be just anywhere now. He may be grubbing away in a mine, he may be hunting and trapping, or he may have been wiped out by the Indians. I know where he intended to go, at least in a general sort of way. He did tell me he meant to stay about there, and it may be he has done so. He said if he moved away and got a chance he would send me word; but as there ain't nairy a post-office

Digitized by Google Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

within about five hundred miles of where he is, his only chance of sending a letter would be by a hunter who chanced to be going down to the settlements, and who, like enough, would put it into his hunting-shirt and never give it another thought. So whether he has stayed there or not is more nor I can say."

"And where is *there*?" Tom asked.

"It is among the hills to the west of the Colorado river, which ain't much, seeing as the Colorado is about two thousand miles long. However, I can put you closer than that, for he showed me on a map the bit of country he intended to work. He said he would be back here in six months from the time he started; and that if you turned up here I was either to tell you the best way of getting there, or to keep you here until he came back. Well, I may say at once that there ain't no best way; there is only one way, and that is to get on a pony and ride there, and a mighty bad way it is. The only thing for you to do is to keep on west along the caravan tract. You have to cross the Green River, that is the name of the Colorado on its upper course. Fort Bridger is the place for you to start from, but you have got to wait there until you sight some one or other bound south; for as to going by yourself, it would be a sight better to save yourself all trouble by putting that Colt hanging there to your head, and pulling the trigger. It is a bad country and it is full of bad Indians, and there ain't many, even of the oldest hands, who care to risk their lives by going where Straight Harry has gone.

"I did all I could to keep him from it; but he is just as obstinate as a mule when he has made up his mind to a thing. I know him well, for we worked as mates for over a year down on the Yuba in California. We made a good pile, and as I had got a wife and wanted to settle I came back east. This place had a couple of dozen houses then;

Digitized by Google Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

but I saw it was likely to boom, so I settled down and set up this saloon and sent for my wife to come west to me. If she had lived I should have been in a sight bigger place by this time; but she died six months after she got here, and then I did not care a continental one way or the other; and I like better to stop here, where I meet my old mates and can do as I like, than to run a big hotel. It ain't much to look at, but it suits me, and I am content to know that I could buy up the biggest place here if I had a fancy to. I don't take much money now, but I did when the place was young; and I bought a few lots of land, and you may bet they have turned out worth having. Well, don't you act rashly in this business. Another three months your uncle will turn up, if he is alive; and if he don't turn up at all I dare say I can put you into a soft thing. If you go on it is about ten to one you get scalped before you find him. Where are you staying?"

"At the Grand. The omnibus stopped there last night."

"Well, you stay there for a week and think it over. You have got to learn about the country west of the Colorado. You had best come here to do that. You might stay a month at the Grand and not find a soul who could tell you anything worth knowing, but there ain't a day when you couldn't meet men here who have either been there themselves or have heard tell of it from men who have."

"Are the natives friendly now?" Tom asked. "In a letter he wrote two years ago to us, my uncle said that he should put off going to a part of the country he wanted to prospect until the Indians were quiet."

"The darned critters are never either friendly or quiet. A red-skin is pizen, take him when you will. The only difference is, that sometimes they go on the war-path and sometimes they don't; but you may bet that they are always ready to take a white man's scalp if they get a chance."

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

"Well, I am very much obliged to you for your advice, which I will certainly take; that is, I will not decide for a few days, and will come in here and talk to the miners and learn what I can about it."

"You can hear at once," the landlord said. He stepped back into the saloon, and said to the two men with whom he had been talking: "Boys, this young chap is a Britisher, and he has come out all the way to join Straight Harry, who is an uncle of his. Straight Harry is with Ben Gulston and Sam Hicks, and they are prospecting somewhere west of the Colorado. He wants to join them. Now, what do you reckon his chances would be of finding them out and dropping in on their camp-fire?"

The men looked at Tom with open eyes.

"Waal," one of them drawled, "I should reckon you would have just about the same chance of getting to the North Pole if you started off on foot, as you would of getting to Straight Harry with your hair on."

Tom laughed. "That is not cheering," he said.

"It ain't. I don't say as an old hand on the plains might not manage it. He would know the sort of place Harry and his mates would be likely to be prospecting, he would know the ways of the red-skins and how to travel among them without ever leaving a trail or making a smoke, but even for him it would be risky work, and not many fellows would care to take the chances even if they knew the country well. But for a tenderfoot to start out on such a job would be downright foolishness. There are about six points wanted in a man for such a journey. He has got to be as hard and tough as leather, to be able to go for days without food or drink, to know the country well, to sleep when he does sleep with his ears open, to be up to every red-skin trick, to be able to shoot straight enough to hit a man plumb centre at three hundred yards at least, and to hit a

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

dollar at twenty yards sartin with his six-shooter. If you feel as you have got all them qualifications you can start off as soon as you like, and the chances aren't more'n twenty to one agin your finding him."

"I haven't any one of them," Tom said.

"Waal, it is something if you know that, young chap. It is not every tenderfoot who would own up as much. You stick to it that you don't know anything, and at the same time do your best to learn something, and you will do in time. You look a clean-built young chap, and you could not have a better teacher than Straight Harry. What he don't know, whether it is about prospecting for gold or hunting for beasts, ain't worth knowing, you bet. What is your name, mate?"

"Tom Wade."

"Waal, let us drink. It ain't like you, Pete, to keep a stranger dry as long as you have been doing."

"He ain't up to our customs yet," the landlord said, as he moved off towards the bar.

"It is a custom everywhere," the miner said reprovingly, "for folks to stand drink to a stranger; and good Bourbon hurts no man."

The landlord placed a bottle and four glasses on the counter. Each of the miners filled his glass for himself, and the bottle was then handed to Tom, who followed their example, as did Hoskings.

"Here is luck to you," the miner said, as he lifted his glass. Three glasses were set down empty, but Tom had to stop half-way with his to cough violently.

"It is strong stuff," he said apologetically, "and I never drank spirits without water before. I had a glass of grog-and-water on board a ship sometimes, but it has always been at least two parts of water to one of spirits."

"We mostly drink our liquor straight out here," the

Digitized by Google Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

miner said. "But I am not saying it is the best way, especially for one who ain't used to it, but you have got to learn to do it if you are going to live long in this country."

"Standing drinks round is a custom here," Pete Hoskings explained, seeing that Tom looked a little puzzled, "and there ain't no worse insult than to refuse to drink with a man. There have been scores of men shot, ay, and hundreds, for doing so. I don't say that you may not put water in, but if you refuse to drink you had best do it with your hand on the butt of your gun, for you will want to get it out quick, I can tell you."

"There is one advantage in such a custom anyhow," Tom said, "it will keep anyone who does not want to drink from entering a saloon at all."

"That is so, lad," Pete Hoskings said heartily. "I keep a saloon, and have made money by it, but for all that I say to every young fellow who hopes to make his way some time, keep out of them altogether. In country places you must go to a saloon to get a square meal, but everyone drinks tea or coffee with their food, and there is no call to stay in the place a minute after you have finished. Calling for drinks round has been the ruin of many a good man; one calls first, then another calls, and no one likes to stand out of it, and though you may only have gone in for one glass, you may find you will have to drink a dozen before you get out."

"Why, you are a downright temperance preacher, Pete," one of the miners laughed.

"I don't preach to a seasoned old hoss like you, Jerry. I keep my preaching for those who may benefit by it, such as the youngster here; but I say to him and to those like him, you keep out of saloons. If you don't do that, you will find yourself no forwarder when you are fifty than you are now, while there are plenty of openings all over the

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

country for any bright young fellow who will keep away from liquor."

"Thank you," Tom said warmly; "I will follow your advice, which will be easy enough. Beyond a glass of beer with my dinner and a tot of grog, perhaps once in three months when I have gone on board a ship, and did not like to say no, I have never touched it, and have no wish to do so."

"Stick to that, lad; stick to that. You will find many temptations, but you set your face hard against them, and except when you come upon a hard man bent on kicking up a muss, you will find folks will think none the worse of you when you say to them straight, 'I am much obliged to you all the same, but I never touch liquor'."

Tom remained four days at the hotel, spending a good deal of his time at the saloon, where he met many miners, all of whom endorsed what the first he had spoken to had said respecting the country, and the impossibility of anyone but an old hand among the mountains making his way there.

On the fourth evening he said to Pete Hoskings: "I see that your advice was good, and that it would be madness for me to attempt to go by myself, but I don't see why I should not ride to Fort Bridger; not of course by myself, but with one of the caravans going west. It would be a great deal better for me to do that and to learn something of the plains and camping than to stay here for perhaps three months. At Fort Bridger I shall be able to learn more about the country, and might join some hunting party and gain experience that way. I might find other prospectors going up among the hills, and even if it were not near where my uncle is to be found, I should gain by learning something, and should not be quite a greenhorn when I join him."

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

"Well, that is sensible enough," Pete Hoskings said, "and I don't know as I can say anything against it. You certainly would not be doing any good for yourself here, and I don't say that either an hotel or a saloon is the best place for you. I will think it over, and will let you know when you come round in the morning; maybe I can put you a little in the way of carrying it out."

The next morning when Tom went to the saloon, Jerry Curtis, one of the miners he had first met there, was sitting chatting with Pete Hoskings.

"I had Jerry in my thoughts when I spoke to you last night, Tom," the latter said. "I knew he was just starting west again, and thought I would put the matter to him. He says he has no objection to your travelling with him as far as Fort Bridger, where maybe he will make a stay himself. There ain't no one as knows the plains much better than he does, and he can put you up to more in the course of a month than you would learn in a year just travelling with a caravan with farmers bound west."

"I should be very much obliged indeed," Tom said delightedly. "It would be awfully good of you, Jerry, and I won't be more trouble than I can help."

"I don't reckon you will be any trouble at all," the miner said. "I was never set much on travelling alone as some men are. I ain't much of a talker, but I ain't fond of going two or three months without opening my mouth except to put food and drink into it. So if you think you will like it I shall be glad enough to take you. I know Straight Harry well, and I can see you are teachable, and not set upon your own opinions as many young fellows I have met out here are, but ready to allow that there are some things as men who have been at them all their lives may know a little more about than they do. So you may take it that it is a bargain. Now, what have you got in the way of outfit?"

Digitized by Google Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

"I have not got anything beyond flannel shirts, and rough clothes like these."

"They are good enough as far as they go. Two flannel shirts, one on and one off, is enough for any man. Two or three pairs of thick stockings. Them as is very particular can carry an extra pair of breeches in case of getting caught in a storm, though for myself I think it is just as well to let your things dry on you. You want a pair of high boots, a buffalo robe, and a couple of blankets, one with a hole cut in the middle to put your head through; that does as a cloak, and is like what the Mexicans call a poncho. You don't want a coat or waistcoat; there ain't no good in them. All you want to carry you can put in your saddle-bag. Get a pair of the best blankets you can find. I will go with you and choose them for you. You want a thing that will keep you warm when you sleep, and shoot off the rain in bad weather. Common blankets are no better than a sponge.

"Then, of course, you must have a six-shooter and a rifle. No man in his senses would start across the plains without them. It is true there ain't much fear of red-skins between here and Bridger, but there is never any saying when the varmint may be about. Can you shoot?"

"No; I never fired off a rifle or a pistol in my life."

"Well, you had better take a good stock of powder and ball, and you can practice a bit as you go along. A man ain't any use out on these plains if he cannot shoot. I have got a pony; but you must buy one, and a saddle, and fixings. We will buy another between us to carry our swag. But you need not trouble about the things, I will get all that fixed."

"Thank you very much. How much do you suppose it will all come to?"

"Never you mind what it comes to," Pete Hoskings said roughly. "I told your uncle that if you turned up I would

Digitized by Google Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

see you through. What you have got to get I shall pay for, and when Straight Harry turns up we shall square it. If he don't turn up at all, there is no harm done. This is my business, and you have got nothing to do with it."

Tom saw that he should offend Hoskings if he made any demur, and the kind offer was really a relief to him. He had thirty pounds still in his belt, but he had made a mental calculation of the cost of the things Jerry had considered essential, and found that the cost of a horse and saddle, of half another horse, of the rifle, six-shooter, ammunition, blankets, boots, and provisions for the journey, must certainly amount up to more than that sum, and would leave him without any funds to live on till he met his uncle.

He was so anxious to proceed that he would have made no excuse, although he saw that he might find himself in a very difficult position. Pete's insistence, therefore, on taking all expenses upon himself, was a considerable relief to him; for although determined to go, he had had an uneasy consciousness that it was a foolish step. He therefore expressed his warm thanks.

"There, that is enough said about it," the latter growled out. "The money is nothing to me one way or the other, and it would be hard if I couldn't do this little thing for my old mate's nephew. When are you thinking of making a start, Jerry?"

"The sooner the better. I have been four months here already and have not struck a vein, that is, not one really worth working, and the sooner I make a fresh start the better. To-day is Wednesday. There will be plenty of time to get all the things to-day and to-morrow, and we will start at daylight on Friday. You may as well come with me, Tom, and learn something about the prices of things. There are some Indians camped three miles away. We will walk over there first and pick up a couple of ponies. I know they have got

Digitized by Google Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

a troop of them, that is what they come here to sell. They only arrived yesterday, so we shall have the pick of them."

Before starting there was a short conversation between Jerry and the landlord, and then the former put on his broad-brimmed hat.

"Have you seen any red-skins yet?"

"I saw a few at some of the stations the train stopped at between this and Omaha."

"Those fellows are mostly Indians who have been turned out of their tribes for theft or drunkenness, and they hang about the stations to sell moccasins and other things their squaws make, to fresh arrivals.

"The fellows you are going to see are Navahoes, though not good specimens of the tribe, or they would not be down here to sell ponies. Still, they are a very different sort from those you have seen."

An hour's walking took them to a valley, in which the Indians were encamped. There were eight wigwams. Some women paused in their work and looked round at the new-comers. Their dogs ran up barking furiously, but were driven back by a volley of stones thrown by three or four boys, with so good an aim that they went off with sharp yelps. Jerry strolled along without paying any attention to the dogs or boys towards a party of men seated round a fire. One of them rose as they approached.

"My white brothers are welcome," he said courteously. "There is room by the fire for them," and he motioned to them to sit down by his side. A pipe, composed of a long flat wooden stem studded with brass nails, with a bowl cut out of red pipe-stone, was now handed round, each taking a short puff.

"Does my brother speak the language of the Navahoes?" the chief asked in that tongue.

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

"I can get along with it," Jerry said, "as I can with most of your Indian dialects."

"It is good," the chief said. "My brother is wise; he must have wandered much."

"I have been a goodish bit among your hills, chief. Have you come from far?"

"The moon was full when we left our village."

"Ah, then you have been a fortnight on the road. Well, chief, I have come here to trade. I want to buy a couple of ponies."

The chief said a word or two to a boy standing near, and he with four or five others at once started up the valley, and in a few minutes returned with a drove of Indian ponies.

"They are not a bad lot," Jerry said to Tom.

"They don't look much, Jerry."

"Indian ponies never look much, but one of those ponies would gallop an eastern-bred horse to a stand-still."

Jerry got up and inspected some of the horses closely, and presently picked out two of them; at a word from the chief two of the lads jumped on their backs and rode off on them at full speed, and then wheeling round returned to the spot from where they started.

"My white brother is a judge of horses," the chief said; "he has picked out the best of the lot."

"There are three or four others quite as good," Jerry said carelessly. "Now, chief, how many blankets, how much powder and lead, and what else do you want for those two horses?"

The chief stated his demands, to which Jerry replied: "You said just now, chief, that I was a wise man; but it seems that you must regard me as a fool."

For half an hour an animated argument went on. Two or three times Jerry got up, and they started as if to quit the village, but each time the chief called them back. So animated

Digitized by Google Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

were their gestures and talk that Tom had serious fears that they were coming to blows, but their voices soon fell and the talk became amicable again. At last Jerry turned to Tom.

"The bargain is struck," he said; "but he has got the best of me, and has charged an outrageous sum for them." Then, in his own language, he said to the chief:

"At noon to-morrow you will send the ponies down to the town. I will meet them at the big rock, half a mile this side of it, with the trade goods."

"They shall be there," the chief said, "though I am almost giving them to you."

As they walked away, Tom said:

"So you have paid more than you expected, Jerry?"

"No, I have got them a bargain; only it would never have done to let the chief know I thought so, or the horses would not have turned up to-morrow. I expect they have all been stolen from some other tribe. The two I have got are first-rate animals, and the goods will come to about fourteen pounds. I shall ride one of them myself, and put our swag on my own pony. That has been a very good stroke of business; they would never have sold them at that price if they had been honestly come by."

CHAPTER III.

ON THE PLAINS.

THE purchase of a buffalo robe, blankets, boots, and a Colt's revolver occupied but a short time, but the rifle was a much more difficult matter.

"You can always rely upon a Colt," the miner said, "but rifles are different things; and as your life may often depend

Digitized by Google Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

upon your shooting-iron carrying straight, you have got to be mighty careful about it. A gun that has got the name of being a good weapon will fetch four times as much as a new one."

Denver was but a small place; there was no regular gunsmith's shop, but rifles and pistols were sold at almost every store in the town. In this quest Jerry was assisted by Pete Hoskings, who knew of several men who would be ready to dispose of their rifles. Some of these weapons were taken out into the country and tried at marks by the two men. They made what seemed to Tom wonderful shooting, but did not satisfy Hoskings.

"I should like the youngster to have a first-rate piece," he said, "and I mean to get him one if I can. There are two of these would do if we can't get a better, but if there is a first-rate one to be had in this township I will have it." Suddenly he exclaimed, "I must have gone off my head, and be going downright foolish! Why, I know the very weapon. You remember Billy the scout?"

"In course I do, everyone knew him. I heard he had gone down just before I got back here."

"That is so, Jerry. You know he had a bit of a place up in the hills, four or five miles from here, where he lived with that Indian wife of his when he was not away. I went out to see him a day or two afore he died. I asked him if there was anything I could do for him. He said no, his squaw would get on well enough there. She had been alone most of her time, and would wrestle on just as well when he had gone under. He had a big garden-patch which she cultivated, and brought the things down into the town here. They always fetch a good price. Why more people don't grow them I can't make out; it would pay better than gold-seeking, you bet. He had a few hundred dollars laid by, and he said they might come in handy to her if she fell

Digitized by Google Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

sick, or if things went hard in winter. Well, you remember his gun?"

"In course—his gun was nigh as well known as Billy himself. He used to call it Plumb-centre. You don't mean to say she hasn't sold it?"

"She hasn't; at least I should have been sure to hear if she had. I know several of the boys who went to the funeral wanted to buy it, and offered her long prices for it too; but she wouldn't trade. I will ride over there this evening and see what I can do about it. She will sell to me if she sells to anyone, for she knows I was a great chum of Billy's, and I have done her a few good turns. She broke her leg some years back when he was away, and luckily enough I chanced to ride over there the next day. Being alone and without anyone to help, she would have got on badly. I sent a surgeon up to her, and got a red-skin woman to go up to nurse her. I don't wonder she did not like to sell Billy's piece, seeing he was so famous with it, and I feel sure money would not do it; but perhaps I can talk her into it."

The next morning the articles agreed upon as the price of the horses were packed on Jerry's pony, and they went out to the meeting-place.

"It is twenty minutes early," Jerry said, as Tom consulted his watch, "and the red-skins won't be here till it is just twelve o'clock. A red-skin is never five minutes before or five minutes after the time he has named for a meeting. It may have been set six months before, and at a place a thousand miles away, but just at the hour, neither before nor after, he will be there. A white man will keep the appointment; but like enough he will be there the night before, will make his camp, sleep, and cook a meal or two, but he does not look for the red-skin till exactly the hour named, whether it is sunrise or sunset or noon. Red-skins

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

ain't got many virtues—least there ain't many of them has, though I have known some you could trust all round as ready as any white man,—but for keeping an appintment they licks creation."

A few minutes before twelve o'clock three Indians were seen coming down the valley on horseback. They were riding at a leisurely pace, and it was exactly the hour when they drew rein in front of Tom and his companion. Jerry had already unloaded his pony and had laid out the contents of the pack. First he proceeded to examine the two ponies, to make sure that they were the same he had chosen.

"That is all right," he said; "they would hardly have tried to cheat us over that—they would know that it would not pay with me. There, chief, is your exchange. You will see that the blankets are of good quality. There is the keg of powder, the bar of lead, ten plugs of tobacco, the cloth for the squaws, and all the other things agreed on."

The chief examined them carefully, and nodded his satisfaction.

"If all the pale-faces dealt as fairly with the red man as you have done there would not be so much trouble between them," he said.

"That is right enough, chief; it can't be gainsaid that a great many, ay, I might say the most part, of the traders are rogues. But they would cheat us just the same as they would you, and often do take us in. I have had worthless goods passed off on me many a time; and I don't blame you a bit if you put a bullet into the skull of a rogue who has cheated you, for I should be mightily inclined to do the same myself."

No more words were wasted; the lads who had ridden the ponies down made up the goods in great bundles and went up the valley with their chief, while Jerry and Tom took the plaited leather lariats which were round the ponies'

Digitized by Google Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

necks and returned to Denver. A saddle of Mexican pattern, with high peak and cantle, massive wooden framework, huge straps and heavy stirrups, was next bought. Jerry folded a horse-rug and tried it in different positions on the horse's back until the saddle fitted well upon it.

"That is the thing that you have got to be most particular about, Tom. If the saddle does not sit right the horse gets galled, and when a horse once gets galled he ain't of much use till he is well again, though the Indians ride them when they are in a terrible state; but then they have got so many horses that, unless they are specially good, they don't hold them of any account. You see the saddle is so high that there is good space between it and the backbone, and the pressure comes fair on the ribs, so the ponies don't get galled if the blankets are folded properly. The Indians do not use saddles, but ride either on a pad or just a folded blanket, and their ponies are always getting galled."

"The saddle is tremendously heavy."

"It is heavy, but a few pounds don't make much difference to the horse one way or the other, so that he is carrying it comfortably. The saddles would be no good if they were not made strong, for a horse may put his foot in a hole and come down head over heels, or may tumble down a precipice, and the saddle would be smashed up if it were not pretty near as strong as cast-iron. Out on the plains a man thinks as much of his saddle as he does of his horse, and more. If his horse dies he will put the saddle on his head and carry it for days rather than part with it, for he knows he won't be long before he gets a horse again. He can buy one for a few charges of powder and ball from the first friendly Indians he comes across, or he may get one given to him if he has nothing to exchange for it, or if he comes across a herd of wild horses he can crease one."

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

"What is creasing a horse?" Tom asked.

"Well, it is a thing that wants a steady hand, for you have got to hit him just on the right spot—an inch higher, you will miss him; half an inch lower, you will kill him. You have got to put a bullet through his neck two or three inches behiud the ears and just above the spine. Of course if you hit the spine you kill him, and he is no good except to give you a meal or two if you are hard-up for food; but if the ball goes through the muscles of the neck, just above the spine, the shock knocks him ever as surely as if you had hit him in the heart. It stuns him, and you have only got to run up and put your lariat round his neck, and be ready to mount him as soon as he rises, which he will do in two or three minutes, and he will be none the worse for the shock; in fact you will be able to break him in more easily than if you had caught him by the rope."

Jerry then adjusted his own saddle to the other Indian horse.

"Can you ride?" he asked.

"No, I have never had any chance of learning at home."

"Well, you had better have a lesson at once. This is a good way for a beginner;" and he took a blanket, and having rolled it up tightly, strapped it over the peak of the saddle and down the flaps.

"There," he said. "You get your knees against that, and what with the high peak and the high cantle you can hardly be chucked out anyhow, that is, if the horse does not buck; but I will try him as to that before you mount. We will lead them out beyond the town, we don't want to make a circus of ourselves in the streets; besides, if you get chucked, you will fall softer there than you would on the road. But first of all we will give them a feed of corn. You see they are skeary of us at present. Indian horses are always afraid of white men at first, just as white men's horses are

Digitized by Google Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

afraid of Indians. A feed of corn will go a long way towards making us good friends, for you may be sure they have never had a feed in their lives beyond what they could pick up for themselves."

The horses snuffed the corn with some apprehension when it was held out towards them, backing away from the sieves with their ears laid back; but seeing that no harm came to them they presently investigated the food more closely, and at last took a mouthful, after which they proceeded to eat greedily, their new masters patting their necks and talking to them while they did so. Then their saddle and bridles were put on, and they were led out of the stable and along the streets. At first they were very fidgety and wild at the unaccustomed sights and sounds, but their fear gradually subsided, and by the time they were well in the country they went along quietly enough.

"Now you hold my horse, Tom, and I will try yours."

Jerry mounted and galloped away; in ten minutes he returned.

"He will do," he said as he dismounted. "He is fresh yet and wants training. I don't suppose he has been ridden half a dozen times, but with patience and training he will turn out a first-rate beast. I could see they were both fast when those boys rode them. I don't wonder the chief asked what, for an Indian pony, was a mighty long price, though it was cheap enough for such good animals. He must have two or three uncommon good ones at home or he would never have parted with them, for when an Indian gets hold of an extra good pony no price will tempt him to sell it, for a man's life on the plains often depends on the speed and stay of his horse. Now, I will take a gallop on my own, and when I come back you can mount and we will ride on quietly together.

"There is not much difference between them," he said on

Digitized by Google Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

his return. "Yours is a bit faster. Pete told me to get you the best horse I could find, and I fixed upon yours, directly my eye fell upon him, as being the pick of the drove. But this is a good one too, and will suit me as well as yours, for he is rather heavier, and will carry me better than yours would do on a long journey. Now climb up into your saddle."

Jerry laughed at the difficulty Tom had in lifting his leg over tne high cantle. "You will have to practise presently putting your hands on the saddle and vaulting into it. Half a minute in mounting may make all the difference between getting away and being rubbed out. When you see the red-skins coming yelling down on you fifty yards away, and your horse is jumping about as scared as you are, it is not an easy matter to get on to its back if you have got to put your foot in the stirrup first. You have got to learn to chuck yourself straight into your seat whether you are standing still or both on the run. There, how do you feel now?"

"I feel regularly wedged into the saddle."

"That is right. I will take up the stirrups a hole, then you will get your knees firmer against the blanket. It is better to learn to ride without it, even if you do get chucked off a few times, but as we start to-morrow you have no time for that. In a few days, when you get at home in the saddle, we will take off the blanket, and you have got to learn to hold on by your knees and by the balance of your body. Now we will be moving on."

As soon as the reins were slackened the horses started together at an easy canter.

"That is their pace," Jerry said. "Except on a very long journey, when he has got squaws and baggage with him, a red-skin never goes at a walk, and the horses will keep on at this lope for hours. That is right. Don't sit so stiffly; you want your legs to be stiff and keeping a steady grip, but

Digitized by Google Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

from your hips you want to be as slack as possible, just giving to the horse's action, the same way you give on board ship when vessels are rolling. That is better. Ah! here comes Pete. I took this way because I knew it was the line he would come back by—and, by gosh, he has got the rifle, sure enough!"

Pete had seen them, and was waving the gun over his head.

"I've got it," he said as he reined up his horse when he met them. "It was a stiff job, for she did not like to part with it. I had to talk to her a long time. I put it to her that when she died the gun would have to go to some one, and I wanted it for a nephew of Straight Harry, whom she knew well enough; that it was for a young fellow who was safe to turn out a great hunter and Indian fighter like her husband, and that he would be sure to do credit to Plumb-centre, and make the gun as famous in his hands as it had been in her husband's. That fetched her. She said I had been kind to her, and though she could not have parted with the gun for money, she would do it, partly to please me, and partly because she knew that Straight Harry had been a friend of her husband's, and had fought by his side, and that the young brave I spoke of, would be likely to do credit to Plumb-centre. Her husband, she said, would be glad to know that it was in such good hands. So she handed it over to me. She would not hear of taking money for it; indeed, I did not press it, knowing that she would feel that it was almost a part of her husband; but I will make it up to her in other ways. There, Tom; there is as good a shooting-iron as there is in all the territories."

"Thank you very much indeed, Pete. I shall value it immensely, and I only hope that some day I shall be able to do credit to it, as the poor woman said."

There was nothing particular in the appearance of the

Digitized by Google Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

rifle. It was a plainly-finished piece, with a small bore and heavy metal.

"It don't look much," Jerry said, "but it is a daisy, you bet."

"We will try a shot with it, Jerry. She gave me the bag of bullets and a box of patches and his powder-horn with it. We will see what it will do in our hands, we are both pretty good shots."

He loaded the rifle carefully.

"You see that bit of black rock cropping out of the hill-side. I guess it is about two hundred and fifty yards away, and is about the size a red-skin's head would be if he were crawling through the grass towards us. Will you shoot first or shall I?"

"Fire away, Pete."

Hoskings took a steady aim and fired.

"You have hit it," Jerry exclaimed. "Just grazed it at the top."

They walked across to the rock; there was a chip just on the top.

"It was a good shot, Pete; especially considering how you are out of practice. If it had been a red-skin it would have stunned him sure, for I doubt whether it is not too high by a quarter of an inch or so, to have finished him altogether."

"It would have cut his top-knot off, Jerry, and that is all. I doubt whether it would have even touched his skin."

They returned to the spot where Pete had fired, and Jerry threw himself down on the grass and levelled his rifle.

"That is not fair, Jerry," Pete protested.

"It would not be fair if I was shooting against you, but we are only trying the rifle, and if that rock were a red-skin you may be sure that I should be lying down."

Digitized by Google Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

"JERRY GIVES TOM A LESSON IN SHOOTING."

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

Digitized by Google

Original from
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

He fired; and on going to the stone again they found that the bullet had struck it fair, within an inch of its central point.

"That is something like a rifle," Jerry said delighted. "Now, Tom, you shall have a shot."

As they walked to the shooting-point, Jerry showed the lad how to hold the rifle, instructed him as to the backsight, and showed him how to get the foresight exactly on the nick of the backsight. "You must just see the bead as if it were resting in the nick, and the object you aim at must just show above the top point of the bead." He showed him how to load, and then told him to lie down, as he had done, on his chest, and to steady the rifle with the left arm, the elbow being on the ground. "You must get quite comfortable," he said; "it is of no use trying to shoot if you are in a cramped position. Now, take a steady aim, and the moment you have got the two sights in a line on the rock, press the trigger steadily. Press pretty hard; it is only a pull of about two pounds, but it is wonderful how stiff a trigger feels the first time you pull at it. You need not be at all afraid of the kick. If you press the butt tightly against your shoulder you will hardly feel it, for there is plenty of weight in the barr'l, and it carries but a small charge of powder. You won't want to shoot at anything much beyond this range, but sometimes you may have to try at four or five hundred yards when you are in want of a dinner. In that case you can put in a charge and a half of powder. Now, are you comfortable? You need not grip so hard with your left hand, the gun only wants to rest between your thumb and fingers. That is better. Now take a steady aim, and the moment you have got it press the trigger. Well done! that is a good shot for a first. You hit the dust an inch or two to the right of the stone. If it had been a red-skin you would have hit him in the

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

shoulder. You will do, lad, and by the time we get to Fort Bridger I guess you will bring down a stag as clean as nine out of ten hunters."

"Don't get into the way of waiting too long before you fire, Tom," Pete Hoskings said. "Better to try to shoot too quick to begin with than to be too long about it. When you have made up your mind that you are going to shoot, get your bead on your mark and fire at once. You may want to hit a red-skin's head as he looks out from behind a tree, and to do that you must fire the instant you see him or he will be in again. One of the best shots I ever saw never used to raise his gun to his shoulder at all. He just dropped his piece into the hollow of his left hand, and would fire as he touched it. He did not seem to take any aim at all, but his bullet was sartin to hit the thing he wanted to, even if it were no bigger than an orange. He could not tell himself how he did it. 'I seen the thing and I fired, Pete,' he would say; 'the gun seems to point right of its own accord, I have not anything to say to it.' You see, shooting is a matter of eye. Some men may shoot all their lives, and they will never be more than just respectable, while others shoot well the first time that a gun is put in their hands. Want of nerve is what spoils half men's shooting; that and taking too long an aim. Well, it is time for us to be mounting and getting back. I have got to see that the dinner is all ready. I never can trust that black scoundrel, Sam, to do things right while I am away."

The preparations for the journey were completed by the evening.

"Now mind, Tom," Pete Hoskings said the last thing before going to bed, "if you don't find your uncle, or if you hear that he has got wiped out, be sure you come right back here. Whether you are cut out for a hunter or not, it will do you a world of good to stick to the life until you get

Digitized by Google Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

four or five years older and settle as to how you like to fix yourself, for there ain't no better training than a few years out on the plains, no matter what you do afterwards. I will find a good chum for you, and see you through it, both for the sake of my old mate, Straight Harry, and because I have taken a liking to you myself."

"Why do you call my uncle Straight Harry?" Tom asked after thanking Pete for his promise. "Is he so very upright?"

"No, lad, no; it ain't nothing to do with that. There are plenty more erect men than him about. He is about the size of Jerry, though, maybe a bit taller. No; he got to be called Straight Harry because he was a square man, a chap everyone could trust. If he said he would do a thing he would do it; there weren't no occasion for any papers to bind him. When he said a thing you could bet on it. You could buy a mine on his word: if he said it was good you need not bother to take a journey to look at it, you knew it was right there, and weren't a put-up job. Once when we were working down on the Yuba we got to a place where there were a fault in the rock, and the lode had slipped right away from us. Everyone in camp knew that we had been doing well, and we had only got to pile up a few pieces of rock at the bottom, and no one who would have seen it would have known that the lode was gone. That is what most chaps would have done, and a third chap who was working with us was all for doing it. Anyone would have given us five hundred ounces for it. Well, I didn't say nothing, it was what pretty nigh any-one on the mines would have done if he had the chance, but Harry turned on our partner like a mountain lion. 'You are a mean skunk, New Jersey,' says he. 'Do you think that I would be one to rob a man only because he would be fool enough to take a place without looking at it? We've worked

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

to the edge of the claim both ways, and I don't reckon there is a dollar's worth of gold left in it, now that it has pettered out at the bottom, and if there was I would not work another day with a man who proposed to get up a swindle.' So as soon as he got up to the surface he told everyone that the lode had gone out and that the claim weren't worth a red cent. He and New Jersey had a big fight with fists that evening. The other was bigger than Harry, and stronger, but he were no hand with his pistol, and Harry is a dead shot; so he told New Jersey he would fight him English fashion, and Harry gave him the biggest licking I ever saw a man have. I felt pretty mean myself, you bet, for having thought of planting the thing off; but as I hadn't spoken, Harry knew nothing about it. If he had, I doubt if he would ever have given me his hand again. Yes, sir, he is a straight man all round, and there is no man better liked than Harry. Why, there are a score of men in this town who know him as I do, and, if he came to them and said, 'I have struck it rich, I will go halves with you if you will plank down twenty thousand dollars to open her up,' they would pay down the cash without another word; and, I tell you, there ain't ten men west of the Missouri of whom as much could be said."

The next morning at daybreak Jerry and Tom started. They rode due north, skirting the foot of the hills, till they reached the emigrant route, for the railway had not been carried farther than Wabash, from which point it ran south to Denver. It was a journey of some 500 miles to Fort Bridger, and they took a month to accomplish it, sometimes following the ordinary line of travel, sometimes branching off more to the north, where game was still abundant.

"That is Fort Bridger, Tom. It ain't much of a place to look at; but is, like all these forts, just a strong palisading, with a clump of wooden huts for the men in the middle.

Digitized by Google Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

Well, the first stage of your journey is over, and you know a little more now than when you left Denver; but though I have taught you a good bit, you will want another year's practice with that shooting-iron afore you're a downright good shot; but you have come on well, and the way you brought down that stag on a run yesterday was uncommon good. You have made the most of your opportunities, and have got a steady hand and a good eye. You are all right on your horse now, and can be trusted to keep your seat if you have a pack of red-skins at your heels. You have learnt to make a camp, and to sleep comfortable on the ground; you can frizzle a bit of deer-flesh over the fire, and can bake bread as well as a good many. Six months of it and you will be a good plain's-man. I wish we had had a shot at buffalo. They are getting scarcer than they were, and do not like crossing the trail. We ain't likely to see many of them west of the Colorado; the ground gets too hilly for them, and there are too many bad lands."

"What are bad lands, Jerry?"

"They are just lands where Nature, when she made them, had got plenty of rock left, but mighty little soil or grass seed. There are bad lands all over the country, but nowhere so bad as the tract on both sides of the Green and Colorado rivers. You may ride fifty miles any way over bare rock without seeing a blade of grass unless you get down into some of the valleys, and you may die of thirst with water under your feet."

"How do you mean, Jerry?"

"The rivers there don't act like the rivers in other parts. Instead of working round the foot of the hills they just go through them. You ride along on what seems to be a plain, and you come suddenly to a crack that ain't perhaps twenty or thirty feet across, and you look down, if you have

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

got head enough to do it, and there, two thousand feet or more below you, you see a river foaming among rocks. It ain't one river or it ain't another river as does it; every little stream from the hills cuts itself its cañon and makes its way along till it meets two or three others, then they go on together, cutting deeper and deeper until they run into one of the arms of the Green River or the Colorado or the Grand.

"The Green and the Colorado are all the same river, only the upper part is called the Green. For about a thousand miles it runs through great cañons. No one has ever gone down them, and I don't suppose anyone ever will; and people don't know what is the course of the river from the time it begins this game till it comes out a big river on the southern plains. You see, the lands are so bad there is no travelling across them, and the rapids are so terrible that there is no going down them. Even the Indians never go near the cañons if they can help it. I believe they think the whole thing is the work of an evil spirit."

"But you said some of the valleys had grass?"

"Yes; I have gone down one or two myself from the mountains of Utah, where the stream, instead of cutting a cañon for itself, has behaved for a bit in the ordinary way and made a valley. Wonderfully good places they were—plenty of grass, plenty of water, and no end of game. I have spent some months among them, and got a wonderful lot of skins, beavers principally of course, but half a dozen mountain lions and two grizzlies. I did not bring home their skins, you bet. They were too heavy, and I should not have troubled them if they had not troubled me. There was good fish, too, in the streams, and I never had a better time. The red-skins happened to be friendly, and I was with a hunter who had a red-skin wife and a dozen ponies. If it hadn't been for that I should soon have had to quit, for

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

it ain't no good hunting if you can't carry away the skins. As it was I made a good job of it, for I got nigh a thousand dollars for my skins at Utah.

"Well, here we are at the fort. I guess we may as well make our camp outside. If you go in you have got to picket your horse here and put your baggage there and come in at gun-fire, and all sorts of things that troubles a man who is accustomed to act as he likes."

The horses were soon picketed. "I will go in first and see who is here, Tom. There are usually a lot of loafing Indians about these forts, and though it is safe enough to leave our traps, out on the plain, it will not do here. We must stay with them, or at any rate keep them in sight; besides, these two horses would be a temptation to any red-skin who happened to want an animal."

"I will wait willingly, Jerry; I should know nobody inside the fort if I went in. I will see to making a fire and boiling the kettle, and I will have supper ready at seven o'clock."

"I shall be sure to be back by that time; like enough I sha'n't be a quarter of an hour away."

It was but half an hour, indeed, before Tom saw him returning, accompanied by a tall red-skin.

"This is a friend of mine, Tom. He was a chief of the Senecas, but his tribe are nearly wiped out, and he has been all his life a hunter, and there are few of us who have been much out on the plains who don't know him. Chief, this is Straight Harry's nephew I was telling you of, who has come out here to join his uncle. Sit down, we have got some deer-flesh. Tom here knocked one over on the run at two hundred and fifty yards by as good a shot as you want to see; while it is cooking we can smoke a pipe and have a chat."

The chief gravely seated himself by the fire.

Digitized by Google Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

"What have you been doing since I last saw you up near the Yellowstone?"

"Leaping Horse has been hunting," the Indian said quietly, with a wave of his hand, denoting that he had been over a wide expanse of country.

"I guessed so," Jerry put in.

"And fighting with 'Rappahoes and Navahoes."

"Then you've been north and south?"

The Indian nodded. "Much trouble with both; they wanted our scalps. But four of the 'Rappahoe lodges are without a master, and there are five Navahoe widows."

"Then you were not alone?"

"Garrison was with me among the 'Rappahoes; and the Shoshone hunter, Wind-that-blows, was with me when the Navahoes came on our trail."

"They had better have left you alone, chief. Do you know the Ute country?"

"The Leaping Horse has been there. The Utes are dogs."

"They are troublesome varmint, like most of the others," Jerry agreed. "I was telling you Straight Harry is up in their country somewhere. Tom here is anxious to join him, but of course that can't be. You have not heard anything of him, I suppose?"

"The Leaping Horse was with him a week ago."

"You were, chief! Why did you not tell me so when I was saying we did not know where he was?"

"My white brother did not ask," the chief said quietly.

"That is true enough, chief, but you might have told me without asking."

The Indian made no reply, but continued to smoke his hatchet pipe tranquilly, as if the remark betrayed such ignorance of Indian manners that it was not worth replying to.

Tom took up the conversation now.

Digitized by Google Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

"Was it far from here that you saw him?"

"Five days' journey, if travel quick."

"Was he hunting?" Jerry asked.

"Hunting, and looking for gold."

"Who had he with him?"

"Two white men. One was Ben Gulston. Leaping Horse had met him in Idaho. The other was called Sam, a big man with a red beard."

"Yes, Sam Hicks; he only came back from California a few months back, so you would not be likely to have met him before. Were they going to remain where you left them?"

The Indian shook his head. "They were going farther north."

"Farther north!" Jerry repeated. "Don't you mean farther south?"

"Leaping Horse is not mistaken, he knows his right hand from his left."

"Of course, of course, chief," the miner said apologetically; "I only thought that it was a slip of the tongue. Then if they were going farther north they must have come back in this direction."

"They were on the banks of the Big Wind River when Leaping Horse met them."

"Jerusalem!" the miner exclaimed. "What on airth are they doing there? Why, we thought they had gone down to the west of the Colorado. I told you so, chief, when I talked to you about it; and instead of that, here they are up in the country of the 'Rappahoes and Shoshones."

"They went south," the Indian said quietly, "and had trouble with the Utes and had to come back again, then they went north."

"Ah, that accounts for it. I wonder Harry didn't send word to Pete Hoskings that he had gone up to the Big Wind

Digitized by Google Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

River. I ain't heard of there being any gold in that region, though some think that coming down through the big hills from Yellowstone Valley on the north-west, metal might be struck."

"Going to look for gold a little," the chief said, "hunt much; not stay there very long, mean to go down south again after a bit. Leaping Horse go with them."

"Oh, I see. The Utes had come upon them, and they knew that if they stopped there they would lose their scalps sooner or later, so they came up here and made north for a bit to hunt and fossick about in the hills, and then go back when the Utes had quieted down."

The chief nodded.

"Well, well, that alters the affair altogether. Whereabouts did you leave them?"

"Near the Buffalo Lake."

"Don't know it. Where does it lie?"

"On a stream that runs into the river from the west, from a valley running up near Freemout's Buttes. They were going up so as to follow the Riviere de Noir, and then either strike up across the hills to the Upper Yellowstone, or go out west and come down over the Grosventre range on to the Wyoming range, and then down through Thompson's Pass, or else skirt the foot-hills on to the Green River."

"Waal, chief, I reckon that among all those hills and mountains, one would have just about the same chance of lighting on them as you would have of finding a chipmunk in a big pine-forest."

"Couldn't find," the chief said, "but might follow. If they go fast never catch them; if wait about, hunt beaver, look for gold and silver, then might come up to them easy enough, if 'Rappahoes not catch and kill. Very bad place. Leaping Horse told them so. White brother said he think

Digitized by Google Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

so too; but other men think they find gold somewhere, so they go on. They have got horses, of course. Three horses to ride, three horses to carry beaver-traps and food. Leaping Horse came back here to sell his skins. He had promised to meet a friend here, or he would not have left Straight Harry, who is a good man and a friend of Leaping Horse. Three men not enough in bad country."

"Do you think there would be any chance of my finding them?" Tom asked eagerly.

A slight gleam of amusement passed over the Indian's face.

"My brother is very young," he said. "He will be a brave warrior and a great hunter some day, but his eyes are not opened yet. Were he to try he would leave his scalp to dry in the 'Rappahoes' lodges."

"That is just what I told him, chief. It would be sheer madness."

The Indian made no reply, and Jerry turned the conversation.

"You don't drink spirits, chief, or I would go and get a bottle from the fort."

"Leaping Horse is not a madman," the Indian said scornfully, "that he should poison his brain with fire-water."

"Yes; I remembered, chief, that you had fallen into our ways and drink tea."

"Tea is good," the Indian said. "It is the best thing the white man has brought out on to the plains."

"That is so, chief, except tobacco. We did not bring that; but I reckon you got it from the Spaniards long ago, though maybe you knew of it before they came up from the south."

The meat was now cooked, and Tom took it off the fire and handed the pieces on the ramrod, that had served as a spit, to the others, together with some bread, poured out the tea from the kettle, and placed a bag of sugar before them.

Digitized by Google Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

There was little talk until after the meal was over. Then the Indian and Jerry smoked steadily, while Tom took a single pipe, having only commenced the use of tobacco since he had left Denver. Presently the Indian arose.

"In the morning I will see my white friends again," he said, and without further adieu turned and walked gravely back to the fort.

CHAPTER IV.

LEAPING HORSE.

"HE is a fine fellow," Jerry said, after the Indian had left him. "You must have a talk with him one of these days over his adventures among the 'Rappahoes and Navahoes, who are both as troublesome rascals as are to be found on the plains. An Indian seldom talks of his adventures, but sometimes when you can get him in the right humour you may hear about them."

"He talks very fair English," Tom said.

"Yes; he has been ten years among us. He was employed for two or three years supplying the railway men with meat; but no Indian cares to hunt long in one place, and he often goes away with parties of either hunters or gold-seekers. He knows the country well, and is a first-rate shot; and men are always glad to have him with them. There is no more trusty red-skin on the plains, and he will go through fire and water for those whom he regards as his special friends. I should say he is about the one man alive who could take you to your uncle."

"Do you think he would?" Tom asked eagerly.

"Ah, that is another matter; I don't know what his plans are. If he is engaged to go with another party he

Digitized by Google Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

will go, for he would not fail anyone to whom he had made a promise. If he isn't engaged he might perhaps do it. Not for pay, for he has little use for money. His hunting supplies him with all he wants. It gives him food, and occasionally he will go with a bundle of pelts to the nearest town, and the money he gets for them will supply him with tea and tobacco and ammunition, and such clothes as he requires, which is little enough. Buckskin is everlasting wear, and he gets his worked up for him by the women of any Indian tribe among whom he may be hunting. If he were one of these fort Indians it would be only a question of money; but it would never do to offer it to him. He does not forget that he is a chief, though he has been away so many years from what there is left of his old tribe. If he did it at all it would be for the sake of your uncle. I know they have hunted together, and fought the Apachés together. I won't say but that if we get at him the right way, and he don't happen to have no other plans in his mind, that he might not be willing to start with you."

"I should be glad if he would, Jerry. I have been quite dreading to get to Fort Bridger. I have had such a splendid time of it with you that I should feel awfully lonely after you had gone on."

"Yes, I dare say you would feel lonesome. I should have felt lonesome myself if I did not light upon some mate going the same way. We got on very well together, Tom. When Pete Hoskings first put it to me whether I would be willing to take you with me as far as this, I thought that though I liked you well enough, it would not be in my way to be playing a sort of schoolmaster business to a young tenderfoot; but I had got to like the notion before we left Denver, and now it seems to me that we have had a rare good time of it together."

"We have indeed, Jerry; at least I have had. Even if

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

the Indian would agree to take me I should miss you awfully."

Jerry made no reply, but sat smoking his pipe and looking into the fire. As he was sometimes inclined to be taciturn, Tom made no attempt to continue the conversation; and after moving out and shifting the picket-pegs so as to give the horses a fresh range of grass to munch during the night, he returned to the fire, wrapped himself in his blankets and lay down, his "Good-night, Jerry," meeting with no response, his companion being evidently absorbed in his own thoughts.

"You are not going on to-day, Jerry, are you?" Tom said, as he threw off his blankets and sat up in the morning. The sun was not yet up, but Jerry had already stirred up the embers, put some meat over them to cook, and put the kettle among them.

"No, I shall stop here for a day or two, lad. I am in no special hurry, and have no call to push on. I have not made up my mind about things yet."

They had scarcely finished breakfast when Leaping Horse came down from the fort.

"Tom here has been asking me, chief, whether there was any chance of getting you to guide him to his uncle. I said, of course, that I did not know what your plans were; but that if you had nothing special before you, possibly you might be willing to do so, as I know that you and Straight Harry have done some tall hunting and fighting together."

The Indian's face was impassive.

"Can my young brother ride day after day and night after night, can he go long without food and water, is he ready to run the risk of his scalp being taken by the 'Rappahoes? Can he crawl and hide, can he leave his horse and travel on foot, can he hear the war-cry of the red-skins without fear?"

"I don't say that I can do all these things, chief," Tom

Digitized by Google Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

said; "but I can do my best. And, anyhow, I think I can promise that if we should be attacked you shall see no signs of my being afraid, whatever I may feel. I am only a boy yet, but I hope I am not a coward."

"You have come a long way across the sea to find my brother, Straight Harry. You would not have come so far alone if your heart had been weak. Leaping Horse is going back to join his white brother again, and will take you to him."

Tom felt that any outburst of delight would be viewed with distaste by this grave Indian, and he replied simply: "I thank you with all my heart, chief, and I am sure that my uncle will be grateful to you."

The chief nodded his head gravely, and then, as if the matter were settled and no more need be said about it, he turned to Jerry:

"Which way is my white friend going?"

"I'm dog-goned if I know. I had reckoned to go down past Utah, and to go out prospecting among the hills, say a hundred miles farther west; then while I journeyed along with Tom I got mixed in my mind. I should like to have handed him over safe to Harry; but if Harry had gone down to the Ute hills with an idea of trying a spot I have heard him speak of, where he thought he had struck it rich, he might not have cared to have had me come there, and so I concluded last night it was best the lad should wait here till Harry got back. Now the thing is altered; they are just hunting and prospecting, and might be glad to have me with them, and I might as well be there as anywhere else; so as you are going back there, I reckon I shall be one of the party."

"That will be capital, Jerry," Tom said. "With you as well as the chief we shall be sure to get through; and it will be awfully jolly having you with us."

"Don't you make any mistake," the miner said, "I

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

should not be of much more use in finding them than you would. I ain't been up among the mountains all these years without learning something, but I ain't no more than a child by the side of the chief. And don't you think this affair is going to be a circus. I tell you it is going to be a hard job. There ain't a dozen white men as have been over that country, and we shall want to be pretty spry if we are to bring back our scalps. It is a powerful rough country. There are peaks there, lots of them, ten thousand feet high, and some of them two or three thousand above that. There are rivers, torrents, and defiles. I don't say there will be much chance of running short of food, if it wasn't that half the time one will be afraid to fire for fear the 'tarnal Indians should hear us. We ain't got above a month afore the first snows fall. Altogether it is a risky business, look at it which way you will."

"Well, Jerry, if it is as bad as that, I don't think it will be right for you and the chief to risk your lives merely that I should find my uncle. If he is alive he is sure to come back here sooner or later; or if he goes some other way back to Denver he will hear from Pete that I am here, and will either write or come for me."

"It ain't entirely on your account, lad, as I am thinking of going; and I am pretty sure the chief would tell you that it is the same with him. You see, he tried to persuade your uncle to turn back. My opinion is, that though he had to come here to keep the appointment, he had it in his mind to go back again to join your uncle. Haven't I about struck your thoughts, chief?"

The chief nodded. "My white brother Harry is in danger," he said. "Leaping Horse had to leave him; but would have started back to-day to take his place by his side. The Hunting Dog will go with him."

"I thought so, chief; I am dog-goned if I did not think

Digitized by Google Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

so. It was Hunting Dog you came back here to meet, I suppose."

"Hunting Dog is of my tribe," he said; "he is my sister's son. He came across the plains to join me. He has hunted in his own country; this is the first time he has come out to take his place as a man. Leaping Horse will teach him to be a warrior."

"That is good; the more the better, so that there ain't too many. Well, what is your advice, chief? Shall we take our pack pony with the outfit?"

The chief shook his head decidedly. "Must travel quick and be able to gallop fast. My white brothers must take nothing but what they can carry with them."

"All right, chief; we will not overload ourselves. We will just take our robes and blankets, our shooting-irons, some tea and sugar, and a few pounds of flour. At what time shall we start?"

"In an hour we will ride out from the fort."

"We shall be ready. Ten minutes would fix us, except that I must go into the fort and sell my critter and what flour and outfit we sha'n't want, to a trader there.

"I ain't done badly by that deal," Jerry said when he returned. "I have sold the pony for more than I gave for him; for the red-skins have been keeping away from the fort of late, and the folks going by are always wanting horses in place of those that have died on the way. The other things all sold for a good bit more than we gave for them at Denver. Carriage comes mighty high on these plains; besides, the trader took his chances and reckoned them in."

"How do you mean, Jerry?"

"Waal, I told him we was going up to the Shoshone Sierra, and intended to hunt about and to come back, maybe by the Yellowstone and then by the Bear rivers, and that we would take the price of the goods out in trade when we

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

got back. That made it a sort of lottery for him, for if we never came back at all he would never have to pay, so he could afford to take his risks and offer me a good price. I reckon he thinks he has got them at a gift. He has given two pieces of paper, one for you and one for me, saying that he owes the two of us the money; so if I should go under and you should get back, you will draw it all right."

They at once proceeded to pack their ponies. Divided between the saddle-bags of the two animals were four pounds of tea, eight of sugar, and thirty-six of flour. Each took a good store of ammunition, an extra pair of breeches, a flannel shirt, and a pair of stockings. The rest of their clothes had been packed, and taken up by Jerry to the traders to lie there until their return.

"That is light enough for anything," Jerry said, when the things were stowed into the saddle-bags. "Four-and-twenty pounds of grub and five pounds of ammunition brings it up to nine-and-twenty pounds each, little enough for a trip that may last three months for aught we know."

In addition to the ammunition in the saddle-bags, each carried a powder-horn and a bag of bullets over his shoulder. The revolvers were in their belts, and the rifles slung behind them. While Jerry was away at the fort Tom had made and baked three loaves, which were cut up and put in the holsters.

"Now we are ready, Tom; the Indians will be out in a minute or two. The sun is just at its highest."

Two minutes later the chief and his companion rode out from the gate of the fort. Jerry and Tom mounted their horses and cantered over to meet them. As they came up, Tom looked with interest at the young Indian. He judged him to be about nineteen, and he had a bright and intelligent face. He was, like his uncle, attired in buckskin; but the shirt was fringed and embroidered, as was the band that carried his

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

powder-horn, a gift, doubtless, from some Indian maiden at his departure from his village. No greetings were exchanged; but the chief and Jerry rode at once side by side towards the north-east, and Tom took his place by the side of the young Indian.

"How are you?" he said, holding out his hand. The young Indian took it and responded to the shake, but he shook his head.

"Ah, you don't speak English yet?" Hunting Dog again shook his head. "That is a pity," Tom went on; "it would have been jolly if we could have talked together."

The chief said something to Jerry, who turned around in his saddle. "His uncle says he can talk some. He has taught him a little when he has paid visits to the village, but he has had no practice in speaking it. He will get on after a time."

All were well mounted, and they travelled fast. Just before sunset they crossed the Green River at a ford used by the emigrants, and some fifty miles north-east of Fort Bridger. They had seen a herd of deer by the way, and the two Indians had dismounted and stalked them. The others lost sight of them, but when two rifle-shots were heard Jerry said, "We will take the horses along to them, you may be sure they have got meat; the chief is a dead shot, and he says that his nephew has also gifts that way." As they expected, they found the Indians standing beside two dead deer. Hunting Dog laid open the stomachs with a slash of his knife, and removed the entrails, then tying the hind legs together swung the carcasses on to his horse behind the saddle, and the journey was at once renewed.

"You will make for Freemont's Buttes, I suppose, chief?" Jerry said, as after riding up the river for three or four miles so as to be able to obtain wood for their fire—as for a considerable distance on either side of the emigrant trail

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

not a shrub was to be seen—they dismounted, turned the horses loose, lit a fire, and prepared a meal.

"Yes. We will go over the pass and camp at one of the little lakes at the head of the north fork, thence we will ride across the plain and ford Little Wind River, and then follow up the Sage Creek and make our camp at night on Buffalo Lake. From there we must follow their trail."

"And where shall we have to begin to look out for the 'Rappahoes?"

"They may be over the next rise; no one can say. The 'Rappahoes are like the dead leaves drifting before the wind. They come as far south as the emigrant trail, and have attacked caravans many times. After to-night we must look out for them always, and must put out our fires before dark."

Tom had noticed how carefully the young Indian had selected the wood for the fire; searching carefully along by the edge of the river for drift-wood, and rejecting all that contained any sap. He himself had offered to cut down some wood with the axe he carried strapped to his saddle, but Hunting Dog had shaken his head.

"No good, no good," he said. "Make heap smoke; smoke very bad."

Tom thought that the shrub he was about to cut would give out obnoxious smoke that would perhaps flavour the meat hanging over it, but when the Indian added "Heap smoke, red-skins see a long way," he understood that Hunting Dog had been so careful in choosing the wood in order to avoid making any smoke whatever that might attract the attention of Indians at a distance from them. It was his first lesson in the necessity for caution; and as darkness set in he looked round several times, half expecting to see some crouching red-skins. The careless demeanour of his companions, however, reassured him, for he felt certain that if there was any fear of a surprise, they would be watchful.

Digitized by Google Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

After supper the Indian talked over with Jerry the route they would most probably have to pursue. The miner had never been in this part of the country before; indeed very few white men, with the exception of trappers who had married Indian women and had been admitted into their tribes, had ever penetrated into this, the wildest portion of the Rocky Mountains. Vague rumours existed of the abundance of game there, and of the existence of gold, but only one attempt had been made to prospect on a large scale. This had taken place three years before, when a party of twenty Californian miners penetrated into the mountains. None of them returned, but reports brought down by Indians to the settlements were to the effect that, while working a gold reef they had discovered, they were attacked and killed to a man by a war party of Sioux.

"I was mighty nigh being one of that crowd," Jerry said when he told the story to Tom, as they sat over the camp-fire that night. "I heard of their start when I got back to Salt Lake City, after being away for some time among the hills. I legged it arter them as fast as I could, but I found when I got to the last settlement that they had gone on ten days before, and as I did not know what line they had followed, and did not care to cross the pass alone, I gave it up. Mighty lucky thing it was, though I did not think so at the time."

"But why should my uncle's party have gone into such a dangerous country when they knew that the natives were so hostile?"

"It is a mighty big place, it is pretty nigh as big as all the eastern states chucked into one, and the red-skins are not thick. No one knows how many there are, but it is agreed they are not a big tribe. Then it ain't like the plains, where a party travelling can be seen by an Indian scout miles and miles away. It is all broken ground, cañons and

Digitized by Google Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

valleys and rocks. Then again, when we get on the other side of the Wind River they tell me there are big forests. That is so, chief, isn't it?"

The chief nodded. "Heap forests," he said, "higher up rocks and bad lands; all bad. In winter snow everywhere on hills. Red-skins not like cold; too much cold, wigwam no good."

"That's it, you see, Tom. We are here a long way above the sea-level, and so in the hills you soon get above the timber-line. It's barren land there, just rock, without grass enough for horses, and in winter it is so all-fired cold that the Indians can't live there in their wigwams. I reckon their villages are down in the sheltered valleys, and if we don't have the bad luck to run plump into one of these we may wander about a mighty long time before we meet with a red-skin. That is what you mean, isn't it, chief?"

Leaping Horse grunted an assent.

"What game is there in the country?"

"There are wapitis, which are big stag with thundering great horns, and there are big-horns. Them are mountain sheep; they are mostly up above the timber-line. Wapitis and big-horns are good for food, but their skins ain't worth taking off. There is beaver, heaps of them; though I reckon there ain't as many as there were by a long way, for since the whites came out here and opened trade, and the red-skins found they could get good prices for beaver, they have brought them down by thousands every year. Still, there is no doubt there is plenty left, and that trappers would do first-rate there if the red-skins were friendly. In course, there is plenty of b'ars, but unless you happen to have a thundering good chance it is just as well to leave the b'ars alone, for what with the chances of getting badly mauled, and what with the weight of the skin, it don't pay even when you come right side up out of a tussle."

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

"Are there any maps of the region?"

"None of any account. They are all just guess-work. You may take it that this is just a heap of mountains chucked down anyhow. Such maps as there are have been made from tales trappers who came in with pelts have told. Well, firstly they only knew about just where the tribe they had joined lived, and in the second place you may bet they warn't such fools as to tell anything as would help other fellows to get there; so you may put down that they told very little, and what they did tell was all lies. Some day or other I suppose there will be an expedition fitted out to go right through, and to punish these dog-goned red-skins and open the country; but it will be a long time arter that afore it will be safe travelling, for I reckon that soldiers might march and march for years through them mountains without ever catching a sight of a red-skin if they chose to keep out of their way. And now I reckon we had best get in atween our blankets."

The two Indians had already lain down by the fire. Tom was some time before he could get to sleep. The thought of the wild and unknown country he was about to enter, with its great game, its hidden gold treasures, its Indians and its dangers, so excited his imagination that, tired as he was with the long ride, two or three hours passed before he fell off to sleep. He was awoke by being shaken somewhat roughly by Jerry.

"Why, you are sleeping as sound as a b'ar in a hollow tree," the miner said. "You are generally pretty spry in the morning." A dip in the cold water of the river awoke Tom thoroughly, and by the time he had rejoined his comrades breakfast was ready. The ground rose rapidly as they rode forward. They were now following an Indian trail, a slightly-marked path made by the Indians as they travelled down with their ponies laden with beaver skins, to ex-

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

change for ammunition, blankets, and tobacco at the trading station. The country was barren in the extreme, being covered only with patches of sage brush. As they proceeded it became more and more hilly, and distant ridges and peaks could be seen as they crossed over the crests.

"These are the bad lands, I suppose?"

"You bet they are, Tom, but nothing like as bad as you will see afore you are done. Sage brush will grow pretty nigh everywhere, but there are thousands of square miles of rock where even sage brush cannot live."

The hills presently became broken up into fantastic shapes, while isolated rocks and pinnacles rose high above the general level.

"How curiously they are coloured," Tom remarked, "just regular bands of white and red and green and orange; and you see the same markings on all these crags, at the same level."

"Just so, Tom. We reckon that this country, and it is just the same down south, was once level, and the rains and the rivers and torrents cut their way through it and wore it down, and just these buttes and crags and spires were left standing, as if to show what the nature of the ground was everywhere. Though why the different kinds of rocks has such different colours is more than I can tell. I went out once with an old party as they called a scientific explorer. I have heard him say this was all under water once, and sometimes one kind of stuff settled down like mud to the bottom, sometimes another, though where all the water came from is more nor I can tell. He said something about the ground being raised afterwards, and I suppose the water run off then. I did not pay much attention to his talk, for he was so choke-full of larning, and had got such a lot of hard names on the tip of his tongue, that there were no making head or tale of what he was saying."

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

Tom had learnt something of the elements of geology, and could form an idea of the processes by which the strange country at which he was looking had been formed.

"That's Freemont's Buttes," the Indian said presently, pointing to a flat-topped hill that towered above the others ahead.

"Why, I thought you said that it was a fifty-mile ride to-day, Jerry, and we can't have gone more than half that."

"How far do you suppose that hill is off?"

"Three or four miles, I should think."

"It is over twenty, lad. Up here in the mountains the air is so clear you can see things plain as you couldn't make out the outlines of down below."

"But it seems to me so close that I could make out people walking about on the top," Tom said a little incredulously.

"I dare say, lad. But you will see when you have ridden another hour it won't seem much closer than it does now."

Tom found out that the miner was not joking with him, as he at first had thought was the case. Mile after mile was ridden, and the landmark seemed little nearer than before. Presently Hunting Dog said something to the chief, pointing away to the right. Leaping Horse at once reined in, and motioned to his white companions to do the same.

"What is it, chief?" Jerry asked.

"Wapiti," he replied.

"That is good news," the miner said. "It will be lucky if we can lay in a supply of deer flesh here. The less we shoot after we get through the pass the better. Shall we go with you, chief?"

"My white brothers had better ride on slowly," Leaping Horse said. "Might scare deer. No good lose time."

Tom felt rather disappointed, but as he went on slowly with Jerry, the miner said: "You will have plenty of

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

chances later on, lad, and there is no time to lose in fooling about. The red-skins will do the business."

Looking back, Tom saw the two Indians gallop away till they neared the crest of a low swell. Then they leapt from their horses, and stooping low went forward. In a short time they lay prone on the ground, and wriggled along until just on the crest.

"I reckon the stag is just over there somewhere," Jerry said. "The young red-skin must have caught sight of an antler."

They stopped their ponies altogether now, and sat watching the Indians. These were half a mile away, but every movement was as clearly visible as if they were but a hundred yards distant. The chief raised himself on his arms and then on to his knees. A moment later he lay down again, and they then crawled along parallel with the crest for a couple of hundred yards. Then they paused, and with their rifles advanced they crept forward again.

"Now they see them," Jerry exclaimed.

The Indians lay for half a minute motionless. Then two tiny puffs of smoke darted out. The Indians rose to their feet and dashed forward as the sound of their shots reached the ears of their companions.

"Come on," Jerry said, "you may be sure they have brought down one stag anyhow. The herd could not have been far from that crest or the boy would not have seen the antler over it, and the chief is not likely to miss a wapiti at a hundred yards."

Looking back presently Tom saw that the Indian ponies had disappeared.

"Ay, Hunting Dog has come back for them. You may be sure they won't be long before they are up with us again."

In a quarter of an hour the two Indians rode up, each

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

having the hind-quarters of a deer fastened across his horse behind the saddle, while the tongues hung from the peaks.

"Kill them both at first shot, chief?" Jerry asked; "I did not hear another report."

"Close by," the chief said; "no could miss."

"It seems a pity to lose such a quantity of meat," Tom remarked.

"The Indians seldom carry off more than the hind-quarters of a deer, never if they think there is a chance of getting more soon. There is a lot more flesh on the hind-quarters than there is on the rest of the stag. But that they are wasteful, the red-skins are, can't be denied. Even when they have got plenty of meat they will shoot a buffalo any day just for the sake of his tongue."

It was still early in the afternoon when they passed under the shadow of the buttes, and, two miles farther, came upon a small lake, the water from which ran north. Here they unsaddled the horses and prepared to camp.

CHAPTER V.

IN DANGER.

THERE were no bushes that would serve their purpose near the lake, they therefore formed their camp on the leeward side of a large boulder. The greatest care was observed in gathering the fuel, and it burned with a clear flame without giving out the slightest smoke.

"Dead wood dries like tinder in this here air," the miner said. "In course, if there wur any red-skins within two or three miles on these hills they would make out the camp, still that ain't likely; but any loafing Indian who chanced

Digitized by Google Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

to be hunting ten or even fifteen miles away would see smoke if there was any, and when a red-skin sees smoke, if he can't account for it, he is darned sartin to set about finding out who made it."

The horses fared badly, for there was nothing for them to pick up save a mouthful of stunted grass here and there.

"Plenty of grass to-morrow," the chief said in answer to a remark of Tom as to the scantiness of their feed. "Grass down by Buffalo Lake good."

Early the next morning they mounted and rode down the hills into Big Wind River valley. They did not go down to the river itself, but skirted the foot of the hills until they reached Buffalo Lake.

"There," the chief said, pointing to a pile of ashes, "the fire of my white brother."

Alighting, he and Hunting Dog searched the ground carefully round the fire. Presently the younger Indian lightly touched the chief and pointed to the ground. They talked together, still carefully examining the ground, and moved off in a straight line some fifty yards. Then they returned.

"Indian here," Leaping Horse said, "one, two days ago. Found fire, went off on trail of white men."

"That is bad news, chief."

"Heap bad," the Indian said gravely.

"Perhaps he won't follow far," Tom suggested.

The Indian made no answer. He evidently considered the remark to be foolish.

"You don't know much of Indian nature yet, Tom," the miner said. "When a red-skin comes upon the trail of whites in what he considers his country, he will follow them if it takes him weeks to do it, till he finds out all about them, and if he passes near one of his own villages he will tell the news, and a score of the varmint will take up the trail with him. It's them ashes as has done it. If the chief

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

here had stopped with them till they started this would not have happened, for he would have seen that they swept every sign of their fire into the lake. I wonder they did not think of it themselves. It was a dog-goned foolish trick to leave such a mark as this. I expect they will be more keerful arterwards, but they reckoned that they had scarce got into the Indian country.

"Do you think it was yesterday the red-skin was here, or the day before, chief?"

"Leaping Horse can't say," the Indian replied. "Ground very hard, mark very small. No rain, trail keep fresh a long time. Only find mark twice." He led them to a spot where, on the light dust among the rocks, was the slight impression of a footmark.

"That is the mark of a moccasin, sure enough," Jerry said; "but maybe one of the whites, if not all of them, have put on moccasins for the journey. They reckoned on climbing about some, and moccasins beat boots anyhow for work among the hills."

"Red-skin foot," the Indian said quietly.

"Well, if you say it is, of course it is. I should know it myself if I saw three or four of them in a line, but as there is only one mark it beats me."

"How would you know, Jerry?"

"A white man always turns out his toes, lad, an Indian walks straight-footed. There are other differences that a red-skin would see at once, but which are beyond me, for I have never done any tracking work."

The Indian without speaking led them to another point some twenty yards away, and pointed to another impression. This was so slight that it was with difficulty that Tom could make out the outline.

"Yes, that settles it," Jerry said. "You see, lad, when there was only one mark I could not tell whether it was turned out

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

or not, for that would depend on the direction the man was walking in. This one is just in a line with the other, and so the foot must have been set down straight. Had it been turned out a bit, the line, carried straight through the first footprint, would have gone five or six yards away to the right."

It took Tom two or three minutes to reason this out to himself, but at last he understood the drift of what his companion said. As the line through one toe and heel passed along the centre of the other, the foot must each time have been put down in a straight line, while if the footprints had been made by a person who turned out his toes they would never point straight towards those farther on.

"Well, what is your advice, chief?" Jerry asked.

"Must camp and eat," the Indian replied, "horses gone far enough. No fear here, red-skin gone on trail."

"Do you think there have been more than one, chief?"

"Not know," Leaping Horse said; "find out by and by."

Tom now noticed that Hunting Dog had disappeared.

"Where shall we make the fire?"

The chief pointed to the ashes.

"That's it," Jerry said. "If any redskin came along you see, Tom, there would be nothing to tell them that more than one party had been here."

The chief this time undertook the collection of fuel himself, and a bright fire was presently burning. Two hours later Hunting Dog came back. He talked for some time earnestly with the chief, and taking out two leaves from his wampum bag opened them and showed him two tiny heaps of black dust. Jerry asked no questions until the conversation was done, and then while Hunting Dog cut off a large chunk of deer's flesh, and placing it in the hot ashes sat himself quietly down to wait until it was cooked, he said:

"Well, chief, what is the news?"

"The Indian had a horse, Hunting Dog came upon the

Digitized by Google Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

spot where he had left it a hundred yards away. When he saw ashes, he came to look at them. Afterwards he followed the trail quite plain on the soft ground at head of lake. Over there," and he pointed to the foot of the hills, "Indian stopped and fired twice."

"How on earth did he know that, chief?"

The chief pointed to the two leaves. The scout examined the powder. "Wads," he said. "They are leather wads, Tom, shrivelled and burnt. What did he fire at, chief?"

"Signal. Half a mile farther three other mounted red-skins joined him. They stopped and had heap talk. Then one rode away into hills, the others went on at gallop on trail."

"That is all bad, chief. The fellow who went up the hills no doubt made for a village?"

The chief nodded.

"The only comfort is that Harry has got a good start of them. It was a week from the time you left them before we met you, that is three days ago, so that if the red-skins took up the trail yesterday, Harry has ten days' start of them."

Leaping Horse shook his head. "Long start if travel fast, little start if travel slow."

"I see what you mean. If they pushed steadily on up the valley, they have gone a good distance, but if they stopped to catch beaver or prospect for gold they may not have got far away. Hadn't we be better pushing on, chief?"

"No good, horses make three days' journey; rest well to-day, travel right on to-morrow. If go farther to-night, little good to-morrow. Good camp here, all rest."

"Well, no doubt you are right, chief, but it worries one to think that while we are sitting here those 'tarnal red-skins may be attacking our friends. My only hope is that Harry, who has done a lot of Indian fighting, will hide his trail as

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

much as possible as he goes on, and that they will have a lot of trouble in finding it."

The chief nodded. "My white brother, Harry, knows Indian ways. He did not think he had come to Indian country here or he would not have left his ashes. But beyond this he will be sure to hide his trail, and the 'Rappahoes will have to follow slow."

"You think they are 'Rappahoes, chief?"

"Yes, this 'Rappahoe country. The Shoshones are further north, and are friendly; the Bannacks and Nez pèrces are in north-west, near Snake River; and the Sioux more on the north and east, on other side of great mountains. 'Rappahoes here."

"Waal," Jerry said wrathfully, "onless they catch Harry asleep, some of the darned skunks will be rubbed out afore they get his scalp. It is a good country for hiding trail. There are many streams coming down from the hills into the Big Wind, and they can turn up or down any of them as they please, and land on rocky ground too, so it would be no easy matter to track them. By the lay of the country there does not seem much chance of gold anywheres about here, and, as I reckon, they will be thinking more of that than of beaver skins, so I think they would push straight on."

"Harry said he should get out of Big Wind River valley quick," Leaping Horse said. "Too many Indians there. Get into mountains other side. Go up Riviere de Noir, then over big mountains into Sierra Shoshone, and then down Buffalo through Jackson's Hole, and then strike Snake River. I told him heap bad Indians in Jackson's Hole, Bannacks and Nez pèrces. He said not go down into valley, keep on foot-hills. I told him, too bad journey, but he and other pale-faces thought could do it, and might find much gold. No good Leaping Horse talk."

Digitized by Google Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

"This is a dog-goned bad business I have brought you into, Tom. I reckoned we should not get out without troubles, but I did not calkerlate on our getting into them so soon."

"You did not bring me here, Jerry, so you need not blame yourself for that. It was I brought you into it, for you did not make up your mind to come till I had settled to go with Leaping Horse."

"I reckon I should have come anyhow," Jerry grumbled. "Directly the chief said where Harry and the others had gone my mind was set on joining them. It was a new country, and there wur no saying what they might strike, and though I ain't a regular Indian-fighter, leaving them alone when they leave me alone, I can't say as I am averse to a scrimmage with them if the odds are anyways equal."

"It is a wonderful country," Tom said, looking at the almost perpendicular cliffs across the valley, with their regular coloured markings, their deep fissures, crags, and pinnacles, "and worth coming a long way to see."

"I don't say as it ain't curous, but I have seen the like down on the Colorado, and I don't care if I never see no more of it if we carry our scalps safe out of this. I don't say as I object to hills if they are covered with forest, for there is safe to be plenty of game there, and the wood comes in handy for timbering, but this kind of country that looks as if some chaps with paint-pots had been making lines all over it, ain't to my taste noway. Here, lad; I never travel without hooks and lines; you can get a breakfast and dinner many a day when a gun would bring down on you a score of red varmints. I expect you will find fish in the lake. Many of these mountain lakes just swarm with them. You had better look about and catch a few bugs, there ain't no better bait. Those jumping bugs are as good as any," and he pointed to a grasshopper, somewhat

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

to Tom's relief, for the lad had just been wondering where he should look for bugs, not having seen one since he landed in the States.

There were two lines and hooks in the miner's outfit, and Tom and Hunting Dog, after catching some grasshoppers, went down to the lake, while Jerry and the chief had a long and earnest conversation together. The baited hooks were scarcely thrown into the water when they were seized, and in a quarter of an hour ten fine lake trout were lying on the bank. Tom was much delighted. He had fished from boats, but had never met with much success, and his pleasure at landing five fish averaging four or five pounds a piece was great. As it was evidently useless to catch more, they wound up their lines, and Hunting Dog split the fish open and laid them down on the rock, which was so hot that Tom could scarce bear his hand on it.

Seeing the elder men engaged in talk Tom did not return to them, but endeavoured to keep up a conversation with the young Indian, whom he found to be willing enough to talk now they were alone, and who knew much more English than he had given him credit for. As soon as the sun set the fire was extinguished, and they lay down to sleep shortly afterwards. An hour before daylight they were in the saddle. Hunting Dog rode ahead on the line he had followed the day before. As soon as it became light Tom kept his eyes fixed upon the ground, but it was only now and then, when the Indian pointed to the print of a horse's hoof in the sand between the rocks, that he could make them out. The two Indians followed the track, however, without the slightest difficulty, the horses going at a hand gallop.

"They don't look to me like horses' foot-prints," Tom said to Jerry when they had passed a spot where the marks were unusually clear.

Digitized by Google Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

925

"LEAPING HORSE MOUNTED, AND RODE ACROSS THE STREAM."

Digitized by Google

Original from
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

Digitized by Google

Original from
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

"I reckon you have never seen the track of an unshod horse before, Tom. With a shod horse you see nothing but the mark of the shoe, here you get the print of the whole hoof. Harry has been careful enough here, and has taken the shoes off his ponies, for among all the marks, we have not seen any made by a shod horse. The Indians never shoe theirs, and the mark of an iron is enough to tell the first red-skin who passes that a white man has gone along there. The chief and I took off the shoes of the four horses yesterday afternoon when you were fishing. We put them and the nails by to use when we get out of this dog-goned country."

After riding for two hours they came to the bank of a stream. The chief held up his hand for them to stop, while he dismounted and examined the foot-marks. Then he mounted again and rode across the stream, which was some ten yards wide and from two to three feet deep. He went on a short distance beyond it, leapt from his saddle, threw the reins on the horse's neck, and returned to the bank on foot. He went a short distance up the stream and then as much down, stooping low and examining every inch of the ground. Then he stood up and told the others to cross.

"Leave your horses by mine," he said as they joined him. "Trail very bad, all rock." He spoke to the young Indian, who, on dismounting, at once went forward, quartering the ground like a spaniel in search of game, while the chief as carefully searched along the bank.

"Best leave them to themselves, Tom; they know what they are doing."

"They are hunting for the trail, Jerry, I suppose?"

"Ay, lad. Harry struck on a good place when he crossed where he did, for you see the rock here is as smooth as the top of a table, and the wind has swept it as clean of dust as if it had been done by an eastern woman's broom.

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

If the horses had been shod there would have been scratches on the rock that would have been enough for the dullest Indian to follow, but an unshod horse leaves no mark on ground like this. I expect the red-skins who followed them were just as much puzzled as the chief is. There ain't no saying whether they crossed and went straight on, or whether they never crossed at all or kept in the stream either up or down."

It was half an hour before the two Indians had concluded their examination of the ground.

"Well, chief, what do you make of it?" Jerry asked when they had spoken a few words together.

"Hunting Dog has good eyes," the chief said. "The white men went forward, the red men could not find the trail, and thought that they had kept in the river, so they went up to search for them. Come, let us go forward."

The miner and Tom mounted their horses, but the Indians led theirs forward some three hundred yards. Then Hunting Dog pointed down, and the chief stooped low and examined the spot.

"What is it, chief?" Jerry asked; and he and Tom both got off and knelt down. They could see nothing whatever.

"That is it," Leaping Horse said, and pointed to a piece of rock projecting half an inch above the flat.

"I am darned if I can see anything."

"There is a tiny hair there," Tom said, putting his face within a few inches of the ground. "It might be a cat's hair; it is about the length, but much thicker. It is brown."

"Good!" the chief said, putting his hand on Tom's shoulder. "Now let us ride." He leapt into his saddle, the others following his example, and they went on at the same pace as before.

"Well, chief," the miner said, "what does that hair tell you about it, for I can't make neither head nor tail of it?"

Digitized by Google Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

"The white men killed a deer on their way up here, and they cut up the hide and made shoes for horses, so that they should leave no tracks. One of the horses trod on a little rock and a hair came out of the hide."

"That may be it, chief," the miner said after thinking the matter over, "though it ain't much of a thing to go by."

"Good enough," Leaping Horse said. "We know now the line they were taking. When we get to soft ground see trail plainer."

"What will the others do when they cannot find the trail anywhere along the bank?"

"Ride straight on," the chief said. "Search banks of next river, look at mouths of valleys to make sure white men have not gone up there, meet more of tribe, search everywhere closely, find trail at last."

"Well, that ought to give Harry a good start, anyhow."

"Not know how long gone on," the chief said gravely. "No rainfall. Six, eight—perhaps only two days' start."

"But if they always hide their tr .il as well as they did here I don't see how the Indians can find them at all—especially as they don't know where they are making for, as we do."

"Find camp. Men on foot may hide traces, but with horses sure to find."

"That is so," Jerry agreed, shaking his head. "An Indian can see with half an eye where the grass has been cropped or the leaves stripped off the bushes. Yes, I am afraid that is so. There ain't no hiding a camp from Indian eyes where horses have been about. It is sure to be near a stream. Shall you look for them, chief?"

The Indian shook his head. "Lose time," he said. "We go straight to Riviere de Noir."

"You don't think, then, they are likely to turn off before that?"

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

"Leaping Horse thinks not. They know Indian about here. Perhaps found Indian trail near first camp. Know, anyhow, many Indians. Think push straight on."

"That is the likeliest. Anyhow, by keeping on we must get nearer to them. The worst danger seems to me that we may overtake the red-skins who are hunting them."

The chief nodded.

"It is an all-fired fix, Tom," Jerry went on. "If we go slow we may not be in time to help Harry and the others to save their scalps; if we go fast we may come on these 'tarnal red-skins, and have mighty hard work in keeping our own ha'r on."

"I feel sure that the chief will find traces of them in time to prevent our running into them, Jerry. Look how good their eyes are. Why, I might have searched all my life without noticing a single hair on a rock."

After riding some fifteen miles beyond the stream, and crossing two similar though smaller rivulets, the chief after a few words with Jerry turned off to the left and followed the foot of the hills. At the mouth of a narrow valley he stopped, examined the ground carefully, and then led the way up it, carrying his rifle in readiness across the peak of the saddle. The valley opened when they had passed its mouth, and a thick grove of trees grew along the bottom. As soon as they were beneath their shelter they dismounted. The horses at once began to crop the grass. Hunting Dog went forward through the trees, rifle in hand.

"Shall I take the bits out of the horses' mouths, Jerry?" Tom asked.

"Not till the young Indian returns. It is not likely there is a red-skin village up there, for we should have seen a trail down below if there had been. Still there may be a hut or two, and we can do nothing till he comes back."

It was half an hour before Hunting Dog came through

Digitized by Google Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

the trees again. He shook his head, and without a word loosened the girths of his horse and took off the bridle.

"He has seen no signs of them, so we can light a fire and get something to eat. I am beginning to feel I want something badly."

Thus reminded Tom felt at once that he was desperately hungry. They had before starting taken a few mouthfuls of meat that had been cooked the day before and purposely left over, but it was now three o'clock in the afternoon, and he felt ravenous. The Indians quickly collected dried wood, and four of the fish were soon frizzling on hot ashes, while the kettle, hung in the flame, was beginning to sing.

"We have done nigh forty miles, Tom, and the horses must have a couple of hours' rest. We will push on as fast as we can before dark, and then wait until the moon rises; it will be up by ten. This ain't a country to ride over in the dark. We will hide up before morning, and not go on again till next night. Of course we shall not go so fast as by day, but we sha'n't have any risk of being ambushed. The chief reckons from what he has heard that the Indian villages are thick along that part of the valley, and that it will never do to travel by day."

"Then you have given up all hopes of finding Harry's tracks?"

"It would be just wasting our time to look for them. We will push on sharp till we are sure we are ahead of them. We may light upon them by chance, but there can be no searching for them with these red varmint round us. It would be just chucking away our lives without a chance of doing any good. I expect Harry and his party are travelling at night too; but they won't travel as fast as we do, not by a sight. They have got pack-ponies with them, and they are likely to lay off a day or two if they come upon a good place for hiding."

Digitized by Google Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

They travelled but a few miles after their halt, for the Indians declared they could make out smoke rising in two or three places ahead; and although neither Jerry nor Tom could distinguish it, they knew that the Indians' sight was much keener than their own in a matter of this kind. They therefore halted again behind a mass of rocks that had fallen down the mountain-side. Hunting Dog lay down among the highest of the boulders to keep watch, and the horses were hobbled to prevent their straying. The miner and the chief lit their pipes, and Tom lay down on his back for a sleep. A short time before it became dusk the call of a deer was heard.

"There are wapiti, chief. We can't take a shot at them; but it don't matter, we have meat enough for a week."

The chief had already risen to his feet, rifle in hand.

"It is a signal from Hunting Dog," he said, "he has seen something in the valley. My white brother had better get the horses together," and he made his way up the rocks. In a minute or two he called out that the horses might be left to feed, and presently came leisurely down to them. "Seen Indians—ten 'Rappahoes."

"Which way were they going?"

"Riding from Big Wind River across valley. Been away hunting among hills over there. Have got meat packed on horses, ride slow. Not have heard about white men's trail. Going to village, where we saw smoke."

Tom was fast asleep when Jerry roused him, and told him that the moon was rising, and that it was time to be off.

They started at a walk, the chief leading, Jerry followed him, while Tom rode between him and Hunting Dog, who brought up the rear. Tom had been warned that on no account was he to speak aloud. "If you have anything you want to say, and feel that you must say it or bust," Jerry remarked, "just come up alongside of me and whisper it.

Digitized by Google Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

Keep your ears open and your rifle handy, we might come upon a party any minute. They might be going back to their village after following Harry's trail as long as they could track it, or it might be a messenger coming back to fetch up food, or those fellows Hunting Dog made out going on to join those in front. Anyhow we have got to travel as quiet as if there was ears all round us."

As they passed the clumps of trees where the Indian villages stood they could see the reflection of the fires on the foliage, and heard the frequent barking of dogs and an occasional shout. A quarter of a mile farther the chief halted and spoke to Hunting Dog, who at once dismounted and glided away towards the village.

"Gone to see how many men there," the chief said in explanation to Jerry. "Too much laugh, no good."

"He means the men must have gone off again, Tom. If there were men in the camp the boys would not be making a noise."

They were but a few hundred yards from the trees, and in a very short time the Indian returned.

"Men are gone," he said; "only squaws and boys there."

"How many lodges are there?" the chief asked. Hunting Dog held up both hands with extended fingers, and then one finger only.

"Eleven of them," Jerry said. "I expect they are all small villages, and they move their lodges across into the forests when winter comes on."

As soon as they had mounted, the chief put his horse into a canter, and at this pace they went forward for some hours, breaking into a walk occasionally for a few minutes.

"I thought you said we should not go beyond a walk to-night, Jerry," Tom remarked on the first of these occasions.

"That is what we kinder agreed, lad; but you may be

Digitized by Google Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

sure the chief has some good reason for going on faster. I dunno what it is, and I ain't going to ask. Red-skins hate being questioned. If he wants to tell us he will tell us without being asked."

A faint light was stealing over the sky, when the chief halted his horse and sat listening. No sound, however, broke the stillness of the night.

"Did you think you heard anything, chief?"

"Leaping Horse heard nothing, but he stopped to listen. What does my white brother think of the 'Rappahoes having gone on directly they returned from the chase?"

"I thought that when they got the news that some white men had gone through, they might have started to join those following up the trail. Isn't that what you think, chief?"

"Only three white men, plenty Indians on trail; no hurry to follow; might have had feast after hunt and gone on in morning."

"So they might. You think the whites have been tracked, and are to be attacked this morning?"

"Perhaps attacked yesterday. Perhaps have got strong place, 'Rappahoes want more help to take it. White rifle shoot straight, perhaps want more men to starve them out."

They again went forward, at a gallop now. Jerry did not think much of the chief's idea. It seemed to him natural that the Indians should want to join in the hunt for scalps, and to get a share of the white men's goods, though he admitted that it was strange they should have gone on without taking a meal. Presently the chief reined in his horse again, and sat with head bent forward. Tom heard an angry grunt from between Hunting Dog's teeth. Listening intently also, he was conscious of a faint, far-away sound.

"You hear?" the chief said to Jerry.

"I heard something; but it might be anything. A waterfall in the hills miles away, that is what it sounds like.'

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

"Guns," the chief said laconically.

"Do you think so?" Jerry said doubtfully. "There don't seem to me anything of guns in it. It is just a sort of murmur that keeps on and on."

"It is the mountains speaking back again," the chief said, waving his hand. "Hills everywhere. They say to each other, the red men who live in our bosoms are attacking the pale-face strangers."

"What do you think, Hunting Dog?" Tom whispered to the Indian.

"Gun-shot," he replied in a tone of absolute conviction.

"Waal, chief, I will not gainsay your opinion," Jerry said. "How far do you think it is off?"

"The horses will take us there in two hours," the chief replied.

"Then we can put it at twenty miles at least. Let us be going; whatever the sound is, we shall know more about it before we have gone much farther."

"Not too fast," Leaping Horse said as the miner was urging his horse forward. "Maybe have to fight, maybe have to run. No good tire horse too much."

It was more than an hour before Tom could hear any distinct change in the character of the sound, but at last he was able to notice that, though seemingly continuous, the sound really pulsated; sometimes it almost died away, then suddenly swelled out again, and there were several vibrations close together. Jerry, more accustomed to the sound of firearms in the mountains, had before this come round to the chief's opinion.

"It is guns, sure enough, Tom; the chief has made no mistake about it. Waal, there is one comfort, they ain't been surprised. They are making a good fight of it, and we may be there in time to take a hand in the game."

"Shall we ride straight on and join them?"

Digitized by Google Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

"I reckon not, lad. We must wait until we see what sort of place Harry is in, and how we can best help him, before we fix on any scheme."

The sound became louder and clearer. The echo was still continuous, but the sound of the shots could be distinctly heard.

"It is over there, to the right," Jerry said. "They must have crossed the Big Wind River."

"And gone up the De Noir valley," the chief said. "We ought to be close to it now."

"Yes, I reckon it can't be far off, by what you told me about the distance."

"Better cross Big Wind at once. They no see us now."

"I agree with you, chief; it would not do for them to get sight of us. If they did our case would be worse than Harry's. I expect he has got strongly posted, or he would have been wiped out long ago; that is what would happen to us if they were to make us out and spy our numbers afore we get to some place where we and Harry's outfit can help each other."

They rode rapidly down to the river. With the exception of a few yards in the middle, where the horses had to swim, the depth was not great, and they were soon on the other side. They rode to the foot of the hills, and then kept along it. The sound of firing became louder and louder, and Tom felt his heart beat quickly at the thought that he might soon be engaged in a desperate fight with the Indians, and that with the odds greatly against his party. Presently the hills fell sharply away, and they were at the entrance of the valley of the Riviere de Noir, which is the principal arm of the Big Wind River at this point. The firing had very much died out during the last few minutes, and only an occasional shot was heard.

"They have beat off the attack so far," Jerry said to him

Digitized by Google Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

encouragingly. "Now we have got to lie low a bit, while the chief sees how things stand."

Leaping Horse dismounted at the mouth of a narrow cañon running up into the cliff beside them. A little stream trickled down its centre.

"Could not have been better," Jerry said. "Here is a place we four could hold against a crowd of red-skins for hours. There is water anyway, and where there is water there is mostly a little feed for horses. I will take your horse, chief, and Tom will take Hunting Dog's, if so be you mean him to go with you.

"Don't you worry yourself, lad," he went on, seeing how anxious Tom looked, as they started with the horses up the cañon. "If Harry and his friends have beaten off the first attack you may bet your boots they are safe for some time. It is clear the red-skins have drawn off, and are holding a pow-wow as to how they are to try next. They attacked, you see, just as the day was breaking; that is their favourite hour, and I reckon Harry must have been expecting them, and that he and his mates were prepared."

CHAPTER VI.

UNITED.

THE cañon showed no sign of widening until they had proceeded a quarter of a mile from the entrance, then it broadened suddenly for a distance of a hundred yards.

"There has been a big slip here both sides," the miner said, looking round. "It must have taken place a great many years ago, for the winter floods have swept away all

Digitized by Google Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

signs of it, and there are grass and trees on the slopes. The horses can find enough to keep them alive here for a day or two, and that is all we shall want, I hope."

"It would be a nasty place to get out of, Jerry, for the cliffs are perpendicular from half-way up."

"It ain't likely as there is any place we could get out without following it to the upper end, which may be some fifty miles away. I don't know the country it runs through, but the red-skins are pretty certain to know all about it. If they were to track us here they would never try to fight their way in, but would just set a guard at the mouth and at the upper end and starve us out. It is a good place to hide in, but a dog-goned bad one to be caught in. However, I hope it ain't coming to that. It is we who are going to attack them, and not them us, and that makes all the difference. The red-skins can't have a notion that there are any other white men in this neighbourhood, and when we open fire on them it will raise such a scare for a bit that it will give us a chance of joining the others if we choose. That of course must depend on their position."

They walked back to the mouth of the cañon, and had not to wait long for the return of the Indians.

"Come," Leaping Horse said briefly, at once turning and going off at a swift pace.

Jerry asked no questions, but with Tom followed close on the Indians' heels. There were bushes growing among the fallen rocks and débris from the face of the cliff, and they were, therefore, able to go forward as quickly as they could leap from boulder to boulder, without fear of being seen. A quarter of an hour's run, and the chief climbed up to a ledge on the face of the cliff where a stratum harder than those above it had resisted the effects of the weather and formed a shelf some twelve feet wide. He went down on his hands and knees, and keeping close to the wall

Digitized by Google Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

crawled along to a spot where some stunted bushes had made good their hold. The others followed him, and lying down behind the bushes peered through them.

The valley was four or five hundred yards wide, and down its centre ran the stream. Close to the water's edge rose abruptly a steep rock. It was some fifty feet in height and but four or five yards across at the top. On the north and west the rocks were too perpendicular to be climbed, but the other sides had crumbled down, the stones being covered with brushwood. From the point where they were looking they could see the six horses lying among the bushes. They were evidently tightly roped, and had probably been led up there when the attack began and thrown at the highest point to which they could be taken, a spot being chosen where the bushes concealed their exact position from those below. The rock was about two hundred and fifty yards from the spot where the party was lying, and their position was about level with its top. Some twenty Indians were gathered a few hundred yards higher up the valley, and about as many some distance down it.

"Why didn't the varmint take their places here?" Jerry whispered to the chief.

"They came here. See," and he pointed to a patch of blood a few feet beyond him. "Indian guns not shoot far," he said, "powder weak; white man's rifles carry here, red-skin not able to shoot so far. When they found that, went away again."

"What are they going to do now, do you think?"

"Soon attack again."

Half an hour passed, and then a loud yell gave the signal and the two troops galloped towards the rock. They had evidently had experience of the accuracy of the white men's fire; not an Indian showed himself, each dropping over one side of his pony, with an arm resting in a rope

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

round the animals' necks and one leg thrown over the back. So they dashed forward until close to the foot of the rocks. Another instant and they would have thrown themselves from their horses and taken to the bushes, but although hidden from the sight of the defenders of the position, they were exposed to the full view of the party on the ledge, from whom they were distant not more than two hundred yards. The chief fired first, and almost together the other three rifles flashed out. Three of the Indians fell from their horses, another almost slipped off, but with an effort recovered his hold with his leg. A yell of astonishment and fear broke from the Indians. As the two bands mingled together, some of the riders were exposed to those on the top of the rock, and three shots were fired. Two more of the 'Rappahoes fell, and the whole band in obedience to a shout from one of their chiefs galloped at full speed down the valley. The three men sprang to their feet, waving their hats, while the party on the ledge also leapt up with a shout.

"It's you, chief, I see!" one of those on the rocks shouted. "I have been hoping ever since morning to hear the crack of your rifle, and I never heard a more welcome sound. We should have been rubbed out sure. Who have you got with you?"

"It's Jerry Curtis, Harry. I come up along with Leaping Horse, though I did not expect to find you in such a bad fix. This young Indian is Hunting Dog, and this young chap next to me is your nephew, Tom Wade. You did not expect to meet him like this, I reckon?"

While he had been speaking, all had reloaded their rifles.

"You had best go across and talk it over with Harry, chief, and consart measures with him for getting out of this fix. Those red-skins have got a bad scare, but you may bet they

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

ain't gone far; and they have lost six of their bucks now beside what the others shot before, and it ain't in Indian natur for them to put up with such a loss as that." He had been looking at the rock as he spoke, and turning round uttered an exclamation of surprise, for the chief was no longer there. Looking down they saw that he had managed to make his way down the face of the cliff, and in another two minutes was ascending the rock. There he stood for some time in earnest conversation with the whites, and then returned to the ledge.

"Trouble over horses," he said.

"Ay, ay, I reckoned that was what you was talking over. There ain't no going back for them now."

The chief shook his head. "'Rappahoes keep watch," he said, "cannot go till night to fetch horses. All lie here to-day, go across to rock when darkness comes, then white men go up valley till get to trees an hour's march away; can see them from rock. Get in among trees and work up into hills. Leaping Horse and Hunting Dog cross river, go down other side past 'Rappahoes, then cross back and get into cañon, drive horses up. White men meet them up in mountains."

"That seems a good plan enough, chief. That is, if you can get out at the other end of the cañon."

"Cañon little up high," the chief replied. "Find some place to climb."

"But they may find the horses to-day."

The Indian nodded. "May find, perhaps not."

"Why should we not go across to the rock at once, chief?"

"Indian count on fingers how many. They do not know we only four; much troubled in their mind where men come from, who can be. Red-skins not like white men. Have many fancies. Fire come out of bush where 'Rappahoe

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

had been killed; think that bad medicine, keep together and talk. Think if men here, why not go across to rock."

"I should not be surprised if you are right, chief. They are more likely to fancy we have come down from above than from below, for they must have reckoned for sure there were no other white men in the Big Wind Valley, and our not showing ourselves will give them an all-fired scare."

"What does the chief mean by bad medicine, Jerry?" Tom asked.

"A red-skin is full of all sorts of ideas. Anything he can't make head nor tail of, is bad medicine; they think there is some magic in it, and that old Nick has had his finger in the pie. When they get an idea like that in their minds, even the bravest of them loses his pluck, and is like a child who thinks he has seen a ghost. It is a mighty good notion for us to lie low all day. The red-skins will reason it all out, and will say, if these are white men who killed our brothers why the 'tarnal don't they go and join the others, there ain't nothing to prevent them. If they ain't white men, who are they? Maybe they can move without our being able to see them and will shoot from some other place. No, I reckon it is likely they will keep pretty close together and won't venture to scatter to look for tracks, and in that case the chief's plan will work out all right. In course, a good deal depends on their chief; one of them is among those we shot, you can make out his feathers from here. If he is the boss chief it may be that they will give it up altogether; the next chief will throw the blame on to him, and may like enough persuade them to draw off altogether. If it ain't the boss chief, then they are bound to try again. He would not like to take them back to their villages with the news that a grist of them had been killed and narry a scalp taken. I expect you will see this afternoon some of them come down to palaver with Harry."

Digitized by Google Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

The morning passed quietly and not unpleasantly, for they were lying in the shade, but before noon the sun had climbed up over the cliff behind them and shone down with great force, and they had to lie with their heads well under the bushes to screen them from its rays. Presently, Leaping Horse said:

"Indian chief come, no lift heads."

All shifted their position so as to look down the valley. An Indian chief, holding up his hands to show that he was unarmed, was advancing on foot, accompanied by another Indian also without arms.

"There is Harry going down to meet them," Jerry said.

Tom looked eagerly at the figure that came down from the rock and advanced to meet the Indians. It seemed strange to him that after having come so far to join his uncle they should remain for hours in sight of each other without meeting. It was too far to distinguish his features, but he saw by the light walk and easy swing of the figure that his uncle was a much more active man than he had expected to see. He had known indeed that he was but forty years old, but he had somehow expected that the life of hardship he had led would have aged him, and he was surprised to see that his walk and figure were those of a young man.

"Is it not rather dangerous, his coming down alone to meet two of them? They may have arms hidden."

"They have got arms, you may be sure," Jerry replied. "They have knives for certain, and most likely tomahawks, but I expect Harry has got his six-shooter. But it don't matter whether he has or not, there are his two mates up on that rock with their rifles, and we are across here. The 'Rappahoes would know well enough their lives wouldn't be worth a red cent if they were to try any of their games. They don't mean business; they will make out they have

Digitized by Google Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

come to persuade Harry and his mates to give up, which they know quite well they ain't fools enough to do. But what is really in their minds is to try and find out who we are, and where we have come from."

The conversation lasted a few minutes. Tom could see that questions were being asked about the concealed party, for the chief pointed to the ledge two or three times. When the talk was over the Indians went down the valley again at a slow pace, never once looking back, and the Englishman returned to the rocks.

"I don't suppose they have got much from Harry."

"I suppose uncle talks their language?"

"No, I don't reckon he knows the 'Rappahoe dialect. But the tribes on the western side of the plains can mostly understand each other's talk; and as I know he can get on well with the Utes, he is sure to be able to understand the 'Rappahoes' talk."

"Leaping Horse will go along the ledge," the chief said a few minutes later, after a short conversation with Hunting Dog. "The 'Rappahoes will try to find out who are here; not like to attack the rock till find out."

The two Indians lay down flat on the ledge, and crawled along without raising themselves in the slightest until they reached a point where the cliffs projected somewhat. From here they could see down the valley, and they lay immovable, with their rifles in front of them.

"They are not more than fifty yards or so from those bushes where we got up on to the ledge. That is where the red-skins are likely to try crawling up, for there they would be out of sight of the rock."

"Surely they would never venture to come along the ledge in daylight, Jerry. They would have to pass along under the fire of uncle and his mates, and would have our rifles to meet in front."

Digitized by Google Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

"No, it would only be one, or at most, two scouts. They would reckon that from that point where the chief is lying they would get a view right along the ledge to here, and be able to make out what we are. It is the strangeness of the thing that has kept them quiet all these hours, and I expect their chief will want to prove that there are only a few of us, and that we are men for certain. I reckon they have sent off to the villages already, and there will be more of the varmint here to-night. The Indians are never fond of attacking in the dark; still, if they were sure about us, they might try it. They would know they could get up to the foot of that rock before being seen, and once among the bushes they would reckon they could make easy work of it."

A quarter of an hour later there was the crack of a rifle, followed instantly by an Indian yell.

"That is the chief's piece, Tom, and I reckon the lead has gone straight."

The silence remained unbroken for the next two hours, and then Leaping Horse crawled back as quietly as he had gone.

"What was it, chief?"

"It was a 'Rappahoe, who will scout no more," the chief said quietly. "He came up the bushes, but before he could step on to the ledge Leaping Horse fired, and he will take no tales back to his tribe."

"They won't try again, chief?"

Leaping Horse shook his head. "First take rock," he said, "then when they have the scalps of the white men they will watch us here. Will know we cannot stay here long without water."

"You are right there, chief, and no mistake; my tongue is like a piece of leather now, and as soon as it gets dark I shall make a bee-line down to the river. I want to have a talk with Harry, but just at present I want a drink a blamed sight worse. If I had thought we were going to be

Digitized by Google Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

stuck up here all day I would have brought my water-bottle with me."

The time passed very slowly, although the air became cooler as soon as the sun had gone down behind the opposite range. As soon as the light faded a little the Indian crawled farther along the ledge, and returned in a short time saying that he had found a spot where the whites could descend. Two or three times Jerry urged that it was dark enough, before the chief consented to move. At last, however, he stood up and gave the cry of an owl, and they were in a minute or two joined by Hunting Dog, who had until now remained at his post. The chief at once led the way along the ledge until he reached the spot where the rock had crumbled away somewhat.

"We had better go down one at a time," Jerry said. "For if there was a slip or a tumble it might let down a gun-hammer, and we want our lead for the 'Rappahoes, and not for each other."

When it came to Tom's turn, he found it a very difficult place to get down in the semi-darkness, and two or three times he almost lost his footing. As soon as all were down they fell into Indian file, and crossed the valley to the rock, the chief giving the hoot of an owl twice as he approached it. Three men at once stepped out from the bushes at its foot.

"I began to wonder when you were coming, and was just going to get the ponies down before it was too dark to do it without running the risk of breaking their legs. Well, I am right glad to see you, Jerry; and you too, Tom, though it is too dark to see much of you. The chief has been telling me how he brought you along. There is no time to talk now, but I am right glad to see you, lad," and he shook Tom heartily by the hand. "Now, mates, let us get the horses down."

Digitized by Google

Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

"I must make tracks for the water first, Harry, the young un and I are pretty near choking; and I expect the Indians are as bad, though it ain't their natur to talk about it."

"Get down horses first," the chief said. "Too dark soon."

"Waal, I suppose five minutes won't make much difference," Jerry grumbled, "so here goes."

"I have tied some hide over their hoofs," Harry said, "so as to make as little noise as possible about it."

"Must make no noise," the chief said urgently. "Redskin scouts soon be crawling up."

One by one the horses were brought down, Harry leading them, and the others pushing aside the bushes as noiselessly as possible. Then their loads were carried down and packed upon them.

"You get on my horse, Jerry," Harry Wade whispered, "I will walk with Tom. I have had no time to say a word to him yet, or to ask about the people at home. Where is the chief?"

Leaping Horse and his companion had stolen away as soon as the loads had been adjusted. The others led the horses to the river, and allowed them to drink, while Jerry and Tom lay down and took a long draught of the water. The miner's bottles were filled, and they then started.

"It is lucky the river makes such a roar among these rocks here," Harry said, "it will drown the sound of the horses' hoofs."

For half an hour they proceeded at a fast walk, then the skins were taken off the horses' feet and they went on at a trot, the two Wades taking hold of Jerry's stirrup-leathers and running alongside. In half an hour they entered the belt of trees, and dismounting, at once began to ascend the hill. They were some distance up when they heard a distant yell.

"You may yell as much as you like," Jerry panted, "you

Digitized by Google Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

won't catch us now. They have been a mighty long time finding out we were gone."

"They could not make out about you," Harry said. "I could see by the chief's manner, and the glances the Indian with him kept giving to the place where you were lying, that they were puzzled and alarmed. They offered if we would surrender that they would allow us to return down the valley without hurt. I said, of course, that I preferred staying where I was; we had come up the valley and intended going farther; we didn't want to interfere with them, and if they had left us alone we should have left them alone; and they had only themselves to thank for the loss of some of their braves. 'We have,' I said, 'many friends who will protect us, and much harm will fall on the Indians who venture to meddle with us.'

"'Are your friends white men?' the chief asked. 'Have they wings that they have flown down here from the hills?'

"'They have come, that is enough,' I said. 'You see, when they were wanted they were here, and if they are wanted again you will hear of them, and your braves will die, and you will gain nothing. You had best go back to your lodges and leave us to go away in peace. Whoever they are, they can shoot, as you have found out to your cost. They have no ill-will to the red-skins, providing the red-skins let us alone. They only fired four shots; if they had wished to, they could have killed many more.' When the chief saw that he could get nothing further from me he went away. As usual he spoke boastfully at last, and said that he had offered peace to us, and if war came, it would be our faults. I laughed, and said that we could take care of ourselves, and preferred doing so to trusting ourselves in the hands of the 'Rappahoes, when we had made some of their squaws widows."

Digitized by Google Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

"Would they have kept their word, uncle, do you think?" Tom asked.

"Not they. There are a few of the Indian tribes whose word can be taken, but as a rule words mean nothing with them, and if we had put ourselves in their power they would have tomahawked us instantly, or else taken us down and tortured us at their villages, which would have been a deal worse. I have no doubt they had a long talk after the chief returned to them, and that it was some time after it became dark before they could pluck up courage enough to climb the rock, though I expect they must have got close to it very soon after we left. I reckon they have been crawling up inch by inch. Of course, directly they got to where the horses had been tied they knew we had gone, and I expect that yell was a signal for a rush forward to the top. But we need not bother any more about them. They may ride as far as the foot of the forest, but when they find we have gained that safely they will give it up until morning; they will know well enough it is no good starting to search the woods in the dark. We may as well rest where we are until the moon is up, for we make so much noise crashing through this undergrowth that they could hear us down there."

"Now tell me, lad, about your mother and sisters, and how you came out after all."

Tom told his uncle of his mother's death, and the reason why he had left his sisters to come out to join him.

"It is a very bad business, lad, and I take a lot of blame to myself. When I got your mother's letter telling me of poor John's death, and that she would not hear of your coming out, I said some very hard things to myself. Here had I been knocking about for twenty years, and having had a fair share of luck, and yet I could not put my hand on five hundred dollars, and there was my brother's widow and children, and I, their nearest relative, could not

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

help them. It made me feel a pretty mean man, I can tell you. Your mother did not say much about her circumstances, but it did not need that. I knew that John had retired from the navy with little besides his half-pay, and that her pension as his widow must be a mighty slim one. Altogether I had a pretty bad time of it. However, I took a tall oath that the next rich strike I made the dollars should not be thrown away. I reckoned that you would be out before long; for it was certain that if you were a lad of spirit you would not be staying there doing nothing. Your mother said that the girls all intended to take up teaching, and it was not likely that you would let them work for the family while you were loafing about at home. I know in my time it was hard enough to get anything to do there, and young fellows who have come out here to ranche tell me that it is harder than ever now. I thought you would fancy this life, and that in time you would talk your mother over into letting you come."

"I should never have got her to agree to it, uncle. I wanted to go to sea, but after father's death she would not hear of it. She said I was her only boy and that she could not spare me, and I had to promise to give up the thought. She was still more against your plan, but when I wrote to you I thought that possibly in time she might agree to it. But it was not long afterwards that her health began to fail, and I saw then that I must give up all thought of leaving her, and must, when I left school, take anything that offered; and it was only after her death that I talked it over with the girls, and they agreed that to come here was the best thing for me."

"And you left before my last letter arrived?"

"Yes; we had no letter after the one you wrote asking me to come out."

"No, I suppose you could not have had it. I wrote

Digitized by Google Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

before I started out three months ago from Salt Lake City. I had struck a ledge of pretty good stuff, I and another. We sold out for a thousand dollars, and I sent my share off to your mother, telling her that I had been having bad luck since I got her letter, but that I hoped to do better in future, and I thought, anyhow, I could promise to send her as much once a year, and if I had a real stroke of luck she and her girls would have the benefit of it."

"That was good of you, uncle."

"Not good at all," Harry Wade grumbled. "I have behaved like a fool all along; it is true that when I did get letters from your father, which was not very often, he always wrote cheerfully, and said very little about how he was situated as to money. But I ought to have known—I did know, if I thought of it—that with a wife and six children it must be mighty hard to make ends meet on a lieutenant's half-pay, and there was I, often throwing away twice as much as his year's pension on a week's spree. When I heard he was gone you may pretty well guess how I felt. However, lad, if things turn out well I will make it up as far as I can. Now, let us join the others."

The others, however, were all sound asleep, having wrapped themselves in their blankets, and lain down as soon as the halt was decided upon. Jerry, having had no sleep the previous night, and but little for four or five days, had not even thought of asking the others for food, which they doubtless had on their saddles, although he had tasted nothing for twenty-four hours. Tom, however, less accustomed to enforced fasts, felt ravenous.

"We have had nothing to eat to-day, uncle, except a crust left over from yesterday's baking, and I don't think I could get to sleep if I did not eat something."

"Bless me, I never thought of that, Tom. If I had I would have sent food across by the chief this morning.

Digitized by Google Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

There is no bread, but there is plenty of cold meat. We cooked a lot yesterday evening, for we thought we might not get a chance of cooking to-day."

"Then you knew, uncle, the Indians were near?" Tom went on, when he had appeased his appetite and taken a drink of water, with a little whisky in it from his uncle's flask.

"Aye, lad; we guessed somehow we had been followed all along. We had done everything we could to throw them off the trail—travelling as much as we could in the course of streams, muffling the feet of our ponies, and picking out the hardest ground to travel on, but every morning before day-break one of us went up the hillside, and twice we made out mounted Indians moving about down the valley. Yesterday morning ten of them came galloping up within easy shot. I don't think they thought that we were so near. They drew up their horses suddenly, had a talk, and then came riding after us. It didn't need their yells to tell us what their intention was. We knocked three of them out of their saddles, then threw our horses down and lay behind them.

"They galloped round and round us shooting, but we picked two more off, and then they rode away. We knew enough of them to be sure that they were not going to give it up, but would follow us till joined by enough of their tribe to attack us again. We made a long march, hoping to get to the timber before they could come up, but just as the sun was setting we saw them coming along, about fifteen of them; and we had just time to get up to that rock. As they rode past we opened a smart fire and dropped four of them; the others rode up the valley, so as to cut us off from going farther. We filled our water-skins and got the horses half-way up as you saw, and then lighted a fire and cooked. We kept watch all night, two down below and one at the top; but everything was quiet, and we guessed they were waiting for others to come up.

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

"About an hour before daylight we heard another gang arrive below us. They halted there, and it was not long before they began crawling up from above and below, and for a bit we shot pretty brisk. The odds were too much against them, with us on the height, and they drew off. Then for an hour they were pretty quiet while they were holding council, except that we did some shooting with a party who had climbed up to that ledge opposite; then we saw both bands mount, and reckoned they were going to make a dash for us. We knew if they did it in earnest we must go down, for once among the rocks and bushes there would be no keeping them from mounting up. We made up our minds that the end was not far off, though I fancy we should have accounted for a good many of them before they rubbed us out. When your four rifles spoke from the ledge we thought it was a party who had gone back there, for we felt sure that we had driven them all away, but it wasn't more than a moment before we saw it wasn't that. There was no mistaking the yell of astonishment from the Indians, and as the horses swerved round we saw that three of them had fallen. You may guess we didn't stop to argue who it was, but set to work to do our share; but it seemed to us something like a miracle when the red-skins rode off.

"We had been talking of Leaping Horse during the night, for he had promised to come back to join us, and I knew him well enough to be able to bet all creation that he would come. He had only left us to keep an appointment with his nephew, who was to join him at Fort Bridger. If there had only been two guns fired we should have put it down to him, but being four I don't think either of us thought of him till he stood up and shouted. Now, lad, you had better take a sleep. We shall be moving on as soon as the moon is fairly up, and it won't be over that hill behind us

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

till two or three. I will watch till then, but I don't think there is the least chance of their following us to-night; they have been pretty roughly handled, and I don't think they will follow until they have solved the mystery of that ledge. They searched it, no doubt, as soon as they found the rock was empty, and at daybreak they will set about tracing the trail up. That will be easy enough for them when they have once got rid of the idea that there was something uncanny about it, and then we shall have them on our heels again and on the chief's too. The first thing for us to do will be to make along the hill till we get to the edge of the cañon, where Leaping Horse has gone for your ponies, and to follow it to its upper end."

"I will watch, uncle, if you will wake me in an hour. I shall be all right after a nap, but I can scarcely keep my eyes open now."

It seemed, however, to Tom that he had not been asleep five minutes when his uncle shook him. The others were already on their feet. The moon was shining down through the trees, and with cautious steps, and taking the utmost trouble to avoid the branches, they started on their upward climb. Not a word was spoken, for all knew how far sound travels on a still night. There was, however, a slight breeze moving among the tree tops when they started, and in an hour this had so far increased that the boughs were swaying and the leaves rustling.

"I reckon there ain't no occasion to keep our mouths shut no longer," one of the men said. "Now that the trees are on the move they would not hear us if they were only a hundred yards away."

All were glad when daylight began to appear, Tom because the climbing would be much easier when the ground could be seen, the others because they were all longing for a pipe, but had hitherto not dared to light one, for the flash

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

of a match could be seen far away. They had been bearing steadily to the right as they mounted, and shortly after daybreak they suddenly found themselves on the edge of a cañon.

"Do you think this is the one, Jerry?" one of the men asked.

"That is more than I can tell, Ben. I did not see an opening in the valley as we came up it, but we might very well have missed one in the dark. I should think from the distance we have gone towards the right it must be the one where we left our horses. Anyhow, whether it is or not, we must follow it up to the top and wait there for a bit to see if the chief comes."

"I reckon he will be there before us," Harry said; "that is if he got round the red-skins all right and found the horses. There would be no reason for him to wait, and I expect he would go straight on, and is like enough to be waiting for us by this time."

CHAPTER VII.

CHASED.

THE party pressed forward as rapidly as they could. The ground was rough and at times very steep, and those on foot were able to keep up with the horses without much difficulty.

"You think the Indians will follow, uncle?" Tom asked.

"They will follow, you may bet your boots, Tom; by this time they have got to the bottom of the mystery. The first thing this morning some of them will go up on to the ledge where you were, follow your tracks down to the

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

cañon where you left the horses, and find that you came up the valley and not down it. They will have made out that there were two whites and two red-skins, and that the two red-skins have gone up the cañon with the horses. Directly the matter is all cleared up, they will be hotter than ever for our scalps, for there is nothing a red-skin hates worse than being fooled. Of course, they will know that it is a good deal harder to wipe out seven men than three, and I don't think they will attack us openly; they know well enough that in a fair fight two red-skins, if not three, are likely to go down for each white they rub out. But they will bide their time: red-skins are a wonderful hand at that; time is nothing to them, and they would not mind hanging about us for weeks and weeks if they can but get us at last. However, we will talk it all over when the Indians join us. I don't think there is any chance of fighting to-day, but whether we shall get out of these mountains without having another scrimmage is doubtful."

Tom noticed that in his talk with him his uncle dropped most of the western expressions which when speaking with the others he used as freely as they did. He was now able to have a fair look at him, and found that he agreed pretty closely with the ideas he had formed of him. There was a strong likeness between him and his brother. They were about the same height, but Harry was broader and more strongly built. His face was deeply bronzed by long exposure to the wind and sun. He had a large tawny beard, while Tom's father had been clean shaved. The sailor was five years the senior, but the miner looked far younger than Tom could ever remember his father looking, for the latter had never thoroughly recovered his health after having had a long bout of fever on the Zanzibar station; and the long stride and free carriage of his uncle

Digitized by Google Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

was in striking contrast to the walk of his father. Both had keen gray eyes, the same outline of face, the same pleasant smile.

"Now that I can see you fairly, Tom," the miner said, when they halted once for the horses to come up to them, "I can make out that you are a good deal like your father as I can first remember him."

"I was thinking you were very like him, uncle."

"We used to be alike in the old days, but I reckon the different lives we led must have changed us both a great deal. He sent me once a photograph four or five years ago, and at first I should not have known it was him. I could see the likeness after a bit, but he was very much changed. No doubt I have changed still more; all this hair on my face makes a lot of difference. You see, it is a very long time since we met. I was but twenty when I left England, and I had not seen him for two or three years before that, for he was on the Mediterranean station at the time. Well, here are the horses again, and as the ground looks flatter ahead we shall have to push on to keep up with them." They were presently altogether beyond the forest, and a broad plateau of bare rock stretched away in front of them for miles.

"There they are," Jerry Curtis shouted. "I was beginning to feel scared that the 'Rappahoes had got them."

It was a minute or two before Tom could make out the distant figures, for his eyes were less accustomed to search for moving objects than were those of his companions.

"They are riding fast," Harry Wade said. "I reckon they have made out some Indians on their trail."

The little dark mass Tom had first seen soon resolved itself into two horsemen and two riderless animals. They were still three or four miles away, but in twenty minutes they reached the party advancing to meet them. The

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

whites waved their hats and gave them a cheer as they rode up.

"So you have managed to get through them all right, chief?"

"The 'Rappahoes are dogs. They are frightened at shadows; their eyes were closed. Leaping Horse stood near their fires and saw them go forward, and knew that his white brothers must have gained the forest before the 'Rappahoes got to the rock. He found the horses safe, but the cañon was very dark and in some places very narrow, with many rocks in the road, so that he had to stop till the moon was high. It was not until morning came that he reached the head of the cañon, an hour's ride from here. Half an hour back Leaping Horse went to the edge and looked down. There were ten 'Rappahoes riding fast up the trail. Has my brother heard anything of the others?"

"Nothing whatever," Harry said. "I reckon they did not begin to move until daylight, and as we went on when the moon rose they must be a good two hours behind us. Which way do you think we had better go, chief?"

"Where does my brother wish to go?"

"It matters mighty little. I should say for a bit we had better travel along this plateau, keeping about the same distance from the timber-line. I don't think the 'Rappahoes will venture to attack us in the open. If we keep on here we can cross the divide and get into the Shoshones' country, and either go down the Buffalo and then up the Snake and so work down south, or go east and strike some of the streams running that way into the Big Horn."

The chief shook his head.

"Too far, too many bad Indians; will talk over fire to-night."

"That is it, chief. It is a matter that wants a good deal

Digitized by Google Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

of talking over. Anyhow, we had better be moving on at once."

Tom was glad to find himself in the saddle again, and the party rode on at a steady pace for some hours, then they halted, lit a fire, and cooked a meal. Tom noticed that the Indians no longer took pains to gather dry sticks, but took the first that came to hand. He remarked this to Jerry.

"They know it is no use trying to hide our trail here; the two bands of Indians will follow, one up and one down, until they meet at the spot where the chief joined us. From there they can track us easy enough. Nothing would suit us better than for them to come up to us here, for we should give them fits, sartin. This is a good place. This little stream comes down from that snow peak you see over there, and we have got everything we want, for this patch of bushes will keep us in firing for a bit. You see, there are some more big hills in front of us, and we are better here than we should be among them. I expect we shall camp here for the night."

"Then you don't think the Indians will come up close?"

"Not they. They will send a spy or two to crawl up, you may be sure, but they will know better than to come within reach of our rifles."

"I am mighty glad to have my teeth into some deer-flesh again," Ben Gulston said. "We had two or three chances as we came along, but we dare not fire, and we have just been living on bread and bacon. Where did you kill these wapiti?"

"At our first halt, near Fremont's Pass. We got two."

"Well, you haven't eaten much, Jerry," Sam Hicks said. "I reckon four men ought pretty well to have finished off two quarters by this time."

"I reckon we should have finished one of the bucks,

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

Sam; but we caught a grist of fish the same day, dried them in the sun, and I think we mostly ate them. They would not keep as well as the flesh. That is as good as the day we shot it, for up here in the dry air meat keeps a sight better than down in the plains. Give me some more tea, Sam."

"What do you think, mates, of camping here?" Harry Wade said. "The chief thinks we are better here than we should be if we moved on. He feels certain the redskins won't dare attack us."

There was a cordial agreement in favour of a halt, for after the work they had gone through during the last week they were glad of a rest. No one would have thought half an hour afterwards that the little party engaged in washing their shirts at the stream or mending their clothes, were in the heart of a country unknown to most of them, and menaced by a savage foe. The horses cropped the scanty tufts of grass or munched the young tops of the bushes, the rifles stood stacked by the fire, near which the two Indians sat smoking and talking earnestly together, Hunting Dog occasionally getting up and taking a long careful look over the plain. As the men finished their various jobs they came back to the fire.

"Now, chief," Harry said, "let us hear your ideas as to what we had best do. We are all pretty old hands at mountaineering, but we reckon you know a great deal more about it than we do. You don't like the plans I proposed."

"No can do it," the chief said positively. "In a moon the snow will fall, and there will be no crossing mountains."

"That is true enough," Jerry said. "An old trapper who had lived among the Shoshones told me that nine months in the year they were shut up in the valleys by the snow on the passes.'

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

"Then how can live?" the chief went on. "As long as we stay in this country the 'Rappahoes will watch us. They will tell the Bannacks and the Nez Pèrces, and they too would be on our trail. As long as we keep together and watch they will not come, they fear the white man's rifle; but we cannot live without hunting, and then they kill one, two, till all killed. At night must always watch, at day cannot hunt. How we live? What good to stay? If we stop all killed sure."

There was silence round the circle. Every one of them felt the truth of the Indian's words, and yet they hated the thought of abandoning their search for gold, or, failing that, of a return home with their horses laden with beaver skins.

Harry was the first to speak. "I am afraid these varmint have interfered with our plans, mates. If we had had the luck to drop into one of the upper valleys without being noticed we could have hunted and trapped there and looked for gold for months without much chance of being discovered, but this has upset it all. I am afraid that what the chief says is true. If we keep together we starve, if we break up and hunt we shall be ambushed and killed. I hate giving up anything I have set my mind on, but this time I don't see a way out of it. We ain't the first party that has come up here and had to go back again with empty hands, and we know what happened to that party of twenty old-time miners from California two years ago, though none of them ever got back to tell the tale. We knew when we started, it wur just a chance, and the cards have gone against us."

"That is so," Ben agreed; "if it had turned out well we might have made a good strike. It ain't turned out well, and as every day we stay here there will be more of those varmint swarming round us, I say the sooner we get out of this dog-goned country the better."

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

"You can count me in with you, Ben," Sam Hicks said. "We have gone in for the game and we don't hold hands, and it ain't no use bluffing against them red-skins. We sha'n't have lost much time arter all, and I reckon we have all learned something. Some day when the railroad goes right across, Uncle Sam will have to send a grist of troops to reckon up with the red-skins in these hills, and arter that it may be a good country for mining and trapping, but for the present we are a darned sight more likely to lose our scalps than to get skins."

"Well, Leaping Horse, which way would you advise us to take, then?"

"Go straight back to cañon, ride down there, cross river, go up mountains other side, pass them north of Union Peak, come down on upper water Big Wind River. From there little way on to Green River. Leaping Horse never been there, but has heard. One long day's ride from here, go to upper waters of Green River."

"That sounds good," Jerry Curtis said. "If we could once strike the Green we should be out of the 'Rappahoe country altogether. I have known two or three men who have been up the Green nearly to its head, and there is good hunting and a good many beaver in the side streams. I should not have thought it would have come anywhere like as near as this, but I don't doubt the chief is right."

"Union Peak," the chief said, pointing to a crag rising among a tumble of hills to the south.

"Are you sure, chief?"

The Indian nodded. "Forty, fifty miles away," he said. "Leaping Horse has been to upper waters of Green River, seen the peak from other side."

"That settles it, then," Harry said. "That is our course, there cannot be a doubt. I should never have proposed the

Digitized by Google Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

other if I had had an idea that we were within sixty or seventy miles of the Green River. And you think we had better take the cañon you came up by, chief?"

The Indian nodded. "If go down through forest may be ambushed. Open ground from here back to cañon. 'Rappahoes most in front. Think we go that way, not think we go back. Get good start. Once across river follow up little stream among hills other side, that the way to pass. If 'Rappahoes follow us we fight them."

"Yes, we shall have them at an advantage there, for they would have to come up under our fire, and there are sure to be places where half a dozen men could keep fifty at bay. Very well, chief, that is settled. When do you think we had better start?"

"When gets dark," the chief replied. "No lose time, more Indian come every hour. Keep fire burning well, 'Rappahoes think we camp here. Take horses a little way off and mount beyond light of fire."

"You think they will be watching us?"

"Sure to watch. First ride north half an hour, then turn and ride to cañon. If spies see us go off take word to friends we gone north. Too dark to follow trail. They think they catch us easy to-morrow, and take up trail in morning; but too late then, we cross river before that."

There was a general murmur of assent. The thought of being constantly watched, and suddenly attacked when least expecting it, made them feel restless, and the thought of early action was pleasant to them.

"You don't think that there are any spies watching us now, uncle, do you?"

"Not close, Tom; they would know better than that. They could see us miles away if we were to mount and ride off, and it is only when it gets dark that they would venture to crawl up, for if one were sighted in the daytime

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

he would not have a ghost of a chance of getting away, for we could ride him down sartin."

"Well, I reckon we may as well take a sleep," Sam Hicks said. "You lie down for one, anyhow, Harry, for you watched last evening. We will toss up which of us keeps awake."

"Leaping Horse will keep watch," the chief said quietly. "No fear of Indians, but better to watch."

Knowing the power of the red-skins to keep awake for an almost unlimited time, none of the others thought of refusing the offer, and in a few minutes all were sound asleep. Towards sunset they were on their feet again. Another meal was cooked and eaten, then as it became dusk the horses were gathered fifty yards away, and Hunting Dog and Tom took their places beside them.

"Keep your eyes open and your rifle handy, Tom," his uncle said. "It is like enough that some young brave, anxious to distinguish himself, may crawl up with the intention of stampeding the ponies, though I don't think he would attempt it till he thought most of us were asleep. Still, there is no saying."

The watch was undisturbed, and soon it became so dark that objects could no longer be seen fifty yards away. Tom began to feel nervous. Every tuft of ground, every little bush seemed to him to take the form of a crawling Indian, and he felt a great sense of relief when he saw the figures round the fire rise and walk towards him.

"I am glad you have come, uncle," he said frankly; "I began to feel very uncomfortable several times. It seemed to me that some of the bushes moved."

"That is just what I thought you would be feeling, Tom. But it was just as well that your first watch should be a short one, without much chance of an ambush being on foot; and I knew that if your eyes deceived you, Hunting Dog

Digitized by Google Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

was there. Next time you won't feel so nervous; that sort of thing soon passes off."

A fresh armful of brush-wood had been thrown on to the fire before the men left it, and long after they had ridden away they could see the flames mounting high. After riding north for a quarter of an hour they changed their route and passed round, leaving the fire half a mile on their right. The light of the stars was quite sufficient for them to travel by, and after four hours' journey the chief who was riding ahead halted.

"Not far from cañon now. Listen."

A very faint murmur came to their ears, so faint that had not his attention been drawn to it Tom would not have noticed it at all.

"What is that noise?" he asked.

"That is the stream down in the cañon," his uncle replied. "How far are we from the head, chief?"

"Not far, must ride slow."

They proceeded at a walk, changing their course a little towards the east. Hunting Dog went on ahead, and in a quarter of an hour they heard his signal, the cry of an owl. It arose from a point still further east, and quickening their pace, in a few minutes they came up to the young Indian, who was standing by his horse at the edge of a steep descent, at the bottom of which Tom could see a stream of water.

"It looks very steep," Jerry said.

"Steep, but smooth," the Indian replied. "Came up here with horses this morning."

All dismounted, and Tom went up to his horse's head. "That won't do, Tom. Never go before a horse down a steep place where you can't see your way, always drive it before you."

There was some trouble in getting the horses to commence the descent, but after a short time the chief's pony set the

Digitized by Google Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

example; and tucking its hind legs under it until it sat down on its haunches, began to slide down, while the other animals, after staring into the darkness with ears laid back and snorting with fear, were half-persuaded, half-forced to follow its example, and the men went down after them. The descent was not so steep as in the darkness it looked, and the depth was not over fifty feet. As soon as they reached the bottom they mounted again, and the chief leading the way they rode down the cañon. At first they were able to proceed at a fair pace, but as the sides grew higher and more precipitous the darkness became more dense, and they were obliged to pick their way with great caution among the boulders that strewed the bottom of the ravine. Several times they had to dismount in order to get the horses over heavy falls, and it was four hours from the time they entered the cañon before they approached its mouth. When they entered the little wood where they had first left the horses, the chief said, "Make fire, cook food here. Leaping Horse and Hunting Dog go on and scout, maybe 'Rappahoes left watch in valley."

"Very well, chief. It is seven hours since we started; I think the horses will be all the better for an hour's rest, and am sure we shall be the better of a feed. Besides, when we are once out of this hole we may have to travel fast."

"You don't think it likely that the 'Rappahoes are on the look-out for us at the entrance?" Tom asked, as the Indians moved away.

"Not likely at all, Tom. Still, as they might reckon that if we gave their searching party the slip we must come down again by the river or through this cañon, they may have left a party or sent down word to some of their villages to keep a watch in the valley."

It was more than an hour before the Indians returned.

"No 'Rappahoes in valley," the chief said, as he seated

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

himself by the fire and began without loss of time to eat the meat they had cooked in readiness. "Better be going soon, must cross river and get on before light comes; have seen fires, Indian villages up on hillsides. When light comes and 'Rappahoes find trail they come back quick."

"You may bet your boots they will, chief," Sam Hicks said. "They will be a pretty mad crowd when they make out that we have come down again by the cañon. As soon as they see which way we have headed some of them will make a bee-line down here in hopes of cutting us off at the mouth, but by the time they are here we shall be half-way up the hill."

The Indian made no reply, but he and Hunting Dog ate their meal steadily, and as soon as they had finished rose to their feet, and saying "Time to go" went out to fetch in their horses.

"I don't think the chief is as confident we shall get off without a fight as Sam seemed to be," Tom said to his uncle.

"There is never any saying what an Indian thinks, Tom, even when he has fallen into white man's ways, as Leaping Horse has done. It may be that the sight of the fires he made out on the opposite hills has troubled him. It will be light before we are far up on the side, and we may be made out by some of the varmint there. They are always restless. Go into an Indian village when you will, you will find some of them smoking by the fire. Their ears are so 'tarnal sharp, they can hear sounds that would never catch our ears, not at half the distance. The clink of a couple of pans together, or a stone set rolling by a horse's tread, were it ever so faint, would bring them on their feet directly, especially now they know that a war-party is out."

The march was again resumed. Passing through the narrowest part of the cañon they issued out into the valley and made for the river. Some time was lost here, for Sam

Digitized by Google Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

Hicks, who was leading one of the pack-ponies, was carried down several hundred yards by the stream, and with difficulty effected his landing. The horse's load shifted and had to be repacked. As soon as this was done they followed the river down for two miles till they came upon a stream running into it from the south-west.

"You think this is the stream we have to follow, chief?"

"Must be him, no other came in on this side for a long way; right line for peak."

They turned up by the stream, and after riding a mile found themselves entering a mountain gorge. It was not a cañon but a steep, narrow valley. They picked their way with the greatest caution for some time, then the two Indians stopped simultaneously.

"What is the matter, chief?" Harry, who was riding next to them, whispered.

"Smell smoke."

Harry sniffed the air.

"I can't say I smell it, chief, but if you say you do that settles it. Where do you think it comes from?"

"Up valley; wind light, but comes that way. Indian village up here."

"Well, so much the worse for the Indian village if it interferes with us," Harry said grimly; "there is one thing certain, we have got to go through. Probably most of the braves are away up in the hills."

They now went on with redoubled caution. The chief gave his bridle to Hunting Dog and went forward on foot. A hundred yards farther the valley made a sharp turn and then widened out considerably, and the glow of a fire was visible among some trees standing on the hillside some fifty feet above the level of the stream. The chief looked at the sky; a faint light was breaking, and without pausing

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

he continued to lead the way. They passed under the Indian encampment, and had got a few yards higher when the pony Sam Hicks was leading gave a sharp neigh.

"Darn its old ears!" Tom heard Jerry growl. Harry at the same moment put his horse to a trot, and the others following clattered up the valley, knowing that concealment was no longer of any use; indeed, an answering neigh from above and hurried shouts were heard, followed a moment afterwards by a loud yell as an Indian running through the trees caught sight of them in the moonlight.

"We are in for it now, Tom; that is, if there are men enough in the village to attack us."

The horses broke into a gallop. They had gone but fifty yards when a rifle-shot was heard from behind, and Tom felt a shock as the ball struck his saddle. Almost immediately another shot was fired abreast of him, and an Indian yell rose loudly behind them. A moment later Leaping Horse with a shout of triumph bounded down the rocks and leapt on to his horse. Four or five more shots were fired from behind, but none of them were hit. A hundred yards farther they were in shelter of a belt of trees that extended down to the stream. As they entered it Harry looked back. He could now see the hills beyond the main valley.

"Look, chief!" he exclaimed. "The varmint up there are signalling far off above the timber-line."

Bright tongues of fire could be seen, two close together and one a short distance to the left.

"What does that mean, uncle?" Tom asked, as the chief gave a short exclamation of surprise and anger.

"It means, lad, that the red-skins have been sharper than we gave them credit for. When their spies brought them news that we had started they must have come down to the fire and followed our trail at once with torches, before we had got above an hour or two away. No doubt it

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

was slow work, but they must have found where we changed our course, and made out that we were making for the head of the cañon. I expect most of them lost no time in following the trail farther, but rode straight for the head of the cañon, and like enough they weren't half an hour behind us when we came out. The others rode to the edge of the plateau and set those fires alight."

"But what do they mean, uncle?"

"They are a warning to all the villages that we have headed back, you may be sure of that, though I can't say what the message is, for every tribe has its own signals, but it will have set them on the watch up and down the valley; and like enough the signal has been repeated somewhere at a point where it can be seen straight down the Big Wind Valley. The shooting will tell them all which way we are making, and if the 'Rappahoes have come out of the cañon, as I reckon they have, they need lose no more time in looking for our trail. I reckon in half an hour we shall have a hundred or so of the varmint after us. I only hope there are no more villages upon this line. I don't so much care about the fellows who are following us, we are sure to find some place where we can make a stand, but it would be awkward if we find our way barred."

"But if there is no one in front, uncle, I should think we might be able to keep ahead. Our horses are as good as they are likely to have."

"You and Jerry might be able to, Tom, for you have got hold of two first-rate ponies; but the Indians' are nothing out of the way, and our ponies ain't in it with you; besides, they and the pack-horses have all been doing hard work for the last week with none too much food, and many of the 'Rappahoes will be on fresh horses. I expect we have got some very tall climbing to do before we get up to the pass, and we have got to do our fighting before we get there."

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

The ground rose steeply, and was encumbered by fallen stones and boulders, and it was not long before the pack-horses began to show signs of distress, while those ridden by Harry and his two comrades were drawing their breath in short gasps. After emerging from the trees the ravine had run in almost a straight line for more than half a mile, and just as they reached the end of this stretch a yell was heard down the valley. Looking back they saw eight or ten mounted Indians emerging from the wood at the lower end.

"That is a signal," Harry exclaimed, as four rifles were fired in quick succession. "Well, we have got a bit of a start of them, and they won't venture to attack us until some more come up. We had better take it a bit quietly, chief, or our horses will give out. I expect we sha'n't be long before we come upon a place where we can make a stand."

The Seneca looked round at the horses. "You, Sam, Ben and pack-horses go on till you get to place where can fight. We four wait here; got good horses, and can ride on. We stop them here for a bit."

"That would be best. I don't like being out of it, but we will do our share presently."

No more words were necessary. Harry and his two mates rode on at a slower pace than before, while the two Indians, Jerry, and Tom dismounted, left their horses beyond the turn, and then coming back took up their positions behind four large boulders. The Indians had noticed their returning figures, for they suddenly drew up their horses and gathered together in consultation.

"Draw your bullet, Tom," Jerry said, "and drop in half a charge more powder; I reckon that piece of yours will send a bullet among them with the help of a good charge. Allow a bit above that top notch for extra elevation. It's a good big mark, and you ought to be able to plump a bullet among them."

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

Tom followed the instructions, and then resting the barrel on the top of the boulder took a steady aim and fired. There was a sudden stir among the group of Indians. A horse reared high in the air, almost unseating its rider, and then they all rode off at the top of their speed, and halted two or three hundred yards lower down the valley. The Senecas uttered a grunt of approval.

"That was a good shot, Tom, though I wish you had hit one of the red-skins instead of his critter. Still, it will give them a good lesson, and make them mighty keerful. They won't care about showing their ugly heads within range of a piece that will carry five hundred yards."

A quarter of an hour passed without any movement on the part of the Indians. Then a large party of horsemen appeared from the trees below, and were greeted by them with a yell of satisfaction.

"There must be well-nigh fifty of them," Jerry said. "I reckon it's the party that came down the hill. They must have picked up a good many others by the way. Now the fun is going to begin."

After five minutes' consultation some twenty of the Indians dismounted, and dividing into two parties ascended the slopes of the valley and began to move forward, taking advantage of every stone and bush, so that it was but occasionally that a glimpse of one of their bodies was obtained.

"They are going to skirmish up to us," Jerry said, "till they are near enough to make it hot for us if we show a head above the rocks to fire. As soon as they can do that, the others will charge. I think they are not more than four hundred yards off now, Tom. That is within your range, so you may as well begin to show them that we are awake. If you can bring one down it will check their pace."

Tom had just noticed three Indians run behind a clump of bushes, and he now levelled his rifle so that it bore on

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

925

"A MOMENT LATER THE INDIAN FELL FORWARD ON HIS FACE."

Digitized by Google

Original from
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

Digitized by Google

Original from
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

a spot a foot on one side of it. Half a minute later an Indian appeared at the bush and began to run forward. Tom pressed the trigger. The Indian ran a few steps, and then fell forward on his face.

"Bravo, Plumb-centre!" Jerry shouted. "We said that you would do the rifle credit, Tom, and Billy the Scout could not have done better himself."

"Young white man make great hunter," the chief remarked approvingly. "Got good eye and steady hand."

The lesson had its effect. The Indian advance was no longer rapid, but was conducted with the greatest caution, and it was only occasionally that a glimpse could be caught of a dusky figure passing from rock to rock. When they came within three hundred yards the two Indians and Jerry also opened fire. One fell to a shot from the chief, but neither of the others hit their marks. Tom indeed did not fire again, the movements of the Indians being so rapid that they were gone before he could bring his sight to bear upon any of them.

"Go now," the chief said. "'Rappahoes fire soon; run quick."

It was but a few yards to shelter. As they dashed across the intervening space two or three Indian rifles rang out, but the rest of the assailants had been too much occupied in sheltering themselves and looking for the next spot to make for, to keep an eye upon the defenders, and the hastily-fired shots all missed. A moment later the party mounted their horses and rode up the ravine, the yells of the Indians ringing in their ears.

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

CHAPTER VIII.

IN SAFETY.

"WE have gained half an hour anyhow," Jerry said, as they galloped up the ravine, "and I reckon by the time we overtake them we shall find them stowed away in some place where it will puzzle the red-skins to dislodge us. The varmint will fight hard if they are cornered, but they ain't good at advancing when there are a few rifle-tubes, in the hands of white men, pointing at them, and they have had a lesson now that we can shoot."

The ravine continued to narrow. The stream had become a mere rivulet, and they were high up on the hillside.

"I begin to be afeared there ain't no place for making a stand." Here he was interrupted by an angry growl, as a great bear suddenly rose to his feet behind a rock.

"You may thank your stars that we are too busy to attend to you," Jerry said, as they rode past within a few yards of it. "That is a grizzly, Tom; and an awkward beast you would have found him if you had come upon him by yourself without your shooting-iron. He is a big one too, and his skin would have been worth money down in the settlements. Ah, there they are."

The ravine made an abrupt turn to the west, and high up on its side they saw their three companions with the five horses climbing up the precipitous rocks.

"However did they get up there?" Jerry exclaimed.

"Found Indian trail," the chief said. "Let my brothers keep their eyes open."

They rode on slowly now, examining every foot of the steep hillside. Presently Hunting Dog, who was ahead, uttered

Digitized by Google Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

an exclamation. Between two great boulders there was a track, evidently a good deal used.

"Let Hunting Dog go first," the chief said. "Leaping Horse will follow the white men."

"I reckon that this is the great Indian trail over the pass," Jerry said to Tom, who preceded him. "I have heard there ain't no way over the mountains atween that pass by Fremont's Buttes and the pass by this peak, which they calls Union Peak, and the red-skins must travel by this when they go down to hunt buffalo on the Green River. It is a wonder Harry struck on it."

"Leaping Horse told him to keep his eyes open," the chief said from the rear. "He knew that Indian trail led up this valley."

"Jee-rusalem! but it's a steep road," Jerry said presently. "I am dog-goned if I can guess how the red-skins ever discovered it. I expect they must have tracked some game up it, and followed to see where it went to."

The trail wound about in a wonderful way. Sometimes it went horizontally along narrow ledges, then there was a bit of steep climbing, where they had to lead their horses; then it wound back again, and sometimes even descended for a distance to avoid a projecting crag.

"Ah! would ye, yer varmint?" Jerry exclaimed, as a shot rang out from the valley below and a bullet flattened itself against a rock within a foot or two of his head. The shot was followed by a loud yell from below, as a crowd of mounted Indians rode at full gallop round the angle of the ravine.

"Hurry on, Hunting Dog, and get round the next corner, for we are regular targets here."

A few yards farther a turn of the path took them out of sight of the Indians, but not before a score of bullets came whistling up from below.

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

"The varmint have been riding too fast to shoot straight, I reckon. It will be our turn directly."

Just as he spoke the chief called upon them to dismount. They threw their bridles on their horses' necks, and descending to the ledge they had just left, lay down on it.

"Get your revolver out, Tom, before you shoot," Jerry said. "They will be off before you have time to load your rifle again."

The Indians were some four hundred feet below them, and were talking excitedly, evidently hesitating whether to follow up the trail. The four rifles cracked almost together. Two Indians fell, and the plunging of two horses showed that they were hit. In an instant the whole mass were on their way down the valley, followed by bullet after bullet from the revolvers which Leaping Horse as well as the whites carried. Anything like accurate aim was impossible, and no Indian was seen to fall, but it was probable that some of the bullets had taken effect among the crowded horsemen.

"Go on quiet now," Leaping Horse said, rising to his feet. "'Rappahoes not follow any farther. One man with this"—and he touched his revolver—"keep back whole tribe here."

Half an hour later they joined the party who had halted at the top of the track.

"It air too bad our being out of it," Ben said. "I hope you have given some of the varmint grist."

"Only five or six of them," Jerry replied regretfully, "counting in the one Leaping Horse shot at the village. Tom here did a big shot, and brought one down in his tracks at a good four hundred yards—as neat a shot as ever I saw fired. The chief he accounted for another; then atween us we wiped out two down below; and I reckon some of the others are carrying some of our lead away. Waal, I think we have shook them off at last anyhow.

Digitized by Google Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN