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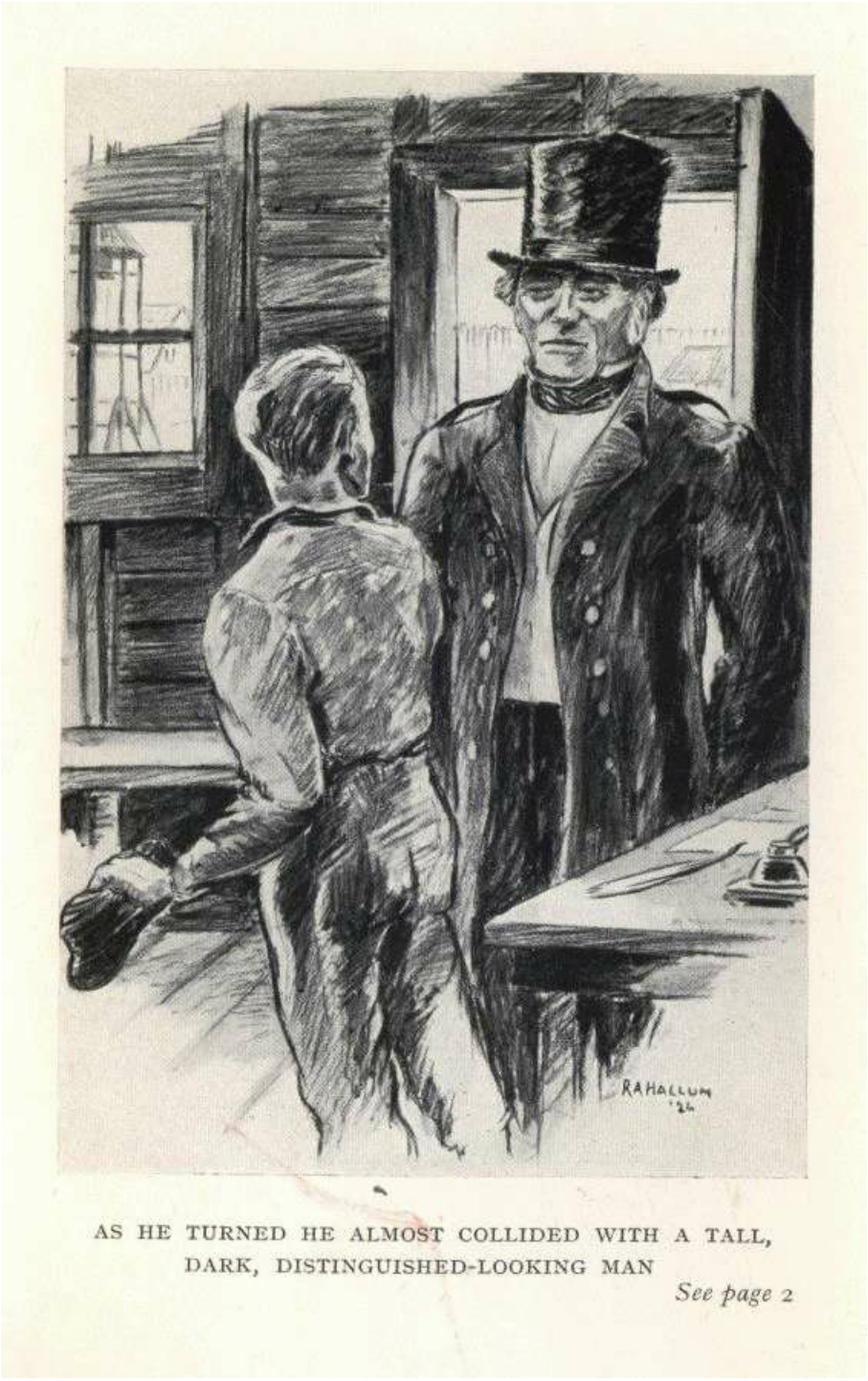

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THE BLACK CANYON

A STORY OF '58

By

B. A. McKELVIE

1927
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FOREWORD

There are few parts of the Western World where a more picturesque and exciting tale has been woven into the fabric of nineteenth-century development than in British Columbia, Canada's Pacific province.

In *The Black Canyon* an effort has been made to picture just a few of the stirring incidents of a single summer, that of 1858, in the hope that the story will prove entertaining, especially to boys, and create in the minds of some a desire to further explore the romance of the West.

The main features of *The Black Canyon* may be corroborated by historical research, but unfortunately many of the details of value have been lost to future generations by the indifference of the times. So it is that, although Ned Stout, the last of McLennan's party, lived until January 1924, only half a dozen names of the gallant band of twenty-six are known to-day. Nor is there any exact record of the toll of lives taken in that short, savage war in the gorges above Fort Yale, although it is estimated that at least 132 white men were killed by the Indians.

The late Dr. Wymond W. Walkem, a friend of Stout, and himself a pioneer, set down, after talking to the old miner, some notes, and these, with data from the Provincial Archives, newspaper clippings, and recollections of Mr. Jason Allard, son of the officer in charge at Yale, who was there at the time, have permitted a reconstruction of the incidents with some claim to accuracy. Of course the particular happenings featuring the youthful heroes have been necessary

additions for the sake of romantic interest and continuity.

That there has been an endeavour to follow closely the history of the fighting may be gathered from the following excerpts from Dr. Walkem's notes:

Before starting mining they formed a company and elected officers, the foreman being John McLennan and the assistant foreman, Archie McDonald. Jack McLennan was subsequently killed by the savages. After working for some time and getting nothing but fine gold, they started up-stream in search of the motherlode. In the meantime men had been pouring into the country ... so that when they left ... they had no fear of the two men they had left in charge of their boats being murdered by the Indians who were beginning to be aggressive.

... While moving from place to place they met many Indians ... who appeared to be quiet and peaceful. One young woman formed a strong attachment for Jack McLennan, who gave her clothing.... She followed him about, insisting on carrying his pack. At night Jack insisted on her staying with her friends, who always followed the prospectors' trail.

One night this young woman suddenly appeared and said in a subdued voice, "Hist! ... Before sun up you white men go. Go back in the stick (forests) far, far, far. Then go to salt-chuck (the ocean). Indian kill all white men in canyon, by and by kill you all. To-morrow he come. Go quick." The young woman then disappeared as silently as she had come.

... Abandoning everything but their guns and ammunition and a blanket apiece, the party struck across the hills until they reached what was afterwards known as Jackass Mountain near the Fraser River.

While passing from a small bench below Jackass Mountain to another bench the Indians, who were concealed in the brush, fired from above. Three of the miners were wounded.... These men died the next day. Travelling was now continued during the night by this small band of miners, and when day broke they went into camp fortified by timber and brush.... A man was lost every day and among these was Jack McLennan, and at Slaughter Bar six of the party were killed.... As the miners were killed, their comrades threw the bodies into the Fraser.... A night attack was made on an Indian village near the present site of Keefer's, to get food. At the crossing of a little stream four freshly caught salmon were found hanging to a pole. The hungry men were about to seize them when Mike Mallahan noticed that a blue jay that had pecked at the fish had died. The salmon were poisoned.

... At last five, the remnant of the party, ... reached China Bar where they built a fort, but were relieved the next day by Capt. Snyder and a company of volunteer miners.

The incidents related as having taken place at Nanaimo were told to me by Mr. Mark Bate, J.P., the Grand Old Man of the Coal City, who came to the establishment in 1857. For many years he was the manager of the collieries and served sixteen terms as mayor. Mr. Bate was also Government Agent at Nanaimo for a long time. He is still hale and hearty and takes an active interest in all matters of a public nature for the advancement of the community.

B.A.M.

Vancouver, 8 *Feb.*, 1927.

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A STORY OF '58

CHAPTER I

THE GOLD STAMPEDE

"Is there a letter here for Neil Alexander?"

The speaker was a bright, manly-looking boy of fifteen, rather above the average height for one of his age and possessed of a width of shoulders suggestive of a strength beyond his years.

It was late in the month of April 1858. The wild flowers and tangled growth about the pickets of the stockade of Fort Victoria bore evidence of the mildness of the Vancouver Island climate, and the postmaster, to whom the inquiry was addressed, provided additional proof of the warmth of the day, for he went about his work in his shirt-sleeves. As he sorted the pile of letters and papers that had come north from San Francisco on the steamer *Commodore*, he whistled so noisily that he failed to hear the request.

The boy advanced a step nearer to the table on which the mail was piled. "Is there a letter here for me?"

The postmaster stopped his whistling, turned and stared at the lad for a moment, then drawled, "How should I know?"

"You're the postmaster?"

The man nodded.

"Well, you should know."

"Y' aint told me your name yet. How d'you reckon I know?"

"Yes, I did. I asked if you had a letter for Neil Alexander."

"Didn't hear you. No," he said after looking through the sorted envelopes, "nuthin' fer you."

The disappointment of the boy was apparent. His lips tightened and he swallowed hard, while his shoulders drooped in dejection, but only for an instant. He quickly recovered himself, squared his jaw, and drawing himself up to his full height turned towards the door. As he did so he almost collided with a tall, dark, distinguished-looking man wearing a high beaver hat and a dark-blue coat, of semi-military cut, adorned with brass buttons.

"I'm sorry, sir," apologised the lad as he passed out of the building.

"Who is he?" asked the man. "What name did he give?"

"Neil Alexander, yer Excellency," answered the postmaster.

"'Alexander,'" murmured the other reflectively, "'Alexander.' I wonder if he's a relation of Duncan Alexander."

The boy did not proceed far after leaving the post-office. He was worried, for he had expected a letter, and not having received it he was at a loss what to do, and he halted to consider his immediate course of action.

"What is troubling you, Mr. Alexander?" It was the man in the blue coat. "Is there anything I can do for you?"

"I—I—don't know," hesitated the boy.

"It's all right," interposed the man in a kindly tone, "my name is James Douglas——"

"Then you're the——"

"Yes, I'm the Governor of Vancouver's Island. I hope you can trust me."

"Oh, it's not that, sir," exclaimed the boy. "You see, I expected to get a letter from my uncle and I don't know what to do. I thought he was living here, but a man told me he's away up in the North now, so I thought there would be a letter, but there is none."

"Your uncle is Duncan Alexander?"

"Yes, do you know him?"

The governor smiled. "Very well. I sent him to Fort Simpson two months ago."

"Then he could not have got my letter telling him I was coming!"

"It's not likely."

"Well, I'm in a pickle," laughed the boy mirthlessly.

"Why?"

"I came here expecting to meet him, and he don't even know I'm in the country, and he's hundreds of miles away."

"You had better come with me," advised the governor, and together they entered the fort and walked its length to one of the buildings which evidently served as an office-building.

"But how does it come that you are here?" asked the man as they walked. "You're only a boy—what? sixteen?"

"Not quite."

"I would have judged you to be. I was only sixteen when I entered the fur trade—nearly forty years ago. But have you come to apply for a post?"

"I don't know what I want to do," replied the boy. "You see, sir, I landed a little while ago to find my uncle. My father, who came out to San Francisco to teach at a school, was killed there about three months ago. He was shot on the street by a gunman. Two of them were having a fight and one shot. He missed the man he was trying to kill and hit my father. Before he died he told me to come up here to my uncle. I wrote to him and thought he would be at this place or would write me telling me what to do."

"Where's your mother?"

"She died before we left Scotland—when I was a baby."

"Well," observed Governor Douglas after a pause, "we will have to look after you until Duncan can get in touch with you. Come in," he added, and Neil followed him into a plainly furnished office.

A square-shouldered, grey-bearded man was seated at a desk.

"Meet Chief Trader Finlayson, Mr. Alexander."

"Pleased to meet you," and the big fur-trader grasped the boy's hand with a grip that made him wince.

The governor, who was also chief factor in charge of the operations of the Hudson's Bay Company, west of the Rocky Mountains, was soon deep in his correspondence, stopping his reading now and then to comment on some item of business, or to exclaim at some interesting passage he found in his letters. Apparently Neil was forgotten by both men.

"Huhm! Listen. Roderick; listen to what Ogilvy says: 'I hear the Russians from Sitka are offering otters here, and are bargaining with Eickoff and Witzell to supply black foxes at low terms!' Scoundrels, Finlayson; rascals they are, huhm!

"Indeed! Well, well.—Listen—'A schooner left here with potatoes for Owyhee in the Sandwich Islands. Better watch out for your trade from Fort Langley to there!' We must watch our interests there, Finlayson."

"Aye."

"Huhm!" he ejaculated, looking up from another letter. "Rae writes that San Francisco is all excited over the gold finds in the Couteau district on Fraser's River. Thousands are coming as soon as they can find transportation, he says."

"Yes," replied the chief trader, "it's true. More than three hundred came on the *Commodore* last night. They're at Esquimalt now, trying to get the captain to go over to the river, but he won't chance his boat there. I was over to Esquimalt this morning and I'm afraid we'll have them all here, for they're gold mad. What we'll do with three hundred men about here is beyond me. I don't like it."

"You came by the *Commodore*?" the governor asked Neil.

"Yes."

"And was there much excitement when you left?"

"Yes. Nothing else was being talked about. Everyone wanted to come with us. The sailors had to fight to keep them from trying to get aboard. Everyone there says Fraser's River is filled with gold sands, and that there's more in the Couteau country than in all California. Other boats were getting ready to come after us."

"I don't like it, Finlayson. They're a lawless lot, those Californian miners—at least a large number of them—for they had to organise vigilance committees to hang the worst of them. There's going to be no lynch law in this part of the world, not in British territory."

"What's best to be done?" asked Finlayson. "As governor of the nearest colony to Fraser's River you'll have to act."

"Yes, I'll have to take charge and see that the laws of Britain are enforced. I don't like it, but it's my duty. I'll have to call the council at once to decide what steps to take."

"It's bad business," commented the chief trader, "bad business," and he shook his head. "It'll disturb trade and excite the Indians. They'll forget fur and start looking for gold. It's a bad business."

"Well, Mr. Alexander," interjected the governor, "you'll take up your quarters for the time being here in the fort, and will eat at the hall. Where's your things?"

"My box is down at the water's edge. It was brought over in the ship's boat that I came in from Esquimalt."

"I'll have it brought up," offered the chief trader.

"We will see you at dinner-time," said Douglas, and, thus dismissed, Neil went out to wander about the fort.

The trading-post consisted of a stockade of poles eighteen or twenty feet in height, enclosing a piece of ground about one hundred yards square. At opposite angles great bastions of hewn timbers guarded the four sides. From the port-holes cannon frowned threateningly in the direction of the water and the Indian village opposite.

Within the enclosure were five storehouses, a blacksmith's shop, dining-hall and chapel, carpenters' shop, a house where the regular employees resided and a cottage for the officer in charge, quarters where visitors were lodged, and one or two warehouses. In the square formed by the arrangement of the houses and shops was a huge tower in which hung a bell, which was used to announce meals, call the inhabitants to chapel, toll during funeral services and celebrate weddings, as well as to give alarm in case of fire or threatened attack. Each stroke of the clapper was the signal for scores of dogs to start barking a hideous accompaniment.

Without the walls of the fort were a few scattered buildings, the most imposing of which was the residence of the Governor. The chief trader resided within the stockade.

Across the harbour was an Indian village of low, flat-roofed, rudely constructed huts. On the beach in front of these shacks a number of canoes, with high, carved prows, were pulled up beyond the tide-line. Even at the distance Neil could make out numbers of men and women moving about the place, their gaily coloured blankets showing brightly against the dull grey of the weather-beaten buildings and the dun-coloured rocks fringing the dark green of the forest.

Several natives were lounging about the main gate of the fort, and he was surprised to find them so different from the Indians he had imagined. Instead of being tall, copper-coloured savages, clothed in fringed buckskin, and wearing gaudy feathers in their hair, he discovered them to be short, broad-shouldered people, with wide, flat faces, who apparently wore little else than a trading blanket for clothing. They appeared to be a listless crowd, moving slowly and with a waddling motion when they walked. One peculiarity he noted. The heads of some were of extraordinary height. He commented on it to one of the men who had engaged him in conversation.

"They be flat-heads," the man said. "They does that themselves."

"Go on, I'm not that green," answered Neil.

"But they does. When a baby is born the squaws binds a board on the young 'un's head and it stays there till he's quite a size. That's their style o' beauty. White women have another style; they squeezes their waists an' wear hoops. It's all in what yuh like, an' they like 'em that way."

Neil did not see the governor or chief trader again until the pealing of the bell announced the evening meal. On entering the hall he was assigned to a seat at a long table over which Governor Douglas presided.

The governor seldom ate in the dining-hall, although formerly it had been his custom to preside at every meal, Neil's neighbour whispered. In the absence of Chief Factor Work, however, he occupied the seat at the head of the table.

"He's a fine old codger, is the gov'ner," his companion volunteered in a low tone as he told Neil of the occupations and importance of the different men about the board. "But he's a stickler on some things. He likes to be called 'Excellency,' an' have everyone speak polite-like. Y' see he thinks it's good fer the young fellahs like me t' learn things that'll be kinda eddicatin' to us, an' so he allus starts talkin' about somethin' or other that'll sort o' improve our minds. Besides he's right in makin' everyone pay respect t' him," he added, "fer if the whites don't, then he'll not get far in makin' th' Injuns do it."

During the meal the governor led the conversation, the others following his lead. A wide range of subjects were introduced and discussed, some bearing on the fur trade, while others were not even remotely concerned with the business of the establishment. Towards the end of the dinner some person mentioned the recent gold discovery on Fraser's River.

The governor turned towards Neil, saying, "Mr. Alexander came north on the *Commodore*. He tells me that there's great excitement in California over it. I did not think we would start a stampede when we sent the few ounces of gold we got from the Indians to the mint there, but apparently we did."

Neil blushed at the reference to himself and was confused to find all eyes were turned in his direction as the governor spoke. He was soon endeavouring to answer all manner of questions on the subject. "How many came on the *Commodore*?" asked one. "How do they expect to start mining in a country where there's no supplies?" asked another. "Many more coming?" questioned a third.

He was pleased indeed when an interruption diverted attention from him. It was caused by the appearance of a boy of about his own age, not so tall and muscular, but whose well-knit frame and easy carriage marked him as one inured to hardships and a life in the open.

The youth walked to the head of the table, saluted the governor and laid a thick packet of papers before him. "The dispatches, sir."

"How are you, Harry?" asked the governor. "Did you have a good trip?"

"A good trip, and a fast one, your Excellency. I tried to get here in time for supper. I hope I'm not too late."

Governor Douglas smiled. "No, you're just in time, though. Everything all right at Nanaimo?"

"Yes, but they are very busy and so Captain Stuart sent me with the dispatches."

It was not until the dishes had all been cleared away that Neil had an opportunity of meeting the new-comer. His name, he announced when he introduced himself, was Harry Thomas. He appeared to be a bright, frank, good-natured lad and a general favourite with all. Neil took an instant liking for him.

"Where do you come from?" he asked when they were together later in the evening.

"From Nanaimo, or maybe I should say Colville Town—I don't know."

"Where's that?"

"Why, don't you know? It's the place where the coal comes from. The company has a mine there."

"And is there a fort there, like this one?"

"No, just a bastion—but I guess we would keep the Indians busy if they tried any funny work," he added with a touch of bravado. "We'd put up a real fight and, besides, there's cannons in the bastion."

"You brought letters to the governor?"

"Dispatches," corrected Harry. "Yes, I had charge of the express canoe. It's quite a trip—about seventy-five or eighty miles, I reckon. We had no trouble, but sometimes the Cowichans get after the S'nenymoes—those are the Nanaimo Indians—and of course you have to take a chance with them getting nasty. They wouldn't attack a company canoe, if they knew it. They know better than that, but they might do some damage before they found out, especially if it was about dusk. They're a tough bunch, and its only their fear of Mr. Finlayson and the governor that keeps them from attacking the whites. They have done so. Once they joined the Songhees in trying to take Fort Victoria, but Finlayson taught 'em a lesson. There's a fine man for you; he's afraid of nothing and understands all there is to know about Indians."

"Tell me about it, won't you?" asked Neil.

"It was just after the fort was started here. There was a row about the Indians killing some of the company's cattle. When they were asked to pay for them, they got ugly and said the country belonged to them and they'd kill all the animals they wanted to and would kill the white men, too. There was a big bunch of Cowichans here, and old Tzouhalem, their chief, was really at the bottom of all the trouble.

"They started to shoot at the fort—you can see some of the bullets in the pickets yet—and Finlayson wouldn't let anyone fire back at them. They kept potting away all day long and the next day too, and didn't hit anyone.

"Finlayson knew their powder was about used up on the second afternoon, so he stood up on that platform there and called out to them that they were fools. He sent a man out by the back gate before that and told him to get across the harbour and clear all the people out of the houses in the village. The man made a signal when this was done.

"'Don't you know I could kill you all, if I wanted to?' he asked. They only laughed at him.

"'I'll show you,' he said. 'Look at your houses,' and he told the men in the bastion to fire. The Indians had never heard one of the big guns before, and when it roared and flashed fire they thought the world had come to an end. And when they saw one of the huts blown to pieces they started to yell for him to stop. That ended it. They never tried to capture the fort again. Sometimes they do attack and kill a white man, but the governor always gets after them and punishes them. That's the only way to keep them from killing everybody. Every Indian in the country knows that once the governor gets on his trail he'll never rest till he gets him. He never breaks a promise. If he tells an Indian he'll get a reward for doing something, he'll get it. That's what has built up the company."

"I saw some Indians to-day, but they looked to be a harmless lot," Neil said.

"They are—sometimes, but not always. They get excited very easy, and when they are—look out. But whatever you do, don't show the white feather, or they'll make your life miserable."

"Did you see King Freezy?" Harry asked.

"No. Who's he?"

"He's the big *tyee*, or head man, over there. You'll know him if you see him. He always wears one of the high hats the governor or one of the factors has thrown away, and a long-tailed coat. He never wears boots, though, for his feet are too big. He's a dandy all right. They say he's got a new hat now, a gold-braided cap one of the naval officers gave him. We must try and see him to-morrow."

In the guest-house where he had been quartered, Neil listened to the men swapping yarns about the big open

fireplace. These stories he soon saw were largely told for his benefit, and although he realised they were trying to have some fun at his expense he pretended to accept all that was said as the truth.

"Have you seen any finger-nail cats lately?" Harry asked with seeming innocence.

"No, not lately," responded a man whom the others called Ned, "not lately, but I heard tell as how a couple were about here t'other day."

"Funny things they must be," observed Harry. "I'd like to see one, but I'm not anxious to lose my finger-nails."

"I seed one onct," went on Ned. "They're not exac'ly cats—more like bats, they be. It's bein' able t' fly's what makes 'em dangerous. They comes down chimbleys an' through chinks in the walls an' the like.

"They likes the horns o' deer best, but when they can't get that, why, they gets after finger-nails—that's why they're called 'finger-nail cats.'

"I mind up t' Fort McLoughlin once, as how a young fellow wouldn't believe in 'em and wouldn't put pitch on his nails, or wrap 'em up, or anythin', got caught. The cats—there were three o' them—no, I'm wrong, it were only two—came down the chimbley an' ate three o' his finger-nails. It were too bad, it were."

"Where do you get this pitch?" asked Neil, pretending to be alarmed at the prospect.

"In the woods, but I heard tell as candle-grease 'll do," answered Ned.

Neil excused himself a few minutes later and went to the room that had been allotted him. As he closed the door he could hear the suppressed laughter of the group about the fire at what they believed to be the success of their joke.

By the light of a candle he opened his trunk, and after rummaging in its contents for a moment brought out a stout cord. This he attached to the side of his rude bunk about six inches from the floor and made fast the other end to his box, which he slid along the floor to the opposite side of the room. He waited a few moments and then called out, as if in alarm, "The finger-nail cats! Help!"

There came a wild burst of laughter from the common-room, followed by a rush of feet. His door was pulled open and two or three persons, tripping on the cord, pitched headlong into the room.

"Here, what's the matter?" demanded Neil, jumping up from the bed, and as Harry, Ned and another picked themselves up from the floor, he broke into laughter which was echoed by the two men who had been fortunate enough to escape a fall.

"You fell into the trap I set for the finger-nail cats," he said, when at last he could control his mirth, and the victims of the prank sheepishly joined in the merriment at their expense.

"You'll do, youngster," declared Ned. "You're a *chechako*, but you're game all right."

"You win," said Harry, extending his hand. "Put it there."

CHAPTER II

THE GREASE FEAST

"How would you like to go to Nanaimo?" the governor asked Neil when they met the following morning. "You see, I feel personally responsible for you until you can get in touch with your uncle," he added.

"I think it would be fine," responded Neil.

"I might offer you an apprenticeship in the service," went on Governor Douglas, "but that might not suit either you or your uncle. In any event, I think the best place for you in the meantime is Nanaimo. Captain Stuart can always find something for you to do, and that'll keep you out of mischief. Besides, if this gold rush continues, Fort Victoria will be pretty crowded."

"Thank you, sir."

"The express will leave to-morrow morning. Harry will see that you get there safe and sound," concluded the governor as he moved away.

Harry Thomas was delighted when, a few minutes later, Neil told him that he was to accompany him on his return journey.

"Dandy! That's great!" he exclaimed. "Say, we'll have some fun, won't we?"

They were standing just outside of the fort gate, overlooking the bay. Across the water there was considerable activity about the Indian huts. This was repeated farther along the shore-line where a visiting tribe was encamped. The boys watched the scene for some moments without speaking, then Harry exclaimed, "By Jove, the Songhees are up to something. I think they're going to potlatch."

"What's that?"

"Oh, it's a way they have of giving away blankets and things. They're foolish, I think, but some of the men say that it's the way they bank. When a chief gets a whole lot of blankets he calls his friends and divides them up. Then after a long while they give him all his blankets back and pay him interest—so he doesn't lose anything by it. They have great times at these potlatches, and any old thing is an excuse for holding one.

"Yes, siree, there's something in the wind. Let's go over and see what's doing."

"Will it be all right?"

"Surely; I know old King Freezy—come on," and he started down the trail to the water at a run. Neil followed.

Harry launched a small canoe which had been hollowed from a single log. "You'd better sit still and I'll do the paddling," he cautioned, as Neil stepped into the little craft. Taking up a paddle he sent the canoe skimming over the smooth waters of the harbour.

"Look, there's more Indians coming from that camp over there," and Neil pointed to half a dozen large canoes which were headed for the Songhee village.

"Haidas," responded Harry.

"Who are they?"

"They come from Queen Charlotte Islands, four or five hundred miles up the coast. They're holy terrors; great fighters and have all the other Indians scared of them. They make the other tribes pay them or they'll attack them and kill the braves and make slaves out of the women and children."

"And don't the others ever fight back?"

"Yes. None of the Indians are cowards when it comes to fighting—it's the best thing they do; but the Haidas have the biggest canoes on the coast and are able to put up a better scrap. Just look at the size of those canoes," and he pointed to the Northerners' craft. "See how much longer they are than the ones on the beach."

The Haidas landed before the boys' canoe grounded on the pebbled shore, and they could easily distinguish King

Freezy among his people as they advanced to greet their visitors.

"Look at the old boy," Harry said. "What did I tell you about his high hat and long-tailed coat? Don't he fancy himself?"

As the lads walked up the slope towards the large central building Neil had time to look about him, and was surprised to see so many dogs about the place. Some were of a yellowish, woolly breed, unknown to him; others were nondescript curs, some of which snapped and snarled at them as they made their way through the beached canoes, old fish-boxes and other accumulations. The men and women paid but little attention to the boys, but some of the children eyed them curiously.

King Freezy presently emerged from the ceremonial house, and Neil with difficulty restrained his laughter when he saw that the chief's great top-hat was now surmounted by a discarded naval cap, gleaming with golden lace. Both were secured by a bright red strip of cloth which tied beneath his chin.

The chief's face expressed pleasure at the sight of Harry, who greeted him in the Chinook jargon, the language invented by the fur-traders and adopted by the Indians for the purposes of barter in the North-West.

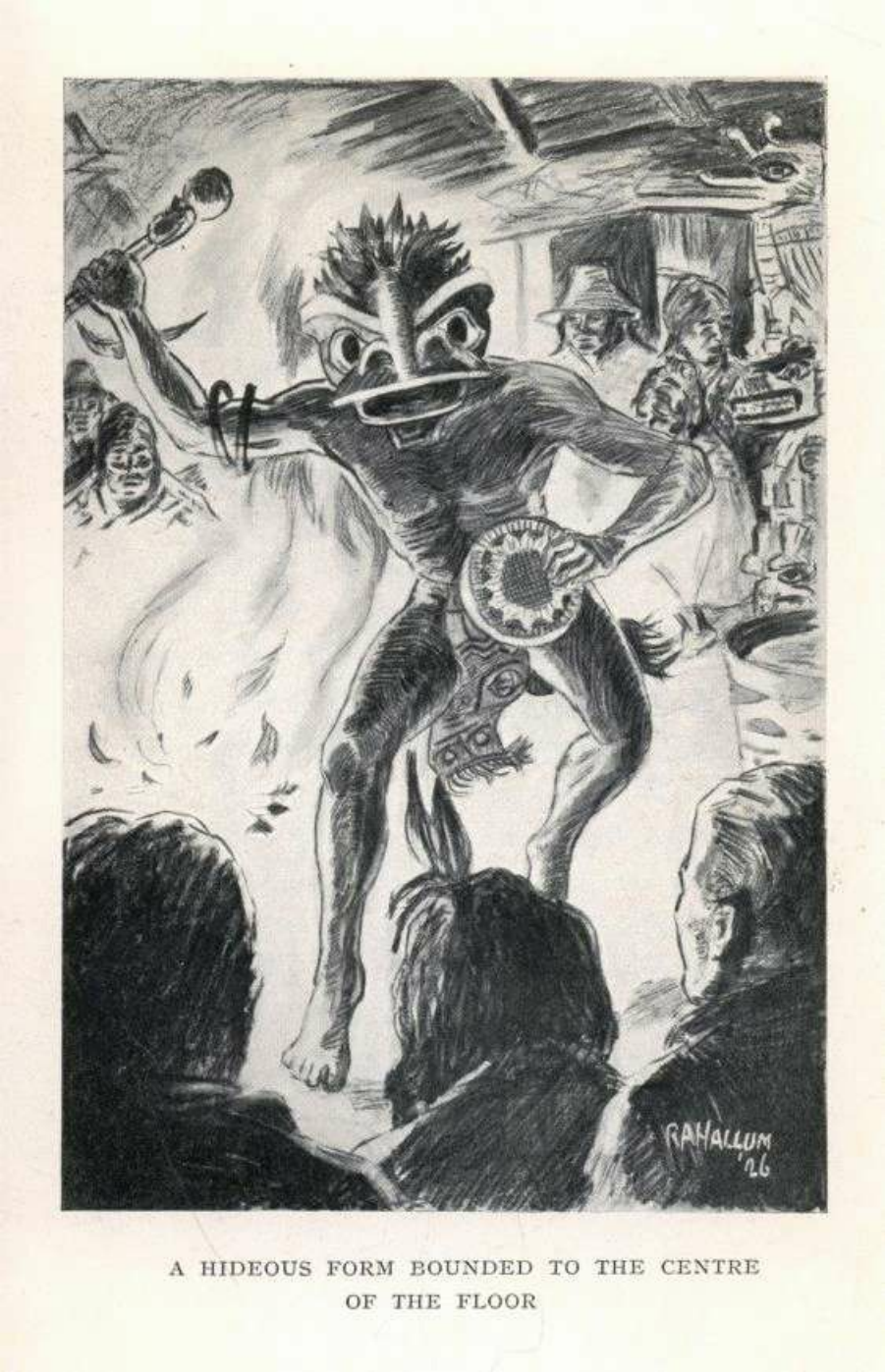
"We're lucky," Harry explained. "It's going to be a grease feast."

The boys were conducted with some ceremony into the house and were given seats close to King Freezy himself.

"Don't laugh, whatever you do," Harry whispered as they entered. "It's all very solemn with them."

A fire was burning on the earthen floor of the big building and the smoke curled up towards a hole in the roof. Not all of it escaped through the opening, and the immense room was filled with a haze that made the boys' eyes smart and burn until they became accustomed to it. Long benches were constructed on platforms about four inches from the ground, along the walls of the building. For the most part these were already occupied by half-naked savages, many of whom had their faces bedaubed with paint. Some of the women had bone ornaments thrust through the flesh of their lower lips. Nearly all held short sticks, not a few of which were curiously carved.

Scarcely had the boys taken their seats when a hideous form bounded to the centre of the floor. It was a man, naked save for a short apron, and wearing a huge mask to represent some fanciful beast. It was painted in livid colours. He started to dance about the fire, and as he turned and twisted he screamed and shouted at the top of his voice. The natives began to beat with their sticks on the boards of the benches and chant a weird refrain. The whole thing was so grotesque and so barbarous that Neil was startled at the scene. He looked at Harry in some alarm and was reassured when he saw that his companion was viewing the ceremony without any display of nervousness.



A HIDEOUS FORM BOUNDED TO THE CENTRE OF THE FLOOR

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The din attracted others to the place and soon all the seats were occupied.

When the dancer disappeared Harry looked around the building and an expression of anxiety crossed his face.

"What's the matter?" Neil asked.

"I don't like this very well," was the whispered answer. "The Haidas are all sitting together, close to the door, and there are no squaws among them. It don't look good."

"What can we do?"

"Nothing; just sit still. We can't leave now. It 'd be an insult. Keep quiet, that's all."

"All right," answered Neil, "I'll stick by you and do whatever you do."

"Fine! Now they're going to start again. Wonder what it'll be this time."

The racket started once more, only this time it was worse. Half a dozen masked figures were dancing about the fire in imitation of the animals they were supposed to represent. One huge fellow wearing a head-dress carved to resemble a bear was swaying uncertainly as does Bruin when he attempts to walk on his hindpaws; another was jumping in imitation of a deer, while still another sought to depict the rising, blowing and sounding of a whale—and so it was that each actor in the strange play strove to give a realistic portrayal of his guardian animal spirit. More dancers joined the throng, their jumping, twisting, gyrating bodies and ugly masks bobbing up and down, now in the shadow as they came between the boys and the blaze, and now in the red reflection of the fire as they circled the burning pile.

Neil was startled at first, but he soon overcame his awe, and after he had watched the dancers for a time he leaned over and shouted in Harry's ear, "Don't it look like hell?"

"Never been there," was the answer.

The Haidas took no part in the singing or beating time, and the lads could see by the angry glances in the direction of their Northern guests that the Songhees did not relish the aloofness of the visitors. It was evident by the sneer on the face of the Haida chief that it was his intention to provoke his hosts.

When the dance ended a Songhee chief stepped to the centre of the hall and started to harangue the people. An interpreter translated his words to the Haida tongue.

"Who is he?" Neil asked, motioning towards the orator.

"He's King Freezy's speaker, I think. He's probably telling the world what a fine fellow the king is—or thinks he is."

King Freezy was sitting directly in front of the boys, and he now rose and walked forward. He started to speak in a slow, moderate tone, and from his gestures it was evident that he was bidding the Haidas welcome.

Hardly had he concluded than the Haida leader rose and made reply. As his speech was translated the faces of the Songhees darkened and their eyes blazed. Some insult had been given and men and women muttered angrily. More than one native reached for his knife, but King Freezy quietened them with a wave of his hand.

Advancing he once more addressed the people, his fiery eloquence and snapping black eyes conveying clearly the purport of his words. He was hurling a challenge of some sort at the Haida chief. He concluded with a sharp order. A dozen men sprang to obey.

The boys thought there would be an open outbreak, but instead the Songhees rushed towards the fire with cedar boxes and started throwing oolichan grease on the fire. The flames shot up as if by magic, but still the wild figures continued to feed the blaze. All the while Indians shouted, beat with their sticks and swayed to and fro.

Higher and higher leapt the flames until they were licking the huge logs that served as crossbeams. The faces of the savages glowed red, and the heat was almost unbearable—but still more grease was thrown on the fire.

King Freezy alone sat still, with folded arms. He it was who had ordered this destruction of fish fat, the highly prized food of the Coast Indians, and the more that was consumed, the greater was he in the estimation of his own people and the more powerful had he proved himself over his ancient enemies who were now his guests. It mattered not if the whole tribe was made poor by the extravagance, it must go on, and no one would complain.

When the flames were at their height and charring the beams above, King Freezy stood up and shouted an order. Young men disappeared to return almost immediately carrying blankets. Rushing up to the fire they threw them into the roaring flames. They vanished again and returned carrying one of the largest canoes of the village. King Freezy, seizing an axe, walked to where the canoe had been set down, and deliberately started to chop it to pieces. Willing hands seized the splintered wood as it was hewn from the craft. This was added to the blaze.

Another canoe was brought and chopped to pieces; more blankets and more boxes of grease were carried in by

perspiring savages as further sacrifice to the flames. The heat was terrific. The boys could hardly bear it although they were at some distance from the actual fire.

"He's trying to drive the Haidas out," Harry shouted. This was the case, and Neil noticed that as the Songhees added fuel to the blaze they did so in such a manner that the burning area gradually extended towards the visitors. Not a Haida showed the least discomfiture. They only drew their blankets tighter about themselves as if suffering from the cold.

"Look!" Neil exclaimed, pointing through the wreathing smoke to where the Haida chief had arisen. The Northerner leisurely approached the roaring furnace until the heat must have blistered his flesh, and deliberately spat into the centre of the fire. He did so with such an air of contempt that it was easy to interpret his action: he was making clear to King Freezy how little he thought of any fire that the Songhees could kindle.

So intent were all upon the performance that no notice was taken of the stealthy approach of a Haida warrior who had gained admittance through a hole in the wall and had crept along below the seats.

Suddenly the naked savage rose beside Neil. His appearance was so unexpected and startling that, for a second, both boys were unable to grasp his purpose. Then his arm lifted and they saw a long blade. As he leaned slightly forward to plunge the weapon into the back of King Freezy, Neil half rose and swung for his chin with all the strength he could muster. Harry threw himself forward upon the shoulders of the Songhee chief, bearing him to the ground.

Neil's blow landed fairly, and the big Indian staggered back, his knife flying into the air to fall harmlessly to the floor.

The Haida recovered quickly and drew a second knife. His eyes blazed with fury as he made a lunge at the white boy. Neil stepped aside and the blade buried its point in the wood of the seat where he had been sitting.

The action was so swift and unlooked-for that the Songhees were unable to grasp its purport for a second or two. Then all was in an uproar. A dozen braves leapt at the stranger, their knives flashing in the light of the fire, but quick as they were they missed him. He dropped beneath the bench and, worming his way along the wall at an incredible speed, found the hole by which he had entered, and disappeared.

King Freezy picked himself up just in time to see the Haida's futile effort to kill Neil. He shouted to his people to seize the would-be assassin and himself jumped towards the place as the man disappeared.

Such was the confusion that all eyes were turned in the direction of the chief, and Indians came crowding from all quarters. Pandemonium reigned. It was several minutes before the chief could make himself heard above the shouting and yelling of his wild followers. He called for them to rush the Haida party.

It was too late. The visitors were not there. Every one of them had disappeared. Immediately the attempt was made on the life of the chief, the Haidas, taking advantage of the turmoil in the lower end of the hall, had slipped out of the door near which they had been seated, and were well on their way to their canoes before their absence was noted.

The Songhees piled, pell-mell, out of the potlatch house in pursuit, but before they could reach their canoes their enemies were some distance from the shore.

The boys did not join in the general rush from the building and soon found themselves alone. They stood looking at each other for a moment, then Harry whistled softly, ending with, "Whew! that was a close one."

"It was."

"Say, you're all right. I thought at first you were going to be scared, but I think you've got more nerve than me."

"Go on," said Neil, "I was scared—awfully scared, but there was nothing else to do. You did the right thing in pushing Freezy out of the way."

"Well, we'll not quarrel about it. The best thing we can do is to get out of here—and quick, too."

"I'm going to take this," said Neil, and he picked up the knife the Indian had aimed at him.

Outside all was excitement. King Freezy and several other chiefs were haranguing the people. Every man was armed and there was every evidence that retaliation was being planned.

The boys were not interfered with as they ran out their canoe. They paddled along the shore for some distance before crossing to the other side to return to the fort.

Here they found considerable excitement. The cause of the trouble among the Indians had been suspected as soon as the Haidas were seen to rush from the ceremonial hall for their canoes, and a man had been sent off on horseback to Esquimalt. Two hours later a gunboat steamed into the harbour and anchored off the Haida encampment. The big guns of the vessel were arguments in the cause of peace that the natives of the Coast well understood.

It was late in the afternoon when a man met the boys and informed them that the chief trader wished to see them.

"I guess we're in for it," muttered Harry.

"Why? We didn't do anything."

"But can we make anyone believe it? There was trouble and we were there. That's enough."

On entering the office they were surprised to see King Freezy and two Indian girls with the chief trader.

There was a twinkle in the eyes of Mr. Finlayson that set Harry's mind at rest as to the manner in which their adventure would be regarded.

"I hear you distinguished yourselves this morning," he said. "And now you are to be rewarded. King Freezy here," and he nodded towards the smiling chief, "tells me you saved his life."

"It was nothing, sir," stammered Harry.

"Well, he thinks so. I'll hear your story later. He wants to reward you for your services, and has brought you a present of a *klootchman* each."

Harry's eyes almost started from their sockets and his jaw dropped.

Neil looked at his friend in astonishment. "He's brought us what?" he asked.

"A *klootchman*," gasped Harry—"a—squaw—a girl. He's giving us each a wife."

"But I say—I—I don't want a wife," exclaimed Neil in consternation.

"Nor me."

"But do we have to take them?" asked Neil, who was first to recover. "Do we really? It's awfully good of him and all that, but I don't want a wife."

"I'll see if I can fix it for you, but I doubt it," replied the chief trader. "You lads had better leave it to me."

He spoke to King Freezy in the native language and motioned for the boys to go, which they did without waiting for a second suggestion.

"Well, this is a nice pickle," murmured Harry when they were outside. "You're making progress, you are, Neil. You only landed yesterday, and now you're established with a princess for a wife."

"How about yourself?"

"Uhm, that's so," and Harry scratched his head in perplexity.

Neil started to laugh and his companion looked at him in amazement. "What's funny? Tell me the joke, for I don't see it."

"Oh, I was just thinking that I'll have the best of it."

"Why?"

"Well, you see, she can't talk to me, and I can't talk to her, but your wife can jaw you in Chinook, and you'll have to listen."

CHAPTER III

THE GHOST LAMP

"Has anyone seen the chaplain?" asked Mr. Finlayson in the hall that evening. "Have you seen him—yet, Harry?"

Both boys blushed, and the men present were quick to see and appreciate that the chief trader was having a quiet joke at their expense.

"Who is she, Harry?" asked one. "When is it to take place?" questioned a second. "What'll the girls at Colville Town say?" demanded a third.

"Go on with you," protested Harry, blushing still more. "I don't know what you mean." And then in order to rid himself of his tormentors, "Maybe it's Neil, here, you mean."

"Perhaps it is me," agreed Neil, not minding the banter of the men. "Only I don't know her name. If some of you fellows will teach me Chinook, I may be able to find out."

While Neil was replying to the jesters, Mr. Finlayson motioned to Harry. "I've fixed it all right," he told the boy. "At first the chief could not understand why you did not want his gift, but I told him that neither one of you could hunt or fish enough to keep yourself, let alone a wife. Besides, you were not rich enough to give a potlatch."

"Thank you, sir," answered Harry with a sigh of relief.

The boys retired early and were soon asleep. Indeed Neil could hardly believe that he had been sleeping for some hours when he was aroused by Harry who exclaimed, "Come on. It's time for us to be moving."

The dispatches had been prepared the previous night and everything was in readiness for an early start. Final preparations were soon made and, just as grey dawn was streaking the eastern sky, the lads, with two S'nenymoes bearing Neil's box, filed past the sentry at the fort gate and made their way down to the waiting express canoe.

The lads seated themselves on cedar mats near the stern, directly in front of the steersman, who answered to the name of Titus. The word was given, the paddles were lifted and fell with a single splash, digging deep into the water, and with a quick start the big canoe bounded away.

It was cold and chilly on the water, and as they sat with blankets drawn tightly about them, the boys said but little. Swiftly the canoe passed down the bay and out into the Straits of Juan de Fuca. The rolling and tossing of the craft as the early morning breeze churned the sea into dancing waves made Neil fear he would be sea-sick, but he soon overcame the dread as he became more accustomed to the motions of the dug-out.

As they skirted the shore, turning gradually eastwards, the day began to brighten, uncovering distant islands, while nearer bare rocky islets, against which the waves broke in spray, showed above the water.

"I'm not used to being up so early," Neil yawned. "Do you always start on trips as early as this?"

"Yes, to get all the daylight there is."

"Well, it may be all right for you fellows who were born here, but it's going to take me some time to get used to it."

"I wasn't born here," answered Harry. "I've only been here a little more than two years."

"Is that so?" And then after a pause, "Is your father in the company's service?"

"No," answered Harry gravely. "I don't know where my father is, or whether he's alive."

"What happened?"

"You see, my dad was owner and captain of a ship, the *Goliath*. He took me with him on a trip after my mother died. When we were at Panama dad was taken with fever and they landed him and Dr. Goodson, a friend of ours who was with us.

"They wouldn't let me land. The ship had to come up here with a cargo of stuff for Victoria. We were to call at Panama on our way back and pick them up.

"Jobsen, the mate, was a rascal, but he was a good sailor. I never liked him. He was in charge after dad went ashore. He was very nice to me, though, and especially after we got to Esquimalt where we unloaded.

"The night before we were to sail he asked me to go ashore with him. It was just about dark. He asked me to wait for him while he went to see about something. Suddenly something was thrown over my head, and I was picked up. I tried to yell, but couldn't. I was put in a canoe or boat and was taken a long way. I didn't know where I was going, but I knew that the Indians had me. After a while the canoe stopped. I was picked up again and carried into the woods. Then I was made to walk, and the sack was taken from my head. An Indian walked on each side of me, and they made signs that if I made a noise they'd kill me. I was too scared to yell if I wanted to.

"They kept me prisoner for three or four days. Then old King Freezy came along with some of his men. They made the other Indians give me to them, and they took me to the fort."

"And what happened to Jobsen?"

"He was drowned. The *Goliath* waited round for a day or two, and he reported that I was lost. Then he sailed away. I think he was trying to get hold of the ship. He thought that dad was done for, and if he could get rid of me, then he'd do what he wanted with the ship. Anyway he didn't get very far, for the *Goliath* was wrecked off Barkley Sound. At least pieces of her floated ashore and were brought down by Indians. I guess everyone was lost."

"And you never heard anything of your father?"

"No. I wrote to Panama, but received no answer. Then the governor sent me to Nanaimo to make myself useful—and I've been there ever since."

"We seem to be in about the same fix, don't we?" exclaimed Neil after a brief silence, and he told Harry his story as he had related it to the governor, but in greater detail.

All the morning the Indians kept on, paddling steadily, their blades rising and falling to the time of a chant. Neil marvelled at the endurance of the men. The canoe wound in and out among great islands, wooded to the water's edge, or showing high bluffs of grey limestone or granite.

They stopped at noon and drew the canoe a little way up the shingle of a cove into which a tiny stream emptied.

"Titus says we mustn't make a fire," Harry said. "There may be some Cowichans about, and he's not sure how they'll act. There's been some trouble between the tribes lately."

"The Cowichans are the Indians you were telling me about—the ones that helped the Songhees attack Fort Victoria?"

"Yes. This is their country. The S'nenymoes are related to them, but they're always fighting among themselves over something or other. Sometimes, though, they join to fight the Northern Indians.

"Once there was a great battle fought among these islands. The Cowichans, so I have been told, were away fighting some tribe down in Puget's Sound. The Northern Indians came down and attacked the Cowichans' villages. They killed the old men and took the women and children away as slaves.

"When the Cowichans came back they found their homes in ruins and their families gone. One old man had escaped to the woods and he told them all about it. From a Songhee they learned that the Northerners were coming back. So the Cowichans sent out to all their friends. They have relations over at the mouth of Fraser's River, and they got them and the Squamish and the S'nenymoes and all the other tribes who were afraid of the people from the North, to help them.

"They put sentries along the coast, and then one day they got a signal that the enemy was coming. All the Cowichans and their friends hid behind the islands, and when the enemy arrived, expecting to take them by surprise, they found the villages just as they had been left. They landed from their canoes, little suspecting the ambush prepared by the Cowichans.

"Then a canoe was seen with three or four women in it, and two or three of the Northern canoes started off after it, but the women paddled away and more canoes started off. By and by there was a whole string of canoes chasing the first canoe which headed through between two islands. The Cowichans were in hiding, and after a number of the Northern canoes had passed through they came out and cut the line in two. There was a terrible fight.

"Then the rest of the Northern canoes came up—there were three hundred canoes altogether—and there must have been a couple of hundred Cowichan, Squamish and S'nenymo canoes. The fight lasted for three days, and the Cowichans killed nearly all the Northerners. Some tried to escape, but they were chased as far up as Comox and killed. The women and children were found near Comox.

"I guess there must have been three or four thousand Indians killed in that fight. It is supposed to be one of the biggest fights ever known on the Coast. The man who told me about it, said it happened a long time ago."

The Indians having rested, the journey was resumed. The canoe now kept close to the shoreline of the islands, taking advantage of the shadows of the trees.

It was towards evening when Titus, who had been looking behind every few moments, uttered an exclamation and gave a sharp order. As the paddle-men bent to their task the canoe seemed to fly through the water. The boys looked back and in the distance they could discern a tiny speck, which Titus said was a canoe in pursuit of them.

"I reckon we're in for it," said Harry. "If it was full daylight they probably wouldn't attack us, but it'll be dark by the time they overtake us, and they won't be able to see it's a Company canoe. Have you got a revolver?"

"No, all I've got is the Haida's dagger," answered Neil.

Harry produced a large Colt revolver and powder-horn and commenced carefully to load two of the six chambers that were empty. He drew off the percussion-caps, inspected the nipples of the weapon and replaced them.

"They're gaining," said Neil. "How long can we keep up this speed?"

"I don't know, but Titus is going to dodge between some islands and try and lose them. We'll probably land somewhere. That'll give us a better chance."

Neil was silent for a few moments, his brows puckered in thought. Finally he asked, "Do these Indians believe in spirits?"

Harry appeared to be annoyed at the frivolous nature of the question under circumstances of such peril. He did not answer until Neil had repeated it. Then he snapped, "Yes, but never mind that now."

Producing a key, Neil reached forward and unlocked and lifted the cover of his box. He groped about in its contents for a moment, and then, with a grunt of satisfaction, drew out a piece of candle and a stout fishing-line. Picking up an Indian basket from the bottom of the canoe, without a word of explanation he set to work with his knife cutting holes in the bottom of it.

Harry paid no attention to him, but from time to time spoke in low-toned Chinook to Titus, who grunted replies. The quick breathing of the canoe-men and the phosphorescent glow as their paddles struck the water told of their exertions.

"It's pretty dark now," observed Harry at last. "I think we'll give them the slip for a while anyway. It'll give us a chance to land some place, and put up a better fight if we have to."

Neil did not answer. He was again busy exploring in his box, searching for something which at last he found.

"What's that you've got?" asked Harry.

"A flute."

"A flute! Have you gone crazy? You're not going to play that!"

"Not just now, anyway."

Nothing further was said for some time. The canoe turned and twisted in and out of narrow, dark passages that separated small islands. At last Titus gave a whispered command and the other Indians stopped their paddling. The canoe glided noiselessly onwards for some distance, while every ear was strained to catch the sound of pursuit.

Hearing nothing, the paddles were again dipped gently and the canoe was run ashore in a small crescent-shaped bay.

"Which way will they come?" Neil whispered after they had landed.

"Right into the bay; why?"

"How long will it take for them to find us?"

"Maybe half an hour, maybe an hour or more, I don't know. Perhaps we've given them the slip altogether," answered Harry. "The moon will be up in a little while, and that'll help them."

"What are you going to do?" asked Neil.

"Well, I've been talking it over with Titus and I think the best thing is for us to split up. There's nine of us. If three take one side of the bay, and three the other, and we stay with Titus here, we'll be able to get them between our fire. Titus thinks there's nine of them, so we're about even."

"But you'd rather not fight, wouldn't you?"

"Certainly, but I guess we'll have to."

"I don't know; I've been thinking maybe we won't have to," answered Neil, and he whispered the details of his plan.

"By thunder! I believe you're right," exclaimed Harry. "It might work. I'll tell Titus, so he can let the others know. If they don't expect it, they'll be as scared as the Cowichans." He crept over to the headman who was sitting with his

canoe-men, and whispered to him. It took considerable persuasion to make the Indians agree to the proposal, but finally they signified their willingness and, after some further discussion among themselves, silently stole away to take up their positions.

"Well, I guess we'd better get ahead with it," suggested Harry. Gathering up the fishing-line, basket and flute, Neil turned to a nearby tree. Harry followed. With some difficulty the boys climbed up into the branches, keeping close to the trunk on the land side.

It took them the better part of half an hour to adjust things to their satisfaction.

"I hate to leave you alone up here," said Harry when they had finished their work. "It will be tough on you if it don't work."

"That's all right," said Neil, and his companion descended.

It was cold up the tree, and Neil was glad of the additional comfort afforded by Harry's coat which his chum had insisted on leaving with him.

It seemed that hours must have passed when Neil, in his cramped position, heard the call of a night bird. It was the signal agreed upon as a warning of the approach of the Cowichans.

Doffing his coat and using it as a shield, he produced the fire-bag Harry had left with him, and after one or two attempts he succeeded in lighting the candle. This he transferred to the basket which had been lashed between two limbs facing the bay, and which was covered with his own coat. He succeeded in doing it without a gleam of light escaping.

Below, Harry and Titus prepared to give battle.

Not many minutes elapsed before the noise of dipping paddles and the scraping of the handles of the paddles against the sides of the canoe could be faintly distinguished. On shore there was not a sound. Neil hardly dared to breathe and feared that the pounding of his heart must surely be heard.

The nose of the big dug-out showed around the point, as the craft glided into the path of the moonlight. Right across the mouth of the bay the Cowichans passed. It seemed as if they had missed their quarry, but presently they turned and crept stealthily into the cove.

Now they had passed the place where the S'nenymoes were concealed on either shore. Neil listened, every nerve tensed. A twig snapped. It was the signal.

Whipping the coat off the basket, he gave voice to a most blood-curdling yell, and springing back to the fork in the branches he seized his flute and, placing it to his lips and blowing with all his might, he produced a most hideous and weird screeching.

The Cowichans stopped, looked towards the tree and saw a ghostly face grinning at them from among the branches. Terror seized them. Turning their canoe about as quickly as possible, they made a dash for the mouth of the bay. Only one shot was fired by the startled savages, the ball burying itself in the trunk of the tree behind which Neil was sheltering.

It was not until they were half-way out of the cove that Titus fired. Almost at the same instant the sharp "crack" of Harry's revolver sounded. Then from both sides of the bay muskets flashed. One Cowichan was seen to suddenly rise to his feet and pitch forward out of the canoe. Another crumpled and dropped, while cries of pain told that other shots had taken effect. Above the noise of the conflict, the cries of the wounded and the exultant shouting of the S'nenymoes, the high screeching and wailing of Neil's flute could be heard.

When, at last, the surviving Cowichans made good their escape, Titus called his braves back, and Harry, going to the foot of the tree, called delightedly, "Come down, you old war-horse; come down." It was several minutes, however, before he could attract Neil's attention, who was still manufacturing ghastly noises with the aid of his flute.

"We'd better be moving," Harry said when they were together again. "There may be other Indians about, and it's certain that those who have escaped will bring back more later."

In a few moments the canoe was launched and they were on their way again, the joyous S'nenymoes paddling with renewed vigour, anxious to arrive home to tell how they had defended the company's property and to claim reward for their service.

"We owe it all to you, old man," said Harry with just a trace of huskiness in his voice. "I don't know what we'd have done without you and your lamp and flute. I wouldn't have thought of a scheme like that in a hundred years. I don't see how you figured it out."

"It's not exactly original," responded Neil. "I remembered a story I heard of the American Revolution. A couple of boys and a girl started playing a fife and drums when an attack was being made on the village where they lived. The sailors from the British warship thought it was an army band, or something like that, and went away without doing any damage to speak of. They thought a strong body of soldiers were coming. I never thought, though, that this old flute would some day be used in a similar way and save my life."

"It certainly did sound awful," laughed Harry. "I don't blame the Cowichans for being scared. If I didn't know what it was I'd have been frightened myself. But you must play some real music on it when we get to Nanaimo."

"Play real music!" exclaimed Neil. "I can't play a thing on it. It belonged to my father. The only music I can make with it is the kind that you have just heard."

CHAPTER IV

THE BASTION SPEAKS

Neil found Nanaimo to be a delightful little place. The settlement was built on a peninsula, which, at times, was almost an island with deep ravines and gullies separating the higher land from the rising forest slopes of the neighbourhood. The mines which were being worked were across one of these ravines, and the miners approached them by way of a bridge that had been recently constructed so as to facilitate the shipment of coal to the loading wharf.

On the highest part of the peninsula stood the defensive works of the establishment in the shape of a single bastion armed with two carronades and loop-holed for muskets. The homes of the miners and regular employees of the Hudson's Bay Company, with the store and other buildings essential to the affairs of the company, were clustered about the little fort with its whitewashed walls of hewn logs. Four streets, or rather, trails, winding in and out between stumps and big boulders, formed the town proper, while a saw-mill operated by water power and a salt-shed where salt was extracted from a brine spring, were a little distance from the other buildings. In the distance, behind the town, rose Mount Wakesiah, while the harbour, on which the village faced, opened between protecting islands to the blue waters of the Gulf of Georgia.

While the establishment and the location of Nanaimo pleased Neil, it was the kindly character of the people that especially delighted him. For the most part the miners were from the colliery districts of England, with a few from other portions of the British Isles, together with three or four French-Canadians and Iroquois Indians who had crossed the continent in the service of the great fur-trading company. Exclusive of Indians, who occupied several villages on the shores of the inlet and numbered between four and five hundred, the total population of the place was less than a hundred and fifty. They all seemed to vie with one another in the cordiality of their welcome to the new-comer.

Neil shared with Harry the room which he occupied at the rear of the Hudson's Bay Company's store and took his meals, for the first week, by invitation of Captain Stuart, at the officers' mess. Later he and Harry ate at the regular dining-hall.

Captain Stuart was a kindly-spoken man who could, however, when necessity required, be stern and enforce his orders by the strength of his will.

"I want to thank you," he said to Neil on the day of the arrival of the party at Nanaimo, after Harry had detailed the story of their voyage. "While Harry and Titus would probably have beaten the rascals, it might have been at some cost. Your scheme probably saved us a heavy loss. I'm going to report your part in the affair to the governor, and I know your conduct will please him greatly."

"It was well done," agreed Dr. Benson, the company physician, who was present when the report was made. "I've always told you, captain, that an ounce of brains is worth a pound of powder."

"You may be right," responded the other, "but still, I like to know that my powder's dry and ready for use if my brain doesn't get me out of a tight place."

The doctor laughed lightly and with a wave of his hand strode away. He was a merry, carefree man, liked by everyone despite his odd manner and disregard for appearances. His usual attire was a pair of old, patched trousers, one leg of which would be enclosed in the top of a high boot, while the other was not. His coat was more often than not fastened on the wrong buttons. Sometimes he wore a stock, but usually he wore neither neckwear nor hat. His skill as a doctor was undoubted despite his manner of administering it.

Later in the day, as Harry and Neil were looking about the little camp, they encountered a miner holding his hand to his face. "What's the matter, Job?" asked Harry.

"Wha's th' maitter!" exclaimed the man. "Yon doucther—th' auld villain—pullit a wee bit tooth, an' he made it hurt waur than need be."

"Surely not!"

"Aye, A'm tellin' ye he did. Whin A went tae see him, Bizzy, his dog, barket at me an' A kicket her. The doc wus keekin' oot an' seed me. When he got me inta his hoose an' pit th' deil's prongs he uses tae pull teeth wi' inta ma mou', he laughet an' said, 'A'll teach ye tae kick Bizzy!' an' he hurted me awfu'." And the miner moved off muttering threats against Bizzy and her master.

Neil found plenty of employment, helping in the store with Harry when required there, or giving a hand at the mill, or again, helping to check the coal as it was loaded when a vessel came for a cargo. There were lots of jobs for him to do, and he undertook them willingly. After the work of the day was done he and Harry walked about the village, or joined with one or two of the younger men in a canoe trip about the harbour.

"The Haidas are coming here on their way from Victoria," Harry said one night two weeks after their arrival. "I guess they sent them home after that trouble with the Songhees. I hope they don't try anything here."

"I wonder if any of them will recognise us," said Neil. "They might be nasty about our saving King Freezy."

"I never thought of that," answered Harry. "I don't suppose any of them would know us again, unless it's that fellow you hit. But we'd better be on our guard anyway."

The Haidas camped near the town and soon made their presence felt. They prowled about the place stealing chickens and anything else that took their fancy. The S'nenymoes were in evident terror of them and did not fraternise with the haughty Northerners, but kept to their own villages.

One afternoon the boys were walking along the trail past the home of a man named Baker. They stopped to pat Baker's dog. Suddenly the dog stopped wagging her tail. The hair on her back bristled and she uttered a low growl. Neil turned quickly to see what had excited the animal. Standing almost behind him was a Haida with a great stone uplifted. Brief as was the glance, he recognised the Indian who had attempted to take the life of the Songhee chief.

"Look out!" he cried and gave Harry a push that sent him sprawling, just as the rock, hurled with all the force the

Indian could command, flew past the boy's head. It struck the dog and killed her instantly.

Harry was up in a second and the lads sprang at the savage. They seized him and a desperate struggle followed. The man was strong, and it was all that the boys could do to hang on to him, one on each arm, in their efforts to prevent him reaching the knife they knew he had in his belt.

Backwards and forwards they fought. The Indian struggled madly to free his hands and the boys hung on to the limit of their strength. Suddenly the Haida reached down in an attempt to fasten his teeth in Neil's ear. He narrowly missed his mark, biting the shoulder of the boy's coat and ripping the cloth. Harry drove a tremendous kick against the Indian's shin, almost felling him. The man turned towards him, but Harry was too quick, avoiding the gleaming teeth, while Neil in turn kicked viciously against the savage's other leg.

The outcome of the fight was doubtful. The strength of the boys was weakening, and it seemed as if one or the other must soon lose his hold. To do so, even for an instant, would permit the Haida to reach his knife. Harry's breath was coming in short, sharp gasps, but with gritted teeth he hung on, and Neil felt his fingers slipping, when a shout was heard and three or four men rounded the corner.

The Indian heard their cries and with a tremendous effort managed to throw the lads from him and make his escape.

While the boys were still gasping out their story, Baker arrived on the scene. Great was his indignation when he saw the body of his dog and heard of the murderous attack on the boys.

"Come on," he cried, "let's find Captain Stuart," and he started off at a run, with the others following.

"Bad business. We can't stand that sort of thing," exclaimed the captain when he had been told of the occurrence. "Sound the alarm."

In a moment the big triangle that served as a bell was clanging out its imperative summons. Men dropped their tasks at mine and mill, turned and ran in the direction of the bastion. Women caught up their children and, pale but determined, hastened towards the sound.

Inside the fort muskets were caught up from the racks and the small cannons were moved into position from which they could cover the Haida encampment.

Within half an hour all was in readiness and Captain Stuart sent a party to the Haidas to demand that the culprit should at once be surrendered for trial before him as magistrate. Orders were given that if met by force the little band was to fall back on the bastion without, if possible, engaging in hostilities.

"We'd better show them our strongest weapons first," said the captain as he directed that the carronades should be well loaded with canister.

Harry accompanied the messengers to identify the Indian, if necessary, while Neil stayed at the bastion, making himself useful in quietening the children. The women, accustomed to the dangers that constantly surrounded them, made no outcry. Realising the seriousness of the situation, they made their way without fuss to the big room at the top of the bastion. One or two remained on the gun-room floor, preparing bandages and other necessities for immediate use in case of emergency.

Dr. Benson, whistling and humming to himself, went about his preparations for attending to the wounded. "Here, young fellow," he called to Neil, "I want you to give me a hand. Not afraid of blood, are you? No, that's good. You've got a pretty good head on you, so you stand by in case I want you."

"Do you think there'll be a fight?" asked Neil.

"You never can tell with these Haidas. I don't know them very well. I think the captain's going to try Finlayson's plan, though, and show them what the guns can do, if they don't behave. That'll probably scare them into submission, but you never know."

It did not take long for the little party of white men to reach the Indian camp, and those watching from the bastion could see them parleying with the native chiefs. Then there was a sudden confusion and the Indians could be seen arming themselves with clubs, spears and muskets. Slowly the white men retreated, their faces towards the savages.

"By Jove, they've got grit!" exclaimed the doctor in admiration. "See the leisurely way they're falling back. It's got the Indians puzzled. That's the reason Great Britain's what she is to-day," he added enthusiastically. "No matter who or what they are, Britons are all good fighters at heart."

Beyond throwing a few sticks and stones, the Haidas did not venture to attack, despite the superiority of their numbers. Had the handful of men turned to run, the natives would have been on them in an instant and all would have been butchered.

"All ready with those guns?" It was the quiet voice of Captain Stuart.

"Yes, sir."

"That's right, boys. Now, when our fellows have fallen back another fifty yards, let 'em have it. One at a time. Aim high. We don't want to kill any of them, but we want to show what we can do if we have to."

There was a moment of strained silence. The gun which was to be fired first was sighted and the fuse made ready. All eyes were upon the slowly retreating little party. Now the Indians were beginning to move forward. The shower of stones increased and it was evident the Haidas were preparing for a rush.

"Gunners,—ready—fire!"

There was a flash of fire, a deafening roar, and the building shook with the vibration as the gun sprang back in recoil against the tackle.

"Well placed," commented the captain. "Now the other one."

The second carronade was run out and again belched forth an angry message.

As the smoke cleared after the second shot and the gunners were ramming home another charge, Neil could see how the grape-shot had torn and shattered the tree-trunks and foliage above the Haidas' camp. The Indians stopped their rush at the first shot and were now fleeing in confusion for cover in the forest or behind convenient rocks.

Once more the cannon thundered its warning.

"That will do for now," commanded Captain Stuart. "I think they're properly frightened and will give in."

Neil hurried down to meet his chum as the little band reached the bastion. "I thought we were in for it," Harry declared. "They would have hurt some of us if the cannon had not been fired when it was. I can tell you it was a pleasant sound."

"Well, young fellow, I don't think you're going to get a chance to learn anything about surgery this time," exclaimed the doctor as he slapped Neil on the back. "They see the error of their ways now."

An hour later a small group of Indians approached the settlement, each with his right hand held aloft in token of peace. In the midst of the group stalked the culprit, his head erect, and carrying himself with a haughty dignity that won the admiration of the white men.

They were met by Captain Stuart and three or four of the men, and the Indian was turned over to them. Court was at once convened, and the captain, sitting as a magistrate, heard the witnesses. Both boys gave evidence, as did also Baker and the men who had come to the rescue of the lads.

The Haida chiefs seemed satisfied with the manner in which the proceedings were conducted and offered no

objection when the man was found guilty and was sentenced to receive a dozen lashes with the cat-o'-nine-tails.

The savage was taken to the gun-floor of the bastion, where he was lashed to one of the guns. Then the whipping was administered by one of the men, every lash raising huge welts on the skin of his bare back. The Indian never uttered a sound.

The flogging concluded, he was handed over to his friends, who, after listening to a lecture from Captain Stuart on the folly of refusing to surrender the man when asked to do so, were permitted to take him away with them.

A strong guard was maintained about the establishment all night, but there was no disturbance, and when daylight came it was seen that the Haida encampment was deserted and their great canoes had disappeared from the beach.

When it was discovered by the S'nenymoes that the Northern visitors had departed, they came out in force, armed to the teeth, to bravely declare what they had intended to do had the Haidas remained another day.

"I wonder if they really would have attacked the Haidas," mused Neil as he and Harry sat that evening with the doctor.

"No," replied Dr. Benson. "They might have attacked the Squamish, or the Cowichans, or even the Kwakiutls—Cogwelts, the men call them—under like circumstances; but the Haidas! Well, that's another matter. I don't know that I blame them either, for those Queen Charlotte Islanders are holy terrors and they've always been able to back up their reputation.

"But the S'nenymoes are no cowards," he added. "There was trouble between them and the Cogwelts a few years ago, not long after the post was established here. Some of the Cogwelts were working in the woods, getting out timber for the mill. The S'nenymoes didn't like the idea, and ambushed them, killing three. The others escaped and made their way home.

"Then one day a hundred canoes, filled with Cogwelt fighting men, swept round the point there and into the bay. It was a great sight, I can tell you. You could hear their war-cries for miles."

"And what did the Indians here do?" interjected Neil.

"By Jove! they went out to meet them, and they had only about thirty canoes. I got everything in readiness for a regular field day of surgery, but they cheated me."

"How?"

"Well, you know, it's the old Indian custom to demand reparation, and if this is agreed to there is no fighting. It's a good idea too. It's like the old Mosaic law—an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth and a life for a life.

"They started to parley out there on the bay. The Cogwelts said that because three of their men had been killed, three S'nenymoes must die, and certain gifts must be made as well.

"The S'nenymoes agreed to the terms. That was fine, but there was just one hitch in the proceedings. It was the question of the three men to be sacrificed. No person seemed to be at all anxious for the distinction. At last old Williwunshum, the head chief of all the S'nenymoes, rose in his canoe, and said that surely he, as the great chief, was worth three ordinary men. He offered to die if his life would satisfy the demands of the Cogwelts. By Jove, boys, it was a splendid thing to see that old chap standing there offering to die to save three of his people!

"Well, the Cogwelts agreed to the proposition. The chief stood with folded arms while three of the Cogwelts fired at him. One shot went through an arm, another cut his cheek and the third smashed his shoulder, but the old fellow never moved. Again they fired, and this time a ball struck him between the eyes and he fell.

"He was a great chief, a friend of the white men and a real hero, even if he was an Indian," declared the doctor, adding in conclusion, "But they gave him a fine funeral—and well they might."

CHAPTER V

THE LURE OF THE RIVER

"How would you boys like to take a little trip?" Dr. Benson asked several days after the trouble with the Haidas.

"How would we like to! When? Where?" they exclaimed. "Oh, doctor, tell us, come on!"

The doctor laughed at their eagerness. "Come, come, I only asked you a question—a foolish one maybe, for I might just as well ask if a duck would like to swim."

"But tell us, please!" Harry persisted.

"Tell you what?" teased the doctor.

"About the trip, or adventure, or whatever it is."

"I didn't say anything about adventure, and besides, I think Neil has had more than his share of excitement lately. It's not good for a *chechako* to have too much of that sort of thing."

"But," answered Neil, "it has been said that those who have things will get more, and that's the way I feel about it."

The sally pleased the doctor and he laughed. "Well, I guess it's no use trying to get ahead of you youngsters, so I'll tell you what I know.

"But, boys," he added, "I don't know if you can get the trip. All that I do know is that there are dispatches to go from here to Langley and Hope and Yale. It seems that everyone at Victoria is mad about this gold excitement, and they don't want to send any men from there for fear they'll not come back. It's the same way here, too, and Captain Stuart is at a loss to know who to send with the dispatches that the governor has sent here to be carried across to Fraser's River. I've suggested that you lads take them. You're not regular employees, but you can very well act, if the captain will agree to send you."

"That's great!" exclaimed Neil. "When can we start?"

"Whoa, hold on there," laughed the doctor. "It's not arranged yet that you'll go. I just mentioned it to you, that's all. I'll do what I can with the captain, but don't be disappointed if you don't get the trip."

It was not long before word was brought that Captain Stuart wished to see them at the office. "The doctor tells me," he said when they answered the summons, "that you lads are willing to take a trip over to Fraser's River."

"Yes, sir," replied Harry.

"I don't know," the captain went on, drumming with his finger-tips on the table, "whether I should send you, especially Neil, on such a trip. There's no telling what will happen."

"They'll look after themselves all right," interposed the doctor. "They proved that with the Cowichans."

"Yes, I know, but this is different. It's not the Indians—it's the whites, crazy about gold, that makes me hesitate. You can always figure what to expect from an Indian, but with these miners it's different."

"But you can't spare any of the regular men," argued the doctor.

"Yes, I guess you're right." And turning to the boys he asked, "When can you start?"

"Now."

"That's the spirit. You'd better get away to-night so you'll make the mouth of the river by morning. I'll send Titus and his crew with you as far as Langley Fort."

It did not take long for the boys to make their preparations for the journey. Before leaving Victoria Neil had deposited with the officers of the company the money, amounting to $2000, which had been realised from the settlement of his father's estate in San Francisco. He therefore had only his personal belongings with him in his box, and taking only what he considered absolutely necessary for the trip, he left the remainder of his belongings with the store-keeper. Harry, being more familiar with the requirements of such a journey, was ready in a few moments. As they were completing their preparations the door opened and Dr. Benson came in.

"I thought," he said, "that Neil might not have a revolver, so brought him one over," and he produced a big six-chambered Colt, a powderhorn, a bag of lead balls and a small box of percussion caps. "I knew you had one, Harry," he added.

"Yes, sir, you should, for you gave it to me."

Neil was more than pleased with the gift.

"You know," observed the doctor as he explained the method of loading the weapon, "I don't go a great deal on muskets. They only have one shot and, if you miss, you may not have time to load. With one of these things you have six chances. Shoot low with it," he advised, "as it throws the ball up a little on the recoil.

"That's all right," he protested when Neil attempted to thank him. "I hope you'll never have to use it on a man, but if you do, shoot straight."

It was ten o'clock when the boys boarded the canoe. Captain Stuart and the doctor came down to the water's edge with them.

"You may spend what time you think necessary over there," said the captain. "I know the governor wants to find out how things are going with the miners, and you youngsters will be better able to find out the true state of affairs than older men would. I've written to Allard at Fort Yale to help you in any way you may desire for such purpose. And now, you'd better be off, and good luck to you."

It was the same canoe in which the boys had made the trip from Fort Victoria. The flag of the Hudson's Bay Company trailed out behind from a short pole, as a protection against molestation by Musqueam Indians at the mouth of the river. It was in order that this part of the journey might be made by daylight that the start was delayed until late at night.

Once outside of the harbour a mast and spritsail were erected and, driven by a fresh nor'-west wind, the canoe cut through the water at a good speed. Wrapping themselves in their blankets the boys lay down in the bottom of the dug-out and, despite the chill of the night and the cramped positions they had to assume, they were soon asleep.

It was broad daylight when they awakened to find that the canoe had already passed the river mouth and was forging ahead through the muddy waters under the impetus of the Indians' paddles. Low-lying lands stretched for some distance on either side, but away to the left could be seen a higher point that showed sharply against the fainter hues of more distant mountains.

"That must be Point Grey," Harry remarked. "That's the place where Captain Vancouver met the Spaniards."

"Did they fight?" Neil asked.

"No, they were both exploring. Vancouver got here first and named all the points and inlets and everything, so the

chaplain at Fort Victoria was telling me. He said that there was nearly a war over the ownership of the country. The Spaniards had seized a trading post belonging to a man named Meares, on the West Coast, and when they heard about it in the Old Country there was trouble. Great Britain asked Spain to apologise and pay Meares for his losses. Spain refused to do it and asked France to help her, but the French wouldn't, and so Spain at last had to do what Britain wanted. Captain Vancouver was sent out with a couple of ships to take the country back. He was told to explore the Coast first. It was while he was doing it that he met the Spaniards at Point Grey. They wanted him to go to Nootka, the place on the West Coast where the Spanish commander was waiting for him, but he wouldn't do it. If he had, why the Spaniards would have done the exploring and would have claimed the country. Vancouver kept at his work and sailed right around Vancouver's Island—that's why it's called after him."

The boys soon saw that they were not the only travellers on the river. Flat-bottomed, crudely-constructed boats, piled high with miscellaneous freight and manned by sturdy, bearded men mostly wearing red flannel shirts; old canoes propelled by those unaccustomed to the art of paddling; even clumsily-made rafts on which the passengers toiled, pulling and pushing at tremendous sweeps in order to make a few slow feet against the flow of the river—all manner of odd craft struggled against current and tide. All were bound for a common destination, the Couteau Country, in the vicinity of Fort Yale.

After half an hour Titus turned the canoe towards shore and they disembarked for breakfast. As the prow of the dug-out touched, Neil saw a man jump up from beside a small fire and reach for his rifle. This he lowered when the boy called out, "Put that down."

"Yuh sure scairt me fer sartin," exclaimed the stranger, and as he spoke a companion who had been sleeping beside the fire rose with a start, and seeing the Indians, gave voice to a cry of fright. The boys looked at the second figure in astonishment, for despite the rough attire, there could be no mistaking: it was a woman.

"Squaw!" grunted Titus.

"Yas," agreed the man. "She's my wife. She jest wouldn't stay behind."

"But you're both wet—drenched," observed Harry.

"Yas," answered the man. "We hit a snag or somethin' out thar an' our canoe upset. I swum ashore wi' Betsy, an' we kept on till we hit this fire some others left. Some fellars were here a bit later, but they didn't have room fer us in their boat. We got a bit of grub from them an' I bought this gun offen one of 'em. When I seed you a-comin' I thought as you were Injuns come t' scalp us."

"What do you intend to do?" Harry asked.

"Dunno," replied the other. "Maybe we'll get a lift up t' Fort Langley an' then we'll be able to shift fer ourselves. We ain't down-hearted, not a bit. In a country like this yuh got t' take her as she comes, an' Adam Jones an' Betsy ain't a-goin' t' quit because they've had one piece o' tough luck."

"That's right," agreed the woman.

Harry invited the couple to join them at breakfast, and the boys were much amused at the quaint manner of Jones and his wife, the former talking almost incessantly, and the latter hardly speaking at all.

"I guess we can give you a lift as far as the fort," Harry said, "but we'll have to leave you there."

"That'll be dandy," said Jones, "an' I only hope as how we'll be able t' repay yuh some day.' If I don't, maybe Betsy'll do it."

"That's right," agreed Mrs. Jones, whose only conversational stock-in-trade seemed to the boys to consist of the single sentence with which she backed up the declarations of her spouse.

The party was soon under way again, the canoe slipping along at a good rate as the Indians bent to their work. They

overtook and passed dozens of boats, canoes and rafts, the occupants of many shouting greetings, while others stopped their exertions momentarily to gaze in some awe at the "H.B.Co." flag. The Indians were not long in appreciating the respect with which their craft was being regarded and increased their efforts, while their chanting became louder and the time quickened.

The river widened suddenly, the low-lying lands giving way to heavily-timbered slopes that rose sharply from the water on the left, while the highlands of the other shore were but little more than a mile distant. Had it not been for the current, the boys would have fancied themselves on the surface of a beautiful lake. Half an hour's paddling, however, brought them around a big bend to a point where another stream emptied into the Fraser.

It was well on towards the middle of the afternoon when they rounded a sweep and caught sight of Fort Langley, one of the largest and most important fur-trading posts in the West. It stood on a knoll overlooking the river. Four bastions guarded the palisades and afforded some protection to the workers in the broad fields that stretched away to the right of the fort. Here produce was raised for the different establishments of the company, and for the trade between the coast and the Sandwich Islands, as well as for shipment to the Russian post at Sitka.

Just now the fort was a busy place indeed. Tents, rough board shelters and rude coverings of bark and branches clustered about the stockades, while a stream of men passed and repassed to the steep incline from the river to the trading wicket.

"Well, friends," said Harry as they landed, "I guess you'll have to take care of yourselves now. Good luck to you."

"We kin do that all right," returned Adam Jones. "We've got a dollar or two an' we'll make out some way."

"That's right," agreed Mrs. Jones.

Hurrying up the slope the boys made their way past the sentry and were soon shown into the presence of J. Murray Yale, the officer in charge.

"Quite likely you're anxious to get along up the river," remarked the trader as he read the letters addressed to him. "It says here you've got letters for Fort Hope and Allard at Fort Yale. I'm pretty short-handed, but I'll manage to get you a crew of some sort and a canoe. We've had to take our best canoes out of the water to keep them from being stolen. This rush has only been on a short while, but there's hundreds on the way up the river already. I don't think many of 'em have reached Yale yet, but it's going to be crowded. I don't for the life of me see how the country's going to support them all."

Several hours later, after the boys had been refreshed by a good meal and had rested a little, Mr. Yale informed them that the canoe was ready.

As they made their way down the slope through the throng of bearded miners they met Adam Jones and his good wife, both smiling broadly.

"We're a-goin' t' set up in business fer a few days till we see how things is shapin'," he explained.

"You're going to do what?" Neil demanded.

"Goin' t' set up a eatin' place. We bought some bacon an' beans an' got hold of a bark shanty a fellah was quittin', so we're goin' t' start feedin' people at a dollar a throw."

"That's right," smiled Mrs. Jones as she bent down to gather some twigs for the fire which was to bring back the fortunes of the family.

"They'll get along all right," laughed Harry.

It was late the following afternoon when the canoe reached Fort Hope and Harry and Neil made their way up from the river to meet the officer in charge. As they had been informed by Mr. Yale, the farther up the river they went the fewer were those they encountered headed in the same direction. The stampede was only well started.

When they had delivered their letters to the man in charge at the little fort, they had an opportunity of looking about the place and entering into conversation with some of the miners who had preceded them. They learned that but a few men had got as far as Yale, but the number was increasing daily. Some few were at work below Hope, and while some gold had been found it was very fine in character and not the coarser grained metal that was so much desired.

"I'm afraid," said one of the Hudson's Bay employees, "that there's goin' to be a lot of 'em disappointed. Some are experienced miners, but there's lots of 'em who are new to this kind of thing. There's one party of twenty-five or six headed by a man named Jack McLennan. They went up two or three weeks ago. They should get on all right. They're all old miners and plainsmen, and I think McLennan was in the company's service once."

The lads accepted the invitation of the trader to stay the night at the fort and make the journey to Fort Yale by land. The distance was about fifteen miles, and it could be made in much quicker time by trail than in attempting to buck the swift waters of the river.

"Are the Indians ever troublesome?" Neil asked one of the men as they sat about the fire after supper.

"Not often," was the reply. "They're often fighting among themselves, but those around Yale and in the Black Canyon above the fort need watching. Around here they're more or less friendly.

"Chief Trader Allard had a close shave at Yale a few years ago," the man continued. "It was just after he started the post. He was working away in the store when old Chief Spentlum and some of his men captured him by surprise. They were going to kill him and loot the store. Mrs. Allard was working in the field and when she heard of the trouble she rushed into the store with a hoe and threatened to cut old Spentlum's head off with it unless they let her husband go. They did it too, quick."

The boys were up shortly after dawn, and having breakfasted, started on their way on two horses under the guidance of an Indian.

"Poor beggars," exclaimed Harry, "look at them down there," and he pointed to the river where five men in a flat-bottomed boat were fighting desperately to gain a few feet against the force of the river. "I'm mighty glad we didn't try it in the canoe."

It was nearly noon when they arrived at Fort Yale and at once sought out Mr. Allard who welcomed them warmly.

"I see the governor wants a report on the gold miners above here," he observed after reading his letters. "I don't know how I can get the information for him. I have no one here to send. I hear McLennan's party is goin' to try and get through the canyon."

"We'll go," volunteered Harry.

"Well, you see, I don't know what to do. You're not regularly in the service, but it you volunteer, why, that's another matter."

"Of course we'll go," answered Neil.

"Well, you're only boys, and it's a dangerous trip," explained the trader.

"We don't mind that."

"Well, if you go it's on your own responsibility. It's a hard trail—I don't know a worse one. But if you are really willing to do it, I'll see McLennan about it."

"We're willing," declared Harry.

CHAPTER VI

THE INDIAN TRAIL

"So you want to join us," said Jack McLennan, the big, broad-shouldered leader of the party of miners when Chief Trader Allard introduced them.

"That's what we want," answered Harry.

"Well, I'll have to see what the boys think about it," observed the miner. "We're not anxious to have a bigger party, but I guess we'll have to leave a couple of men here anyway to look after what we've got so far, and we might take you lads along. You look pretty young, though, to be wanting to take part in a man's game," he added.

"We may be young all right, but I think we can take care of ourselves," answered Neil. "At least the Hudson's Bay officers think we're able to, or they wouldn't have sent us up here."

"That's so," agreed McLennan. "Anyway, I'll put it up to the lads and see what they think about it. You come down to our camp after supper and we'll talk it over."

That evening the boys went over to the miners' encampment, and McLennan called his companions together. The boys were delighted at the appearance of the party. Some members of it were only a few years older than themselves; others were in the prime of life, while the grey beards of several told of advancing years. All bore evidence of being used to roughing it on the frontiers of civilisation. They were a hardy, well-disciplined, clean-cut-looking lot.

"Boys," said McLennan, mounting a fallen timber, "we've been working here for quite a spell and have only found fine gold. It's very nice and all that, but it's not what we've been used to in California. We want the coarse metal. I think that this gold has come through the canyons and the coarser stuff's up farther. Besides, the country's crowding up. Ten more came in to-day and there's hundreds more on the way. Soon there won't be room to turn round. If we don't push ahead, and others do, then they'll get the good gold if it's there. If we don't like things up higher, we can come back here or return to California. What do you say?"

There was a murmur of approval, only one or two apparently hesitating.

"Two men will have to stay here to hold our ground and look after the boats and things," went on McLennan. "We can draw straws to see who'll stay, if nobody'll volunteer."

"I'll stay, captain," said one man. "I don't exactly like leaving this ground, even if the gold is fine. I'll stay if anyone else will."

"Well, I reckon I'll stay with you," offered another.

"That's fine," commented McLennan. "Of course you fellows will share in anything we find."

The others applauded this statement.

"Now," went on the leader, "there's these two boys who want to go along with us. In fact, our good friend Allard has asked us to take them. As I understand it, they're sort of dispatch bearers for the Hudson's Bay Company. The company, as you know, is mightily interested in finding out how the mining is going to affect the fur trade. I used to work with them at Fort Vancouver and other places and I know they're not interested in gold, but furs. The company plays fair, and personally I don't see where it can harm us to have these two lads along."

"Let's hear from 'em," suggested one of the miners.

"Go ahead, Harry," urged Neil.

"No, you talk. You can do it better, and you think faster."

McLennan motioned for one of them to get up on the log. Neil did so. His heart was pounding and he felt sure that the quaking of his knees would betray him. For a moment he could think of nothing to say and just stood looking at the grave-faced, bearded gathering. Then he smiled, and when several answered his grin he felt more at ease.

"This is my first stump speech," he said at last, and when the laughter stopped he went on, "As your captain said, we want to go with you up through the canyons. The company wants to find out how the miners get along with the Indians, and how the Indians act as well. I know we're young, but if the officers of the Hudson's Bay didn't think we could do the work we wouldn't be here. Besides," he added, "supposing there is trouble between you and the Indians, wouldn't it be a good thing to have someone who could report the facts of the case—someone the governor knows, even if they are boys?"

"By Jove, the lad's right," exclaimed Archie McDonald, to whom the boys had been introduced as the second in command of the party. "We're in Queen Victoria's country now, and it's just as well to have along somebody that knows those in charge of things here."

"Sounds reasonable," assented another.

"Will we take 'em?" asked McLennan, and a shout of approval was given in answer.

"Well, that's settled," he continued. "The youngsters will have to abide by our rules, and they'll have to chip in with their share of the food and do their share of the work."

"Certainly," answered Neil.

"Then they're entitled to a share in the profits."

"Yes, yes," answered the crowd.

"Well, I suggest, if it's agreeable, that these boys get half a share each. That'll be twenty-seven shares altogether."

"That suits us," said Harry, and the miners also signified their willingness to accept the arrangement.

The boys secured a supply of jerked venison, bacon and beans from the company's store. They already had their blankets. Harry purchased a small hand-axe and Neil a bullet mould, some lead and caps for their revolvers. They already had some ammunition, but thought it best to be well stocked, as they did not know how long they would be gone from the post, or where they could secure additional supplies after leaving Yale. They each took another powderhorn and Neil obtained a number of fish-hooks. He already had the stout fishing-line that had served them so well when attacked by the Cowichans.

They were up at daybreak the following morning and, after a hearty breakfast, joined the miners.

There was a narrow trail through the smaller canyon, immediately above the fort, but after consulting with the company employees it was considered inadvisable to attempt to follow this, as there was an indication that the water might rise rapidly at any moment from the melting snows along the upper reaches of the river.

"I guess we'll have to go over the mountain," decided McLennan, "so come on, boys!"

With a cheer the miners shouldered their packs and followed. The trail, which could hardly be called such, led straight up the steep slope of the mountain. It was with some difficulty that the party reached the top, where a halt was called.

"She were a tough 'un," remarked one of the men to Neil as they rested. "I think you'd get along better if you'd fix that pack," he added, and he showed the boys how to adjust their loads to distribute the weight evenly.

"All right; time to be moving," called McLennan, and once more the outfit started. It was even more difficult now to make way through the brush, and the leaders had to make frequent use of their axes to cut away the small growth that almost blocked progress in some places.

The trail led up and down, over boulders and slides, across mountain streams and along windfalls and through thickets, and finally down a steep gorge between two peaks to the river. It was nearly night when the party at last emerged from the semi-darkness of the ravine to a small bench above the foaming river that boiled and swirled into the narrower confines of the rock-rimmed canyon that ended just above the fort.

Great mountains towered above the Fraser on both sides, almost shutting out the light of the setting sun. Darkness came abruptly. A big fire was lighted, and after a frugal supper sentries were posted and the men, weary with the toil of the day, lay down about the blaze and were soon asleep.

Neil and Harry were tired indeed. They had kept up with the party all day, never once complaining, despite their fatigue. They were unaccustomed to the difficulties of packing, but were determined not to give in. "We'll soon get used to it," Harry said as they stretched themselves out on the ground.

The journey was continued soon after daybreak. A stop was made once to prospect some ground on a river bar where a few grains of gold were found. It was decided, however, to keep on and endeavour to win through the Black Canyon ahead.

"It's no use staying cooped up between these hills if we can get through and find something better," asserted McLennan. "If we don't, why then we can work back." To this the others agreed.

"To-morrow we'll have to make it through the big canyon," the captain said on the third evening, "so get all the sleep you can."

"My, Harry, look at that!" exclaimed Neil the next morning as they approached the narrow cut. "It's going to be a tough one." Almost perpendicular cliffs of bare stone rose to dizzy heights above the river, forming—it seemed to the boys—a broken archway through which the blue sky could be glimpsed in a jagged line.

"Fine to look at if you're fond of scenery," grunted Harry, "but it's going to be a hard job to walk along those cliffs."

McDonald approached and called to Harry, "Say, young fellow, didn't you say you'd been to sea?"

"I've sailed quite a lot on my father's ship," he answered. "Why?"

"Ever do much climbing?"

"Yes, in the rigging."

"The captain and I were talking about this trail ahead. They said at the fort it's pretty high in places and only a few inches wide. Someone pretty light and not liable to get dizzy had better go first, and we were wondering if you'd like to tackle it. You don't have to, and if you'd rather not, say so."

"I'll go," responded Harry. "Will you come with me, Neil?"

"Yes."

The boys soon found that the difficulties had not been over-estimated by McDonald. There had never been any attempt on the part of the Indians to improve on Nature's engineering, except where it was impossible for them to jump from ledge to ledge. Here crude ladders of sticks bound together with deer-hide and withes led from lower to higher shelves of stone. In other places the narrow trail was so steep that caution demanded that it be climbed on hands and knees.

Higher and higher the lads struggled, the others following with even greater difficulty. Now the pathway narrowed

until it was only wide enough to permit of progress being made by sliding one foot ahead of the other. They had to hang on to uneven projections or force their fingers into crevices in the rock wall of the cliff to prevent falling. Three hundred feet below, the river foamed and roared as the water poured over the rocky bottom of the canyon.

"You're not getting dizzy, are you?" Harry shouted as he saw Neil look down and his face pale. "Look up," he commanded and Neil obeyed. "Now look me straight in the eye," and for a full minute he gazed at his chum. "Now, old pal," he said, "you'll be all right in a second or two. Just get a good grip on your nerves."

"All right," was the husky answer. "I'll do it. Don't be scared about me. I'm not going to fall."

"That's right. Come on, then."

They continued their hazardous way, climbing higher and still higher. Harry kept close to his friend, stopping every few feet to talk reassuringly to him.

They had gone several miles and Neil had regained control of himself, when all at once Harry came to a stop. The trail had come to an end.

Resting on the narrow pathway, the outer end slung from the top of the precipice by a native rope, was a stout pole. Another projected from the face of the rock in a similar manner a few feet farther along, where the ledge was continued. Across the two supports was laid a third pole, and over this uncertain bridge the boys must walk.

Harry turned and scrutinised his companion. "Have you got your nerve back?" he asked.

"Yes."

"Well, you're going to need it all."

The trail was sufficiently wide to permit Neil passing Harry to take a look at the single pole that spanned the intervening distance between the ends of the broken path. A false step would be fatal, for there was a sheer drop of three hundred feet.

"Come on," said Neil, "we've got to do it, and the longer we stay here the less we'll want to."

"Right you are," agreed Harry. "Follow me, then. Keep close to the wall. Hold on to everything you can and slide your feet. Don't push out with your weight or the blamed thing will slide from under you. Here goes," and he led the way, edging carefully along the pole, digging his fingers into shallow depressions and cracks in the rock and taking advantage of everything that offered a hold. Neil followed.

"Whew!" exclaimed Harry as he wiped the perspiration from his forehead after they had reached the other side. "That's worse than being on a yard in a storm, and I've seen lots of men doing that and wondered how they had the nerve to."

"We'd better wait here till the others come up, and maybe we can help them across," suggested Neil.

"How?"

"I've got my fishing-line, and I thought that if we doubled it a few times it would reach from that rock there over to this one. It wouldn't be much, but it might help some. You know, a railing isn't much good itself, it's just the feeling of safety that it gives."

"That's a good idea," agreed Harry, and they were soon at work doubling and knotting the line. Harry crossed the pole and secured the cord to a projection while Neil pulled it taut and secured it on his side.

Hardly had they finished than the foremost of the party appeared. "Texas," a veteran frontiersman, was in the lead. Without a moment's hesitation he crossed. "Thanks fer th' rope. It helped," he said. "Saw a bridge like that 'un on th'

Colorado once."

Passing back word for the last man over to bring the line, the boys pushed on ahead again. The trail was just as narrow and dangerous as that they had passed. There were two more native bridges of a similar character to be crossed, but they were shorter and not as high. It was late in the day when finally the trail descended to a flat upon which camp could be pitched. It had taken the entire day to make a distance of seven miles. There had been no opportunity of eating and the boys were ready for the rude supper that was hastily prepared.

"I want to thank you boys," said the captain.

"What for?" asked Harry in astonishment.

"For leading the way."

"That's nothing to thank us for," responded the boy, blushing. "It was easier for us that way than in a crowd."

"Well, there's one thing; I'm glad we brought you along," went on McLennan. "I didn't know how you'd do at first, but I see by the way you fixed that rope on the bridge that you've got brains as well as grit—and you think of the other fellow."

It was only natural that the boys should appreciate such a compliment from a man of the type of the captain, and they noted that the rest of the men displayed a more friendly disposition towards them, for the miners, with one or two exceptions, had rather ignored them. Now, however, they seemed to be ready to accept them as regular members of the company.

Some prospecting was done on the bars above the canyon, and at one point where, with some trouble, the river was crossed to the mouth of a creek, fairly good indications were found, but once more it was decided to follow the Fraser.

The trail led up and down the steep, partially wooded banks of the river, at some places being easily travelled, and at others being hard to negotiate. It was in crossing the face of a mountain that the party almost met with disaster. There had been a rock and sand slide. The path led up to this and it was necessary to make a run across the loose material to the other side.

All but one or two had made the trip when one man in his efforts to do so stumbled. The rock and earth started to slip, and he would have been carried down into the river to his death had not Texas caught up Neil's fishing-line rope and thrown one end of it to him. This the man wrapped about his wrist and was dragged to safety. It was some time before the others dared to essay the crossing, Texas standing ready with the line to assist them.

Having successfully passed the mountain, the most dangerous part of the journey was over. The country was more open and the hills more rolling. The miners continued their way in a more leisurely manner, stopping from time to time to prospect on the river bars and benches. Twelve days after leaving Fort Yale they came to the forks of the Fraser and Thompson rivers. The country here was more or less familiar to McLennan who had, a dozen years before, been stationed for a short time at Fort Kamloops.

Several bands of Indians were encountered and one or two fairly large villages were passed. While the natives appeared to be surly and in conversation with McLennan and Harry expressed in Chinook their dislike for the invasion of white men not connected with the Hudson's Bay Company, fearing that they would have an evil effect on the salmon runs, they displayed no open hostility. Near a place which the Indians called Nicomen, on the Thompson River, the miners discovered considerable gold. It was, after some argument, decided to set up camp and thoroughly test the ground. Rockers were constructed for washing the sand and gravel. These were crudely-built cradles, which one man operated while another alternately shovelled dirt and ladled water into them. The gold, being heavier than the sand and small stones, settled to the bottom to be caught by cleats or riffles, while the lighter material was carried away through the lower end of the machine.

Each night the rockers were "cleaned up" and the gold was collected, the finer particles being separated from the metallic black sands by the use of quicksilver.

Guards were continually on watch about the camp, especially after nightfall. It was while taking his turn at such duty that Neil saw something floating on the river that attracted his attention. He called to Captain McLennan, who waded into the stream and returned a moment later pushing a large log before him. Lashed to the timber was an Indian woman, almost naked, and to all appearances dead.

Cutting the bonds that held her, they carried the woman up the bank and called to the others. A small flask of rum, carried for emergencies, was brought from McLennan's shelter and a few drops were forced between the *klootchman's* lips while two of the men rubbed her wrists. Presently she opened her eyes and looked up. A few moments later McLennan spoke to her in the traders' jargon, and although frightened at first, she finally made answer.

"She was set adrift by her people because they reckoned she had an evil spirit," he explained. "Has anyone anything she can wear?" he asked.

One of the miners offered a blanket. "I've got two," he lied, and went to get it, but before the generous fellow could secure his only night covering, Harry got his. "We can both sleep under yours, Neil," he said.

"What are you going to do with her?" McDonald asked.

"I don't know; never thought of that," responded McLennan. "We can't have her hanging about here, or we'll have trouble with the Indians," and he talked to her. "She says she's my slave and refuses to leave," he exclaimed in perplexity.

The captain again expostulated with the woman and at last she rose and disappeared into the night. Next morning she returned and, despite his best efforts, insisted on trying to help him with his work.

CHAPTER VII

THE NATIVE UPRISING

"We've been doing pretty good here," said McLennan one day, "but I think we should prospect 'round a bit to see if we can locate the source of this gold."

"That seems to be a reasonable idea," answered McDonald, "and it might be wise to split up for a few days, some staying here and some going in search of better ground."

And so it was finally arranged. McLennan with ten men and the two boys started up the river, panning and testing the river bank where possible, and occasionally venturing some distance back from the stream in search of old channels and quartz indications. The country was more or less familiar to McLennan who had, while in the service of the fur-traders, visited many of the establishments in the West and worked at a number of them.

Nothing better than the bar on which they were working was encountered, and after a week the party returned to Nicomen.

It was the evening of reunion of the miners and all were in excellent spirits. The clean-up for the day showed a larger amount of gold than had yet rewarded their efforts. "I think," observed Texas, "as we're jes' gettin' down t' pay dirt, an' we're goin' t' strike it rich. The gold has been coarser an' more of it in the las' two or three days."

"Yes," agreed another, "she sure looks good, cap'n. Been gettin' better at every shovelful."

The men were gathered about a big blazing fire, for although it was July and the days were excessively warm, the miners liked the red glow of the flames, and the smoke from the burning pine knots helped to drive away the hordes of

mosquitoes that descended with the coming of night. Everyone was contented with the outlook for the future, and as darkness settled over the valley the radiance of the blaze limned the faces of men satisfied with their lot. It was just the night for a story and it required but little urging to start McLennan on a yarn.

"Did I ever tell you about the time the Indians tried to kill old John Tod, and what he did to them?" he asked.

"No," chorused half a dozen voices. "Tell us about it."

"Well," started the captain, "it was about a dozen years ago. I was at Fort Kamloops, and old Tod was in charge there—a great old lad he was too, and is yet for all I know—anyway, it was time for him to be lookin' after gettin' in his supplies of salmon. You know, they eat salmon all year 'round at some of these posts, leastways that's their chief food; fresh when it's in season, and dried for the rest of the time.

"Tod sent all his men off to the Fraser to collect the fish for the winter's supply. I wasn't located there, but being at the fort, I went along with the men. It was quite a job, I can tell you, catching and curing and bringin' back eight or ten thousand fish.

"We'd been gone about a day and were joggin' along nice and easy when one of the fellows shouted, 'Here's old Tod!' an' sure enough there he was a-comin' like a whirlwind on his big white mare. He slowed down as he caught up to us an' told us to follow on, an' if anything happened, to beat it back to the fort. 'Keep me in sight, and if things are all right, go ahead,' he ordered, and then he was off again.

"We didn't know what to make of it, but there was no use tryin' to, so we jus' obeyed. For a long time nothing happened. We could see Tod ridin' ahead about a mile or so. Then he disappeared over a rise. When we got to the top of the hill we could see the old boy caperin' about on his horse like he was tryin' to do a dance or somethin'. We thought at first he'd gone crazy, and we stopped and watched from behind sage brush what was goin' on.

"Then all of a sudden we saw Indians—about three hundred of them, I would judge—moving slowly towards him from the sides of a draw we had to pass through, and we knew old John had been tryin' to attract their attention. He did it all right, and kept workin' his horse closer and closer to them. Then he suddenly pulled his sword and pistol and threw them both up in the air.

"Pretty soon he was among them. Then there was a commotion and the Indians began runnin' about in all directions. A bunch of them started to cut down a tree.

"We knew then that Tod had them well in hand, so we rode down and past them and kept a-goin'. We knew too that they'd been hidin' there all the time to wipe us out and Tod had some way found it out and had come to our rescue.

"You'd never guess what he did to those Indians. No! Well, I'll tell you. He vaccinated them. Yes, that's what he did. He told us about it afterwards. He'd just got some vaccine from Fort Vancouver when he heard that they were aimin' to kill us, and he put it in his pocket. When he got them so curious with watchin' him that he got among them, he called out that he'd come to save them from the small-pox that an Okanagan had brought from Walla Walla. That scared them all right, for if there's anything that Indians are frightened of it's small-pox. They forgot all about wantin' to kill us and begged him to save them. Just to see that he had them properly scared he made them cut down a tree. As soon as it was done he sat on the log and made the Indians pass in line before him. He used his old rusty tobacco knife and vaccinated them—on their right arms, until he had no more vaccine left, and then he told them how to do the others with vaccine from their own arms.

"Well, when we came back that way in about a week there wasn't a warrior that could lift his right arm to fight anyone."

The laughter and comment of the miners at the strategy of old John Tod was interrupted by the silent, almost ghost-like appearance of the Indian woman McLennan had saved. She stepped into the circle of light and dropped to a log. Her face was drawn and anxious and she looked with frightened eyes at the captain.

"Boys," he whispered, "there's something wrong. Don't say a word, for she's something to tell, or she wouldn't have

come like this."

For several minutes the woman made no move. Every eye was fixed upon her. Not a sound, save the crackling of the fire and the lapping of the water on the river bank, was heard. No words were required to tell these men, experienced in the ways of the frontiers, that the woman was fighting a battle with herself—a struggle between her regard for the white man and her tribal allegiance and racial instincts.

At last she began to speak, slowly and hesitatingly at first, then more distinctly and with greater determination, using the Chinook jargon. McLennan and Harry, who was seated beside him, leaned forward. Neil, on the opposite side of the fire, saw his chum turn pale. Then his jaw squared and his eyes flashed with indignation. McLennan never took his eyes off those of the woman, but his brows knit and he clenched his hands in a way that indicated the nature of her message.

When the *klootchman* had concluded she stood up, looked once more at the white man in silence for a moment, then with a sob turned and disappeared as quickly as she had come.

"Boys," exclaimed McLennan, "it's serious. We've got to leave at once—now. She says the Indians are murdering the whites who followed us up the canyons, and they're coming here to get us. She says that our best way is to try and cross right over the mountains to the ocean, but that's impossible. But we've got to get going. Travel light. Take all your powder and shot, and what food you can carry and a blanket to wrap it in. Quick, now!"

In an instant the camp was in commotion, but there was no loud talking or undue excitement, although every man knew the terrible portent of the woman's warning. In little more than a quarter of an hour they were ready for the trail. McLennan and his lieutenant inspected every man and asked him what his pack contained. Such was the discipline of the company that no one had attempted to take more than he had been told to. In addition to his bundle each man had his poke of gold in his belt next to his body. Jerked venison was the food selected as offering greater sustenance and being less bulky than bacon and beans.

"Well, lads," said McDonald kindly, as he came up to Harry and Neil, "I guess you're in for it this time. Have you guns?"

"Revolvers."

"Good. Plenty of ammunition?"

"Yes."

"Men, there's six Kentucky rifles, four revolvers and eighteen double-barrelled shot-guns. Remember this: for distance use the rifles, for close quarters the guns, and the revolvers for emergencies. May God have mercy on us."

"Put out the fire," ordered the captain and in an instant three or four wet blankets were thrown over the blaze, and in the darkness the flight was commenced. Straight for the timbered lands they went. Not a word was spoken as they kept up a brisk walk, treading in single file, up the slopes for the higher ground. All night long they continued and, with the breaking of day, stopped in a thicket, by the side of a small stream, for a rest.

"We've got to harbour our strength," whispered McLennan, "and keep to the hills as long as we can. Then we'll drop down to the river and take our chances. We can't cross to the sea. It'd be sure death to try it."

An hour later the journey was continued with the utmost caution. Greater progress was made by daylight, although it was necessary to take advantage of every bit of natural covering offered. It was late in the day when a halt was called.

"We've come quite a piece," said the leader, "and in the morning we'll make our way down to the river coming out just above that mountain with the slides. It's a risky thing to do, but I guess we'll have to. The boys from Yale will probably start up the river when they hear of the trouble, and we've a chance of getting through. Whatever happens though, lads, stick together. Two or three may get through where everyone would be killed going alone."

The miners nodded and each man raised his right hand in silent assent, and then shook with his neighbour.

"Harry," whispered Neil, "we'll stand by each other."

"Yes, and with the rest."

"Of course—and—and what a fine lot they are. The Indians are going to find no cowards among McLennan's men."

While they insisted that every man not detailed to sentry duty should lie down to rest, neither McLennan nor McDonald closed an eye. They were on the alert all the time. Few, indeed, managed to sleep, although all attempted to do so. The boys dozed fitfully, awakening every few minutes when a night bird called or one of the men moved.

"Poor youngsters," Neil heard McLennan say. "It's too bad they've got to face this. I'm sorry now we brought them."

"So am I," answered Archie McDonald; "but they're mighty fine boys and, if I don't miss my guess, they'll fight with the rest. But do you think there's any chance of getting through?"

"I don't know, Mac, it all depends on the boys at Yale. It's more than a month since we left there, and there must have been hundreds come since. I don't think the Indians would attack them, but if they've killed many in the canyons the boys'll be out to get after them. I'm afraid we'll have to fight at this end anyway, but if we can beat our way down to the big chasm we may get through."

The miners were on their way again at dawn. It was with the utmost caution that they made the descent from the hills. Not an Indian was seen.

"If we can get around this big mountain," said Harry, "we may have a chance." They were approaching the place and the ascent of the first bench had commenced. Neil stopped and pointed to the ground. His chum was beside him in an instant examining some blades of grass bent and bruised by a human foot. They looked at each other in some consternation.

Old Texas saw them, and he too scrutinised the mark. "Two hours old," he whispered as he passed on. "Get ready to fight."

Gradually they worked their way up the hill and along to the first of the dangerous slides. Again the boys and Texas volunteered to lead the way. McLennan followed. Several more crossed in safety, when suddenly the silence was broken by a savage yell from the heights above and three arrows struck the rock above the boys. A scream of pain from one of the men who was in the act of crossing told that one shaft, at least, had found its mark.

A cold shudder ran through Neil and for an instant he swayed unsteadily. Then his head cleared and he found himself kneeling beside Harry. He drew his revolver.

"Take a rest with your revolver on a rock and keep covered as well as you can," Harry said through clenched teeth. "Watch that ledge up there."

Neil did as he was told. Presently he saw an Indian's head appear. The boys fired at the same time. With a cry of pain the savage rose, tottered and crashed headlong down the mountain-side.

"Well done," muttered Texas.

"Keep up a fire at that ledge," ordered McLennan, "and protect the men in crossing."

Slowly and steadily the miners loaded their rifles and shot-guns and bombarded the rocks above, as one by one their comrades dashed across the treacherous slide.

The Indians started to shoot their arrows in an arc so that, while protected themselves, their shafts fell on the trail occupied by the defenders. Two more men were struck in this manner, the first one wounded having been brought across the slide by his companions.

They hurried on now, McLennan and three or four riflemen acting as rear-guards, while McDonald, Texas, Mike Mallahan and the boys led the advance. The wounded were assisted by their companions as the retreat continued.

At a second slide a halt was made. The ground offered some small opportunity for defence and a rude barricade was hastily thrown up. "We'll have to try and make this one after dark," declared McLennan. "Besides, we've got to look after the boys who've been hit."

Harry and a young Bavarian, named Ned Stout, had already cut away the shirt from one of the injured, and the boy was horrified to see that the wound from which the arrow had already been drawn was turning black and was badly swollen.

McLennan examined the hurt carefully and shook his head. The man, despite the agony of his suffering, smiled at his leader. "I reckon I'm a goner, cap," he murmured.

"I'm afraid so, Jim," and there were tears in McLennan's eyes. "You've only a short time."

"Thought so," answered the brave fellow. "Better leave me and see to the other boys. Good-bye, cap—and—and don't let 'em get my body."

"All right, Jim, I won't, and good-bye." With a squeeze of Jim's hand, McLennan hurried over to where the others were lying. A quick examination proved that they too had been fatally wounded.

"Is there nothing can be done for them?" asked Neil, his face white and drawn.

"Nothing, I guess, or they'd do it," answered Harry. "What's that?" and he started off towards the barricade.

"Got him," chuckled a miner exultantly as he reloaded his rifle, and he nodded to where an Indian lay stretched on the narrow pathway. The scout had advanced too far in following the whites, and the old frontiersman had seen him.

All day long the miners lay on the hot, sandy path, while the sun beat mercilessly down upon them. They had no water, not even for the wounded, and the river rushing by only a short distance away added to the torment of their sufferings.

"I can't stand it any longer," half-sobbed Neil to his chum, as the fevered and delirious cries of the wounded men were repeated again and again. "I'm going to get water for them."

"I'll go with you," volunteered Harry.

It was with some difficulty that McLennan was persuaded to permit the attempt. "But how'll you get it?" he asked.

"From that rock down there," Neil answered. "It'll protect me and I can draw some up in a hat, if you'll get the men to cover me."

"All right," grudgingly consented the captain. "Might as well go that way as any other; but there's no reason why two of you should go," and despite his protestations Harry was compelled to stay behind. He offered to take Neil's place, but this was refused, and with tears in his eyes he watched his chum steal down the slope. Neil took the largest of the felt hats offered by the miners and cut four small holes in the brim. Through these he passed his fishing-line, and the result was a very serviceable bucket.

"That boy's sure got nerve," exclaimed Mallahan as Neil ran down the hillside to the rock, behind which he sheltered himself. As he reached it and dropped the hat, weighted with a small stone, down to the river, a musket cracked sharply high up on the mountain and a bullet spat against the granite. The shot was answered by a volley from the miners, and protected by their fire he made a dash up the incline, reaching the protected path without mishap.

The lips of the wounded men were moistened and a little muddy water was given them to drink, after which several men cut away their shirt sleeves and the cloth was torn into small strips. These were soaked in the water and were

distributed so that each man could wet his mouth. The water that remained was carefully protected for the further use of the injured and dying men.

Slowly the long, hot day dragged on its way. The cool of evening approached and, as the sun sank behind the hills, the three wounded men, one after another, passed away.

Reverently the bodies were carried to the edge of the river and were thrown into the water, McLennan muttering a brief prayer. As soon as this had been done the party started away. The slide was crossed and at a brisk pace the miners hurried on. All night they kept going, stumbling and bruising themselves on the rough and uneven trail.

Just as day was breaking, at a narrow part of the path, a shot was heard. Then the cry carried from man to man: "The captain's hit!" He had been protecting the rear.

Everyone turned, but the voice of McLennan rang out, as with a stupendous effort he lifted himself, "On, boys, keep going, I'm done for," and rising to his feet he threw himself down the steep embankment in order that his body might roll to the river and escape mutilation.

Only for a moment did they pause, and then, with tears streaming down the face of more than one, the miners continued their flight. At last, tired and almost exhausted, they made their way out on to a river bar. Hardly had they time to drop their packs and throw up a rude fortification of rocks and brush than a score of whooping, howling savages appeared.

Harry and Neil were first to see them. They had been posted as sentries while the older men worked. The boys fired at the same instant and two Indians dropped. The others took refuge behind trees and stones and poured lead and arrows down upon the miners, who answered as fast as they could load and fire their weapons.

"Boys," shouted McDonald, "let's charge 'em."

A cheer was given in answer and up sprang the brave little band and raced up the slope, but not without serious losses, for six men died in that gallant rush. Their comrades avenged them, for when the Indians were finally scattered they left ten dead behind them.

Stopping only long enough to throw the bodies into the river, the survivors continued the retreat. In order to give them a better opportunity to use their guns it was found necessary to discard their packs, taking only their ammunition and that of those who had been killed, and a piece of jerked venison each. The firearms of those who died were thrown into the river to prevent the Indians getting them. As they hurried along the men chewed at small pieces of venison.

Neil and Harry carried their deer meat in the bosoms of their shirts, and to this Harry owed his life, for, being one of the rear-guard as the party left the bar, an arrow struck him over the heart and embedded its point in the tough dried, almost leather-like substance. Luckily it had been shot from a distance and its force was nearly spent. It was sufficient, however, to cause him to fall. Neil was beside him in a flash.

"Thank God," he exclaimed fervently when he saw that Harry was uninjured. "But cut that meat in two and throw away the part where the arrow hit. It might be poisoned," he added.

CHAPTER VIII

THE OLD CANOE

"There's hardly any food left," McDonald remarked to Texas. "We didn't have much to start with, and there's only enough left for another day. What do you think we'd better do?"

"Don't know: suppose we'll have to do without," answered the old fellow.

"If we could only catch some fish," observed Stout.

"There's one thing we could do," said Harry.

"What?"

"We could raid an Indian village. There's one a bit farther along. We passed it coming up, and Neil and I could sneak into it after dark and maybe get something."

"No, you don't," interjected Texas. "You youngsters ain't goin' to risk yerselves all the time. Ned, here, and I'll go and get it."

"Sure," agreed Stout.

"By Jove! fellows, you give me an idea," said McDonald. "What's the matter with us all going? Let's carry the fight to them for a change, and make a raid on the village."

"A thumpin' good idea," exclaimed Texas. "I'm for it."

The word was quickly passed that the village was to be attacked, and it acted like a tonic to the weary men.

"We'll teach them a lesson," asserted the leader. "The boys, Texas and Ned will raid the huts for food and the rest will keep the Indians busy.

"Get all the dried meat and salmon you can, and run for cover," he instructed.

At dusk the sixteen desperate whites were on the way, Harry and Neil with the old Texan in the lead. Hardly a sound marked their advance as they left the trail and worked their way up the hillside. Stealthily they crept on hands and knees as they approached the village an hour later. A big fire was blazing in front of the largest hut, and about this the savages were executing a war-dance. Nearer and nearer crawled the miners, in order that the shot-guns could be more effectually used at shorter range. Several of the men now carried rifles in addition to their guns.

The whooping and yelling of the natives permitted the invaders to approach closer than they had anticipated. Now McDonald raised his rifle and the others followed his example. Every man took careful aim.

"Fire!" Each trigger was pulled at the same instant and a deadly rain of lead burst among the dancers. Ten of the savages fell. Before they could recover from their surprise the miners were upon them. Again the shot-guns roared, revolvers cracked sharply and the heavier note of the rifles carried death to the savages. The warriors broke and ran before the whites. Squaws and children fled squealing for the forest, leaving the little village deserted.

Harry and Neil, with the others detailed for the duty, following the first wild rush, made straight for the lodges. Breaking into the huts, they emerged with arms laden with dried salmon and berry cakes. As they made their way from the village down the incline, men were already at work with brands snatched from the fire. In a few minutes four or five huts were burning and the flames were spreading.

The attack had been a complete success. The Indians had been so surprised they had not fired a shot, and their loss had been terrible.

"They'll be after us soon," panted Stout as they hurried down the hill, "but we gave 'em a real lesson."

It was almost morning when the party came to a halt on the banks of a creek. "Looks a likely place fer 'em to try somethin'," declared Mike Mallahan. "Shouldn't be surprised t' see 'em hidin' in th' grass over there."

"Sure," agreed Texas. "I think ye'r right, an' I'm goin' t' find out," and the old fellow disappeared after explaining his plans to McDonald. Half an hour later the grass on the opposite side of the creek burst into sudden flame. By its light, as

Mallahan had suspected, half a dozen Indians were seen, and the miners opened fire. Five of the savages fell and the sixth sought to escape, but before he had gone far a shot from the higher ground stopped him, and through the smoke the miners could see old Texas moving down the hill, waving to them.

It did not take long for the fire to sweep down the bank, and the men crossed over the burnt ground.

"Fine work," shouted McDonald as he grasped the hand of the old frontiersman. "But come on; we've no time to waste."

Once more the stumbling, erratic course was resumed. The men were so tired and worn from their fatigues, constant fighting and lack of sleep that they could hardly walk, and it became necessary, after a painful hour of slow travelling, to again call a halt. Stones were rolled into position to form a rude barricade, and within this the weary men lay down to obtain a little rest. Sentries were changed every hour.

It was nearly seven o'clock when Neil and Harry were roused by a cry. In an instant they were on their feet. McDonald and Stout were bending over the body of the sentry who had been shot between the eyes. A moment later the whole party was engaged in battle and the natives attacked from behind trees and boulders. The miners returned the fire, aiming carefully and shooting with cool deliberation. One Indian was hit, but two of the defenders were sorely wounded before the savages drew off to await an opportunity for another surprise attack. The respite gave the men a chance to strengthen the defences.

"I think they're trying to starve us out," Harry whispered huskily, later in the day. "I'm so thirsty now I don't know what to do."

The heat of the sun, which beat down out of a cloudless sky, was intense and the wounded and tired men suffered tortures. Driven to desperation one man made his way down to the river and drank. He filled his felt hat to the brim and laboriously made his way up the hill. With hungry eyes the little band watched his progress. "Jake's goin' t' make it," a young fellow named Moore assured the wounded; "you'll have water in a minute."

Nearer and nearer crept Jake; only a few feet more. Now he had almost reached the shelter of the trail, when he stumbled, uttered a piercing shriek, then straightened to his full height and made one or two steps towards his comrades, holding out the hat; then fell, his neck pierced by an arrow.

Neil had been watching him carefully and, as he tottered, the boy made a leap towards him and caught the hat from his hands. Quick as he had been he could not prevent most of the contents from spilling, but managed to save about half a pint of the precious liquid. He bounded out of range just as an arrow whizzed past his shoulder.

Several of the men would have gone out, at the risk of their lives, to bring in the body of Jake, but this McDonald forbade, as it was evident that the poor fellow was dead. The water was divided between the wounded men and poor Jake's hat was then cut into pieces which were given to the others to suck the moisture from the felt.

"We can't stand another day like this, or we'll all go crazy," said McDonald. "There's a bar ahead, where we panned on the way up. We might make a stand there, and anyway we could get water. Shall we make a try for it?"

The others nodded, and old Texas gave answer, "Anythin' you say, Mac. We can't stick it here, an' the closer we get t' Yale the better chance there'll be fer help. Surely those who followed us'll be in the canyons some place, or'll be a-comin' t' clean out these Injuns. We might as well be movin'."

There were no preparations to be made, except to arrange men to take turns in assisting the wounded. Progress was necessarily slow as the pace was set by the speed with which the injured could be transported. It surprised McDonald and his companions that they were not followed and were allowed to start without being attacked.

The Indians, Texas argued, must have expected them to wait for nightfall before making a move and had therefore not gathered in sufficient strength to stop them.

"It may be that, an' again, it may not," answered Mallahan. "We got to expec' anythin'."

"You're right," agreed Harry. "There's some reason. They know we're moving."

Later in the afternoon they came upon a small stream that tumbled and foamed into the river from a deep gorge in the mountains. "Look," exclaimed McDonald, pointing to where four freshly-caught salmon hung on a pole near the water. "They've left them there to dry."

"Stop!" shouted Mallahan as McDonald reached towards the fish. "Look!" and he pointed to a dead blue-jay on the ground.

McDonald recoiled in horror. "Poisoned!" he exclaimed.

"What's the matter?" asked Neil, who had been acting on the rear-guard, coming forward.

"Matter?" ejaculated Harry. "The devils poisoned those fish and hung them there for us to eat. That's why they didn't attack us. A jay pecked at one and died. Mike noticed it, or we might have used them."

McDonald took the fish and, after bruising them with a stone, threw them into the river. "Others may be coming this way," he said.

Another defensive work of boulders and brushwood was thrown up about their stopping-place, affording fairly good protection against attack. Plenty of water was now available, and after going, one at a time, to the creek to drink, those who still had hats filled them and brought the water into the circle. The boys volunteered to keep the first watch and the others lay down to rest.

"I don't see that we have much chance," Harry muttered disconsolately. "There's the Black Canyon ahead of us, and everyone's exhausted, and most all are wounded or hurt in some way. I guess we're goners all right."

"Not till we're done in," answered Neil with some show of spirit. "I'm not going to give in till I have to."

"I'm not doing that," answered Harry, "but I'm just telling you how things look to me—that's all."

"Well, we've got to figure something out."

"What?"

"Don't know; but if we only had a boat, we could run the river."

"That sure would mean the end. No boat could get through those rapids."

"Well," answered Neil slowly, "it's a different way of going—and there's always a chance."

There was no attack during the night, but both of the seriously wounded men died before morning. Shortly after daybreak the journey was continued, and owing to the rest which they had obtained the men made better time. After little more than an hour of travelling they approached one of the largest bars on the river, the one to which McDonald had referred as having attracted attention on their way up the stream. Here they came upon the first signs of white man's habitations, for from the higher ground upon which they were travelling they spied through the trees two or three rough huts and a tent.

"Hurrah!" shouted McDonald, "we're among friends; come on, boys," and following his example they increased their pace. They had not gone far, however, when the leader halted and, as the others joined him, said, "There's something wrong here. There's no one about the place—— Look! What's that?"

"It looks like a body," answered Harry hesitatingly.

Cautiously they continued their way now. All hope of finding friends and safety vanished as they drew nearer and could view the full horror of the scene. "Boston Bar" was the rude charcoal lettering on the front of one of the huts. Evidently the place had been taken by complete surprise, for there was no sign to indicate that any defence had been

made by the dozen men who had occupied the camp. The meagre belongings of the dead men, several of whom, it appeared from letters, had been French, were scattered about, and all the food and firearms had been taken.

There were tears in McDonald's eyes as he addressed his little band. "I kind of hoped we'd find someone here," he said, "for you remember the ground panned pretty good. You see what's happened. It means that the Indians have control of the canyons, and maybe they've attacked Yale as well, but I hardly think they'd go so far. Sooner or later men will be coming up here again, and maybe sailors from the navy. It may be some time, however, for if they think there's no one alive up here, the boys at Yale will probably wait till they hear from the governor at the coast. In the meantime, we're short of ammunition and food. There's only a dozen left, counting these two boys, who, you'll agree, are as good as any men—but it means there's only twelve weapons, and also there's that many mouths to feed. What are we going to do? We've got to decide on something."

"Don't make much difference what we do," muttered Texas. "If we stay here we'll be killed, an' if we keep on we'll get it too. But we're that much closer to Yale and any help that's comin'."

One by one the men expressed their opinions, which were about evenly divided between attempting further progress through the canyons and staying to meet death fighting where they were. While the discussion was under way Neil beckoned to Harry. He had been keeping watch and his eyes had been searching the vicinity for signs of hostile activities. He saw something hidden beneath some brushwood. "I think it's a canoe," he explained excitedly.

Harry looked searchingly at his chum, then nodded. "We'll try it, old man," he said in answer to the unspoken suggestion. "It's a chance for all of us."

"Now, let's hear from Harry. He's as much right as anyone to speak," said McDonald.

"As far as I can see," said the boy, "the only hope, in any event, is for relief to come. If they don't know at Yale we're up here, they might not send any force here for a long time, but if they knew, then help would come."

"That's right," murmured McDonald, and the others nodded.

"Well, Neil and I will go for help."

There were several protests. "It ain't fair for these young boys to do that," protested Stout, and Moore added, "Let's stick together."

"You could never make the trail," said McDonald. "You'd have no chance at all."

"We don't intend to try the trail," answered Harry. "We'll shoot the rapids."

"Impossible."

"What's the use of talkin' that way," grumbled one of the men. "You can't chance the river without a boat. We ought to stop jawin' and get some rest."

"Just a minute," commanded McDonald. "These lads don't suggest anything unless they've some scheme. Go ahead, Harry, tell us what's on your mind."

"Neil thinks there's an old canoe over there under some brush. If it'll float we'll take the chance. If we get through, help'll be coming right away—if we don't—well——" He did not finish the sentence. It was not necessary.

"Boys, it looks like a chance—a desperate one," said the leader when the boys concluded; "but I think some older men should go."

"We thought of that, but really, Neil and I are the only ones that know anything about canoes. You are all miners and plainsmen."

"That's right—I guess it's up to you all right," agreed McDonald with a little catch in his voice. "Come on, then, and we'll see this canoe," he added.

While the others kept watch, Harry, McDonald and Mallahan stole over to the place. A hasty examination showed that it was indeed a canoe and that it could be made serviceable with a little patching. It had been out of the water for a long time and cracks had developed in one or two places. They picked it up and ran with it back to the protective works that had been thrown up on their arrival. Harry, Neil and old Texas set to work at once. Pitch was found oozing from a convenient stump where the axes of the slaughtered miners had felled a tree in establishing their camp. This was smeared over strips torn from Harry's shirt and these were forced into the cracks and gum was again applied. The canoe was then carried to the river edge, where it was filled with stones and sunk in a protected spot in order that the wood might swell during the night.

Paddles had to be fashioned, and for this purpose boards cut by the dead miners for their rockers were utilised. With their knives the boys and Texas cut four rough blades. Harry deemed it advisable to have two extra ones in case those which they would use at starting should break. "I don't like the wood, and don't want to take any chances we don't have to," he said.

One by one the men came to the boys and wished them success, and three of them asked them to take messages to be sent to friends in the event of them making Yale, thus escaping the fate that threatened the whole party.

"We'll keep on the best we can," McDonald told them. "We'll get as close to the canyon as we can, and if there's a chance we'll try and make our way through. If you get through all right it won't take the boys long to organise a party, but if you don't make it, why, we're all done for. Now, you boys try and get some sleep, for you'll need all your strength."

Harry and Neil were awakened at dawn and, accompanied by McDonald, they went down to the water and lifted the canoe. It was found to be fairly tight, the repair work being really more effective than they had expected. It was deemed advisable, however, to spread more pitch over the cracks of the dug-out.

"You'd better wait for a bit," advised Texas. "You'll travel fast and need all the light you can get in those dark canyons. The river mist'll be higher in half an hour."

As they waited the miners came, one at a time, and pressed the boys' hands. There were tears in more than one pair of eyes as the gaunt, bearded, powder-begrimed and battle-marked men bade farewell to them.

"We'll start as soon as you've gone," said McDonald. "There's no use us staying here."

CHAPTER IX

SHOOTING THE RAPIDS

"Quick, Harry, run for your life!" Neil called as the report of a musket sounded from the fringe of the forest and one of the men who was bidding the boys farewell pitched forward.

Harry did not hesitate but joined Neil in a rush for the canoe. As they pushed it down the incline to the water, a bullet hit against the rocks close to Neil's heels, while an arrow struck a glancing blow on the side of the craft. Behind them McDonald and his men were firing as fast as they could load in the direction of the Indians, and with such purpose did they maintain the bombardment that the boys were able to launch the canoe. Harry sprang to the bow, it having been agreed that he should take the position, being more familiar with the management of dug-outs, while Neil with a vigorous shove, as he jumped aboard, sent it into mid-stream.

Seizing his paddle, he aided in turning the nose of the craft down-stream. The current caught her and, assisted by the

boys, the dug-out shot away at a rapid speed.

As they passed beyond a high bluff that shut off all sight of Boston Bar a bullet clipped the paddle in Neil's hands. Reaching down he picked up the spare one in his end of the canoe and discarded the other.

Keeping well to the middle of the swirling, foam-flecked, muddy waters, the boys only used their paddles for steering. Harry knelt in the bow with his blade poised, his eyes fixed on the river ahead for signs of boulders or dangerous whirlpools, while his chum steadied the canoe with his paddle, keeping a close watch on his companion in order that he might catch and act upon the signals that had been agreed upon.

They were well within the canyon now, and the shadows of night still hid beneath the mists, that were slowly ascending, the heights above them. The mighty river, forced into narrower, rock-bound confines, increased the speed of its flow, while the angry roaring of the rapids was almost deafening. Neil strained forward in order to watch the slightest movement of his friend; now it was to aid in twisting the canoe to the right to avoid a hidden rock, betrayed by the splashing of the water over its crest; now to swing sharply—almost broadside to the current—to escape destruction on a snag that had become snared among the boulders of the river bed.

Faster and faster the dug-out travelled, and narrower and still more narrow was the river. Now they were passing a bar where white men had worked and, brief as was the view, the boys were horrified to see the inert forms of two men at the water's edge. Suddenly, as they rounded a bend, two great piers of stone rose before them, closing the passage to one of yards. Standing like a great door to the river-gate was a gigantic boulder, and around its sides the waters beat themselves to white foam. There was no escaping; to run the canoe to shore and drag it up the huge, step-like stone formations was Harry's first thought, but this, he quickly saw, was impossible, such was the tremendous force of the current. The boy raised himself slightly to get a better view and, muttering a prayer, prepared to fight through.

Neil, every nerve on edge, watched for the slightest signal. They were rushing straight at the big rock. Surely, he thought, they would be dashed to pieces. His own inclination would have been to edge over from it as far as possible, but he made no move—Harry was in command. His duty was to obey. Now it was only a few yards away—a matter of seconds until they would be dashed against it.

Harry's paddle struck, and simultaneously Neil's blade entered the water. The canoe swerved, almost grazing the stone, and shot through the opening as if from a gun. The nose of the dug-out went deep into the foaming waters, half-filled, but the added weight only steadied her as they swept forward.

So intent were they on the dangers of the river that they failed to note the fresh menace that threatened. An Indian was at work on a fish-trap when they rounded the bend. He saw them and scurried up the side of the rock promontory for his musket. He reached it just as the canoe burst through the gateway and, dropping to one knee, took aim and fired.

Neil was in the act of lifting his right arm to drive the paddle into the water on the left side of the canoe when he felt a sudden blow, as if he had been struck beneath his uplifted arm by a red-hot iron. He almost fell forward, but recovering himself completed the stroke. It was a moment before he realised what had happened, but on looking down he saw a red stain spreading through the fabric of his shirt and he knew he was wounded. His only hope was that the hurt was from a bullet, for he dreaded the infection that invariably followed an arrow wound. "I must keep going—I've got to," he muttered through gritted teeth.

They were through the big canyon and past the place where they had come upon the river on their way up-stream. The fort could not be more than five or six miles away. Now they were rushing through the smaller canyon, gambling with death in a dozen forms. There was plenty of work to do. Harry's paddle was busy, turning the frail craft from threatening rocks and away from whirlpools. It was only by sheer will power and determination that Neil kept his senses and followed the other's lead. The memory of McDonald, Stout, Mallahan and the others fighting their way, foot by foot, hoping and praying for the safety of the boys, buoyed him up and strengthened his purpose. He dared not look down now at the stain he knew to be broadening as his labouring arm pumped blood from the wound, but kept his eyes on the figure before him.

Right in front of them a mountain seemed to rise and block progress—a sudden turn to the right—and Harry cried

aloud in his delight, for in the distance he could see houses, and as his vision broadened, tents were in view—and men—white men. They had come through the canyons; had battled with death that lurked in the black, rocky gorges and had won, not only for themselves but for their friends—some of them.

Eagerly Harry scanned the place. It was not the Fort Yale of two months before, but a regular city of wooden huts and canvas. Neil did not see. His mind had been acting mechanically during the past two or three miles; his powers of perception were dazed, only the unconscious promptings of his will compelled his muscles to lift and lower his paddle.

With a few swift strokes Harry turned the nose of the dug-out towards the spot where men were running to meet them. The prow grated on the sand and gravel and Harry turned with a glad cry: "We've made it—we've—— Why, what's the matter?"

Neil had slipped down into the half-filled canoe. His head was resting on the stern. His work was finished—the race had been won and his sense had given way to the pain that was racking his body.

"Neil! Neil!" cried Harry in alarm as he sprang into the water and hastened to the side of his friend. "Speak to me," he pleaded. "Speak to me," and he half lifted his friend from the canoe. It was then that he saw the blood-stain and realised that Neil had been hit. Tears were streaming down his face as he clumsily sought to find the wound.

"Here, sonny, let me help you," said a regular giant of a man, as he stooped and picked up the injured boy as if he was a babe.

Harry stumbled along beside him as they pushed their way through the gathering crowd. "Will he die?" he asked half hysterically.

"Maybe not," answered the man. "I don't think so."

"Who is he? Where did they come from?" questioned curious men as they ran up to the scene. Their voices and questions recalled to Harry his duty to those who were still fighting for their lives in the chasms up the river.

"We've come for help," he cried, and everyone looked at him.

"What's that?"

"There are men fighting Indians up the river," he went on, "McDonald, Texas, Mike Mallahan and others, and unless you go to their rescue they'll all be killed."

His half-naked appearance, haggard face and blood-shot eyes commanded attention. "You've got to go," he almost sobbed. "Please—they'll all be killed if you don't."

"Who are 'they'?" asked the big man, looking up from where he had set Neil down to permit him to examine the wound.

"Jack McLennan's party," answered Harry. "Sixteen had been killed when we left a little while ago. They're at Boston Bar."

"How d' yuh know?" asked a miner.

"We came through the canyons for help."

"Did y' say it were Jack McLennan's outfit?" asked another anxiously, and Harry recognised him as one of the two members of the original party who had been left behind.

"Yes, we're the boys that took your place."

"Good Lord!" almost shrieked the other. "It's true, pards—it's true what he says. They're my pals up there."

"Boys," shouted the big man, "we've got to go—and quick. Who'll come with me?" he asked as he set Neil down on a pile of ferns and bracken.

"I'll go, Snyder," answered one. "An' me." "I'll go." "I'm yer man," and a score more answered in the affirmative.

"Get someone to look after this boy," Snyder ordered. "You," he said, turning to Harry, "had better come along, if you're able."

There was a stir in the crowd and a man, followed by a woman, edged through to the centre. "By thunder, Betsy," he exclaimed, "it's them boys!" And as Snyder asked for someone to care for Neil, "Give him here. We'll look a'ter him, won't we, Betsy?"

"That's right," answered the woman, who already had Neil's head pillowed on her lap and was seeking to staunch the blood that still flowed from his wound.

Already messengers were running along the bank of the river with the tidings of the fight in the canyons. Ever since the first headless body had floated down from above, followed by others, telling gruesome tales of murders by savages, there had been but little work done at the rockers. The Indians had swept down on little groups of miners and, taking them by surprise, had killed them. A few had escaped the first onslaught and had warned others in their flight, and hundreds had poured into Yale. The savages followed, almost to the fort, killing Dick Green and his six Cornish companions only a few miles above the town. The miners had made preparations to defend themselves, while a punitive expedition of forty rifles, under command of Captain Rouse, an old army officer, had pushed their way up the river for ten miles where they engaged in a spirited fight with the natives, killing seven. Finding no trace of any white men alive, they had returned to Fort Yale. It had been suggested that a strong force be organised to punish the natives, but calmer counsels had prevailed and it was decided to report the matter to Governor Douglas and await his action. Now, however, when word had been brought that white men were battling for their lives against the savages, there was no hesitation in deciding what to do.

"We must have guns," one man shouted. "We'll kill every Injun—like rabbits," he added.

"Let's get the guns from the Hudson's Bay," cried another. "Come on," and he started off, followed by a score of excited men.

"Hand over yer guns and powder," ordered the leader of the gang.

"No, I can't," was the quiet answer.

"We'll take 'em, then."

"No, you won't," asserted Snyder, who with Harry and a number of others had followed the rush to the store.

"We're not a-goin' t' see whites killed because we can't get guns."

"Why didn't you say there was trouble of that kind?" demanded the fur-trader. "I can't be giving guns to every bunch of men that asks for them."

"Let me explain——" started Harry.

"Harry Thomas, is that you?" exclaimed the trader. "Where's McLennan and his men?"

"Those who are alive are fighting. That's why the guns are wanted, to rescue them."

"Why didn't someone say that? But I'll have to have them back, they're not mine."

It did not take long for several men who were known to the trader to be responsible to come forward and give guarantees for the return of the arms, and these were then handed over.

The majority of the miners flocked about H. M. Snyder, declaring him to be their leader, while others selected a younger man named Graham as their captain. Still others chose John Centras, a French-Canadian.

"I'm in favour of going the limit to save those fellows, but not of killing Indians just for the sake of killing 'em," declared Snyder. "We're miners, not soldiers. It's for the governor to make war, not us, but to save those lads above there I'll do anything that's necessary."

"That's my stand," declared Centras, and he and his band immediately joined up with Snyder. Graham's volunteers, however, decided to act independently.

It was just noon when the two parties, numbering all told about two hundred and fifty, started up the river. It was agreed that Snyder's force should lead the way. Harry accompanied this party.

He had not seen Neil after Adam Jones and Betsy removed him to their hut, but he knew that every care and attention would be given to him. Just as the expedition was leaving Jones sought him out.

"Go ahead, lad, yer chum'll be taken care o'," he said. "Betsy's lookin' a'ter him. Th' bullet didn't stick; jus' loss o' blood, that's all."

"Thanks," was all that Harry could say.

"'Sall right," answered Adam. "I'm lookin' fer a sawbones that was in camp t'other day," he added. "If I don' find him won't matter much, 'cause Betsy's jus' as good, anyway."

Graham's party took the lower trail through the first canyon, the water being low enough to permit its passage. Snyder and his men took the upper trail. The miners required no urging to hurry them on. They realised the necessity for haste if the little party defending themselves in the gorges ahead was to be saved. Up the mountain-side they went almost at a half-trot. A stop was made at the top to select an advance-guard. Snyder took charge of them in person. They were mostly old Indian fighters from the American plains.

"Say," exclaimed one man as the party rested, "we ain't got no flag. There being no Britisher flag, I brought this one," and he produced a small Stars and Stripes.

"I'm not goin' to fight under any flag but my own," declared an Englishman.

"Join the advance-guard, then," suggested Snyder. "It don't make much difference about the flag as long as it is that of a civilised country."

"I'll join the advance party, anyway," offered the sturdy John Bull.

Before nightfall they reached the rancheries where it had been agreed they would await Graham's party, which arrived a little while later, more than ever determined on a "war to the knife," having found additional evidence of Indian barbarity in the way of headless bodies.

Next morning the leaders agreed to attempt to travel by both sides of the river. By this means each party could offer protection to the other.

Harry again led the way over the difficult and dangerous trail. Graham and his men made their way over the rocks and up the steep bluffs on the other side of the stream. Progress was necessarily slow and all day was occupied in forcing their way through the canyon.

At daybreak they were again on the way, Harry being with Snyder in the lead. They had not gone far when the boy heard the sound of firing. "Listen," he whispered.

"What is it?"

"Shooting."

They paused for a moment and then went forward rapidly as caution permitted. Sharper and more distinct came the sounds, and it was not long until they could hear the war-cries of the savages as well. They were close to the scene of conflict now, and as they looked down to a river bar they could see puffs of smoke coming from behind a pile of brushwood and boulders, while from a clump of small growth flashes of fire told of the hiding-place of the Indians. Snyder motioned to await reinforcements.

"There's only four or five guns," Harry observed, and a lump rose in his throat.

"Quick," commanded Snyder, beckoning to those who followed, "they're going to rush the place."

The Indians were gathering for an attack. There were more than twenty of them, and so intent were they on their purpose they did not see the approach of the white men.

"Kneel and take careful aim," whispered the leader, and he sighted his rifle. The others followed his example. "Now—let 'em have it!"

The effect of the volley was deadly. Half a dozen Indians crumpled and fell. Others scattered and ran, one or two more being dropped before they reached cover. Three braves attempted to cross the river, but were killed by Graham's marksmen.

Leaving their cover the miners ran down the slope, Harry in the lead. Only one defender of the barricade rose to wave to them. "It's Texas," exclaimed the boy. "Texas—oh, Texas, we're here—we've come!" he shouted in wild frenzy.

Leaping over the brush and boulders he grasped the hand of the haggard old Texan. "Where are the others?"

The old man looked at him dully, half turned and nodded to the enclosure behind him. Scrambling into the place Harry found four men: brave McDonald, gallant Stout, Moore and Mallahan, wounded and bleeding, their guns pushed through openings in the defensive works—courageous and determined to the last.

"Thank God," whispered McDonald, as tears streamed down his powder-blackened face.

Stout smiled feebly, while the others stretched out their hands in greeting. Stout was badly hit. Half a dozen times musket balls had scored him, while a broken arrow shaft protruded from the fleshy part of one leg.

"Quick, captain," called Harry. "Brandy—quick."

Seizing the flask he gave Stout a drink and then passed it to the others.

"Here, boy, let me attend to him, I'm a doctor," said one of the relieving force, and stepping forward he seized the arrow shaft and, making a quick incision, drew out the barbed head. "Now, that brandy again," and he poured the alcohol into the wound.

"How long since you got this?"

"Just a few minutes."

"Good, we'll save him all right."

Mike Mallahan was looking at Harry in a dazed way. He did not seem to realise fully that the fighting and dangers were all over. Finally he whispered, "Neil?"

"Yes," asked McDonald as a wound in his shoulder was being dressed. "Where's Neil?"

"At the fort. He was hit."

There was no need for him to inquire where the others were that he had left at Boston Bar.

"I'm going to stay with these men," he told Captain Snyder a little later.

"That's right. You'd better keep the doctor, too, and men to help carry the wounded to Yale."

CHAPTER X

UNEXPECTED MEETINGS

"D' yuh know anythin' about fixin' up a fellah as has been hurt?" Adam Jones asked as he accosted two strangers.

"What do you mean?" asked one who, from his rolling gait and manner of speech, it was plain was a seafarer.

"I'm wantin' a sawbones powerful bad," answered Jones. "There was one here, but he's gone killin' Injuns."

"I'm a doctor," said the smaller of the two strangers; "but you seem to be all right."

"Come along, then—an' come a-runnin'," exclaimed Adam, seizing him by the wrist. "You're wanted. There's a youngster wounded—shot by the Injuns—and he's one of the whitest boys I ever seed. You've got t' fix him up."

"But wait a moment," protested the doctor. "Where is he?"

"Come along an' I'll show yuh. Betsy's doin' what she can—an' that's pretty good—but he seems t' be too much fer her."

"Go along, Goodson," advised his companion.

As they hurried along Jones kept up a running conversation: "Me an' Betsy—she's my wife—are runnin' a eatin'-house here. Makin' pretty good money, too. Met this boy an' another—don' even know their names—an' they helped us when we needed it. We don' ferget favours. They needs us now, an' they're a-goin' t' get the bes' we kin give 'em. We jis' foun' 'em yestiddy—they come through the canyon t' get help fer some others. One was hit, an' t'other goes back wi' the men t' rescue his pals."

"They must be plucky boys."

"Here y' are," and Jones led the way into a rough log and bark hut that served him and Betsy as a home. A long rough table and board benches beneath a canvas top formed the "eatin'-house." He motioned for the doctor to go inside while he remained with the other man. "I guess we'd better stay out an' not get in th' way," he advised. "If we're wanted, Betsy'll let us know."

"How old is the lad?"

"Dunno; maybe seventeen. Never asked him."

"And the other one?"

"About the same, I guess."

"What is his name?"

"Dunno. Never asked that either. He's a smart fellah, though. Both o' them are. Guess they was born here, th' way

they handle the Injun lingo—leastways th' one that's gone up-river."

Jones busied himself about the rude fire-place upon which he and his wife prepared the meals for their patrons, while the stranger watched him.

"What do you feed your guests?"

"Bacon an' beans, an' flapjacks an' coffee—good, too."

The doctor reappeared. "It's not serious," he said. "The ball cut through the flesh and cracked a rib. He's lost a lot of blood and he's pretty well exhausted, but he's young and has a strong constitution. I'll come again to-morrow."

Neil fell into a deep sleep as soon as the doctor left. He had recovered from his swoon to find Mrs. Jones bending over him. At first he could not realise where he was and called out for Harry.

"He's all right," she told him. "You jis' take this," and she gave him some bean broth.

He was still sleeping when the doctor came the following morning. "Let him sleep," he advised. "It's the best thing for him. He needs it. He seems young to be up here in this wild country, and from what your husband says, he's had a bad time of it lately."

"That's right," agreed Betsy.

"Well," returned the doctor, "I'll drop round later in the day."

When Neil awakened that afternoon he found that he was extremely weak, but greatly refreshed, and hungry.

"I'm glad ye're better," said Mrs. Jones. "Jus' take this now," and she gave him a piece of boiled fish.

"But how did I get here?" he asked when the edge had been taken off his hunger.

"Adam brung you."

"But where's Harry?"

"He went up the river wi' the men."

"Oh, yes," he cried, "that's it; we came for help. They're going back to help the boys. Thank God we made it," and his eyes filled with tears. "I should be with them, I must go," and he attempted to rise.

"No, y' ain't," said his nurse gently but firmly, and she pushed him back on the rude bunk. "Doctor Goodson says ye'r t' stay quiet."

"Goodson—Goodson?" he asked. "Who's he?"

"The sawbones that fixed y' up yestidday."

"Goodson!" The name was familiar, but he could not just remember where he had heard it before.

"What's he like? I remember someone fixing me, but I can't recall what he was like."

"Oh, jis' a middle-aged sort o' man; but don' you get t' botherin' about him, he'll be here in a while, anyway."

"Well, well, how's our patient to-day?" called a cheery voice, and the doctor appeared at the doorway. "Better, I hope."

"Yes, sir," answered Neil.

"Fine," said the doctor, seating himself on a block of wood that served as a stool. "That's fine. You'll be all right soon."

Neil was looking at him closely. "I seem to know your name," he said, "but I don't remember—yes, I do—I know, I know!" he exclaimed excitedly.

"Know what?"

"Where's Harry's father?"

"Where's Harry's father?" the doctor repeated in amazement. "You don't mean——"

"Yes, I do—Harry Thomas. He told me about you."

The doctor was standing up now, leaning over the bed, his face flushed with excitement.

"Told you about me! Then he's alive?"

"He took the men up the river to save our friends."

"What? He's the boy that came through the rapids with you?"

"That's him."

"Wait a minute, I'll be right back," and the doctor bolted from the room.

"Lan' sakes!" exclaimed Mrs. Jones. "What a way fer a sawbone t' act! He's got y' all excited. He ain't no good. I'll not let him come back."

"No, no, Mrs. Jones. It's all right. It couldn't be better—it's—it's wonderful!"

"What's wonderful? I don' call it wonderful fer to get you all excited."

"But you don't understand—— Oh, Harry, boy! Won't you be happy!" he cried in delight.

The sound of running feet interrupted further explanation, and a moment later the doctor reappeared followed by his friend, who exclaimed as they entered, "Where is he? Oh, Goodson, you're not fooling me—where is he?"

The big man dropped down beside the bed. His face was deathly pale, and his gleaming eyes and opened lips showed that hope and fear of disappointment were struggling for mastery of his mind.

"Goodson says you know a boy named Harry Thomas," he said, controlling his voice with difficulty. "What Harry Thomas is he?"

"Of the ship *Goliath*."

"God be praised, it's Harry! Goodson, it's our boy," and the captain dropped his head on the blankets and sobs of joy shook his frame.

Mrs. Jones was right. The excitement was too much for Neil and he was in a high fever that night. The doctor was soundly berated by Betsy the following morning for having been the cause of it. The medical man not only accepted the scolding but acknowledged the fault, which once more restored him to favour with the good woman.

"Ain't she a daisy?" demanded her admiring husband.

"Not a daisy," answered the doctor, "that's not good enough. She's a rose—a great big beautiful rose."

"Y' jis' bet she is," proudly agreed Adam.

The Hudson's Bay people made daily inquiries about Neil's condition and the chief trader himself visited the boy to discover if there was anything he could do to add to his comfort. It was a week later that Neil, propped up on a rough but comfortable chair of Adam's manufacture, beneath the canvas covering, saw Harry approaching with one of the men from the post. He appeared to be thin and worn, but the sight of his chum brought a happy smile to his tired eyes and he rushed forward as fast as he could.

"My, but it's good to see you!" he exclaimed.

"Harry!" was all that Neil could say, and tears coursed down his cheeks.

"I knew you'd be all right, or I'd never have left you," he explained after he had exchanged greetings with the Jones family. "I was afraid, though, you'd think it strange of me to go away and leave you."

"I would have thought it strange if you didn't. But, Harry—were you in time?"

"For some," and he looked away across the river for some time without speaking, and then told the story of the relief of the beleaguered little band. "I waited till there was nothing more for me to do, and then I came back to you," he concluded.

"What's happened to the Indians?"

"The fighting's all over, I guess. The parties went on after we reached the bar, where I stayed with the men. They tell me that Graham and one or two of his men were killed. Some Indians showed a white flag, but they didn't believe it was genuine, and thought it was just a trap, and wouldn't pay any attention to it. That night Graham was shot by his camp-fire, and so was another man with him.

"Snyder's party, I understand, have quietened the Indians and there's not likely to be any more fighting. The miners will be going back up the river to work."

"Now, Harry, I've got big news for you—good news."

"What is it? Have you found your uncle?"

"No, it's even better than that—— But look, who's coming?"

Harry turned. The colour left his face, then came back with a rush. He swayed unsteadily for a second, gazing spellbound at the approaching figures. Then a half-sob, half-cry of delight escaped him: "Dad!"

"My boy!" and Captain Thomas gathered his son in a bear-like embrace.

Tears trickled down Neil's face as he witnessed the happy reunion. Dr. Goodson appeared a moment later, and he too could hardly restrain his emotion at meeting Harry.

It was indeed a joyful party that gathered around the table after the regular patrons had been served. Adam Jones dished out beans, bacon and conversation. Betsy beamed happily on all, and particularly upon her husband, whose remarks she corroborated whenever he appealed to her for confirmation. The captain, Dr. Goodson and Harry had so much to tell each other that Neil did not attempt to take much of a part, being content to sit back and enjoy the happiness of his chum. He tried not to be selfish, but a fear arose in his mind that Harry's good luck would mean their separation when the captain exclaimed: "Well, son, I don't know what we're going to do with you now. I don't suppose, after all you've been through, you'll want to go back to your lessons—but we can discuss all that later."

The captain and his friend had a tent erected close to the river and Harry went with them, his father refusing to be parted from him for another night.

There was great excitement about the camp when Harry and his father started for the Jones's place for breakfast next morning.

"What's the matter?" he asked a miner.

"Ain't y' heard? Gov'ner Douglas is a-comin'. A messenger come in from Hope sayin' he's on th' way, an' we're aimin' t' give him a welcome."

"Did you ever see the governor, Harry?" asked his father.

"Ever see him! Why, he and Mr. Finlayson have been my best friends. They looked after me."

"Then I must thank him."

Neil was delighted to learn of the approach of the governor, although he had expected it, knowing that word of the uprising had been sent to Victoria.

Upon the receipt of the news Governor Douglas had requisitioned a force of marines and bluejackets and had come to the mouth of the river on a warship. There he learned of Captain Rouse's expedition and deemed that there was no need of taking an armed force farther, so he proceeded himself with a small escort.

He was loudly acclaimed by the miners upon his arrival later in the day, and the story of the trouble was told to him.

Harry was not with the crowd who greeted him, but was on the point of leaving Neil to seek an interview when Captain Thomas exclaimed: "Who's this coming?"

"Why, it's the governor!"

Harry rose and the others, with the exception of Neil, followed his example.

"Ah, there you are, Harry," said Governor Douglas. "I was worried about you lads. Stuart said he had sent you and young Alexander up this way—— Oh, there you are, Neil. Wounded, I'm told. Not serious, I hope," and he extended his hand to the boy.

"No, your Excellency."

"That's good. As soon as I learned you were hurt, I came to see you, and to thank you both for the noble part you played in this sad affair."

The boys blushed, for to receive praise from the lips of James Douglas, who himself knew no fear, was indeed an honour.

"I have another duty to perform," went on the governor. "It's to introduce you to your uncle. Duncan, this is your nephew," and he stepped aside to permit a broad-shouldered, handsome man to come forward.

The meeting was so unexpected that for a moment Neil could hardly realise that at last he had met his guardian, who greeted him warmly.

"He's a lad you can be proud of, Duncan," said the governor.

Harry took the opportunity of introducing his father and the doctor.

"I can't tell you, sir, how much I appreciate what you've done for me and my boy," exclaimed the captain. "He's been telling me how kind you've been to him."

"Sir," answered the governor, "there's no thanks due to me. Harry deserved any consideration that's been shown to him. He does you credit."

"What a splendid man!" exclaimed the captain as the governor departed.

"He is that," answered Duncan Alexander. "Every man in the service knows he has a friend in the chief factor."

It was not long before Neil and his uncle were well acquainted. Duncan Alexander did not know of his brother's death until he received orders to return from Fort Simpson to Victoria, where Mr. Finlayson had told him of the arrival of Neil and the sad reason for his coming. The governor had brought him on the trip to Fort Yale in the hope that he might find his nephew.

When, a week later, Neil was able to walk about the camp, he found that he and Harry were regarded as heroes. On every hand they were showered with praise for risking their lives in the rapids to save others. On the evening before their departure for the coast, a delegation of red-shirted miners approached them as they sat about their camp-fire. The spokesman of the group said, "Th' boys heard as you was leavin' an' they didn't want t' let you go without showin' their sentiments, so they all chipped in, an' asked us to give you these small pokes, hopin' they'll buy somethin' to remember us by," and he produced two heavy bags of gold dust, each containing one hundred ounces.

"Now don't refuse it," he protested. "Th' boys wouldn't like it. You're only young 'uns, but you proved yerselves t' be men."

"But," exclaimed Harry, "we only did what anyone would have done. Besides, we were saving ourselves."

"Well," drawled the other, "that may be so, but there's a heap o' grown men wouldn't ha' done it as well."

Seeing that to refuse the gifts would be to hurt the men, the boys accepted the gold with thanks. The crowd cheered and, after shaking hands all round, the men departed.

On the way down the river and across the gulf there were many discussions between the boys as to the future. It was not until they reached Victoria, which they were surprised to find had grown into a modern city, that any decision was reached.

"Duncan," said Captain Thomas, "one thing's certain. We shouldn't part those boys. They sail well together. I don't know what you've decided for Neil, but I'd suggest that for the present you let him come to Europe with us. I've got to go home and straighten up my affairs. I've got proof of the loss of the *Goliath*, and there's the insurance to fix up, as well as other things. I would consider it a privilege to take Neil with me.

"I'd suggest that the boys get an insight into business life and then come back here, get a schooner and start trading. Neil, I understand, with the money he got from his father's estate and his gold, will have about four thousand dollars. I'll match it for Harry. It's to be understood, though, that I stand all the expenses in the meantime."

"That's most generous," exclaimed Duncan Alexander. "I thank you for the offer, but the boy will have to decide for himself."

"But it's not right that Captain Thomas should stand all the expenses," declared Neil when he and Harry had been called into the conference.

"Be still," interrupted Harry. "There's only one thing I want to say. If you don't come along with us, I'll see that you marry King Freezy's girl. You can speak Chinook now."

"Go on," laughed Neil. "How about yourself? You'll have to take one, too," and he gave his chum a shove.

And so it was settled. The boys left for England on one of the company's ships and remained away for two years. On their return they entered into a profitable trading business.

THE END

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